

Medi-Cal Changes for Californians with Unsatisfactory Immigration Status

California Medi-Cal 2026–2027 eligibility changes

What is this about?

Effective January 1, 2026, California scaled back full-scope Medi-Cal eligibility for adults based on immigration status. This fact sheet explains the key terms, what's changing and when, who's exempt, and what to do to protect your coverage.

Key Terms: Satisfactory vs. Unsatisfactory Immigration Status

California sorts Medi-Cal applicants into two groups to decide what coverage they can get:



SATISFACTORY IMMIGRATION STATUS (SIS)

U.S. citizens and non-citizens whose immigration status qualifies them for federally funded full-scope Medi-Cal — for example, lawful permanent residents (green card holders) who have completed, or are exempt from, the 5-year waiting period.



UNSATISFACTORY IMMIGRATION STATUS (UIS)

A broader group whose status doesn't qualify for federally funded full coverage. This includes undocumented immigrants, DACA recipients, asylum applicants, many TPS holders, green card holders still in their 5-year wait, refugees and asylees (for state budget purposes), U/T visa applicants and survivors of trafficking or domestic violence, people with a pending family- or employment-based petition, and several other categories.

Your exact category determines your timeline. [DHCS](#) keeps a detailed chart matching each immigration status to its specific dates — see “More Help” on page 2.

What's Changing, and When



JANUARY 1, 2026 — ENROLLMENT FREEZE: Adults 19 and older with UIS can no longer newly enroll in full-scope Medi-Cal. If you already had full coverage by this date, you keep it as long as you renew on time each year.



JANUARY 1, 2027 — HEALTH PLAN CHANGE: Many enrollees with UIS move from a managed care health plan to fee-for-service Medi-Cal. Coverage continues, but your plan and provider network may change. Ask your current doctors and clinics if they accept Medi-Cal Fee-for-Service (FFS) and use the online tool to find care.



JULY 1, 2027 — MONTHLY PREMIUM: Adults ages 19–59 with UIS (or who are undocumented), who aren't pregnant and remain on full-scope Medi-Cal, must start paying a \$50/month premium to keep coverage. Adults 60 and older don't pay a premium but do lose non-emergency dental.



JULY 1, 2027 — DENTAL BENEFITS: Non-emergency dental benefits end for UIS adults 19 and older who aren't pregnant. Emergency dental care — for severe pain, infection, or extractions — stays covered for everyone.

Who Is NOT Affected by These Changes

No matter your immigration status, you can still apply for and keep full-scope Medi-Cal, with no premium, if you are:



A child under 19



Pregnant, or within 1 year after your pregnancy ends (including after a miscarriage or termination)



Under 26 and were in foster care on your 18th birthday

A few smaller groups — including citizens of the Compact of Free Association nations (Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau) and Cuban or Haitian entrants — also keep full dental coverage and don't pay a premium, but other parts of the new rules still apply to them. **Regardless of immigration status, everyone who is income-eligible can still get Emergency Medi-Cal and emergency dental care.**

What to Do Now

- 1. Renew on time, every time.** If you already have full-scope Medi-Cal, renewing during your renewal month — regardless of your immigration status — is the single most important thing you can do to keep it.
- 2. Mark your calendar.** Plan ahead for the July 2026 dental change and the July 2027 premium, so neither catches you by surprise.
- 3. Know you still have options if you're not enrolled.** If you have UIS and aren't currently enrolled, you can still get Emergency Medi-Cal for urgent medical needs, and you can apply for full coverage anytime if you're under 19, pregnant, or aging out of foster care.
- 4. Get your specific category confirmed.** Immigration categories can be complex and can change. Check DHCS's immigration status chart or ask a trusted enrollment counselor which rules apply to you.
- 5. Talk to a qualified immigration attorney.** Before making decisions about applying for or keeping Medi-Cal, get advice from a trusted, qualified immigration lawyer or nonprofit — especially if you have questions about public charge or other immigration consequences.

More Help



Medi-Cal Member Help Line 1-800-541-5555

General questions about your Medi-Cal coverage



Health Consumer Alliance 1-888-804-3536

Free legal help with Medi-Cal eligibility, denials, and appeals



DHCS Immigration Status Chart
[dhcs.ca.gov](https://www.dhcs.ca.gov)

Search "Immigration Status and Changes to Medi-Cal Eligibility" to find the exact timeline for your status



CDSS Immigration Services Bureau
[cdss.ca.gov](https://www.cdss.ca.gov)

A list of trusted, qualified nonprofits offering free or low-cost immigration legal help



Embassy or Consulate

You can ask your local embassy or consulate for legal help



Find a Fee-for-Service Doctor or Service

<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/medi-cal/find-care/>
Tool to help find providers

This fact sheet reflects DHCS guidance current as of September 2026; DHCS's own immigration status chart is valid through June 30, 2027 and will be updated in July 2027. Details can change — always confirm current information with DHCS, your county Medi-Cal office, or a qualified immigration attorney. This is not legal advice. **Source:** California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), [dhcs.ca.gov](https://www.dhcs.ca.gov), as of September 2026. Visit <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/immigration-status-and-changes-to-medi-cal-eligibility/> for more information.