

## Navigating the Storm

As the State of California struggles to resolve its multi-billion dollar deficit, the Alliance has been navigating the storm with board decisions and staff actions:

- Consistent Payments for Alliance Medi-Cal Services. Despite the State's budget crisis, halted payments and IOUs, the Alliance continues to make timely payments to providers for services to Alliance members.
- Medi-Cal Budget Advocacy. The Alliance's board communicated their concerns to our legislators and State officials about Medi-Cal program cuts, advocated for member co-pays for ED and pharmacy services, and missed appointments as ways to steer patients toward more cost-effective care. The board also advocated that Medi-Cal managed care be expanded as an alternative to program cuts.
- Merced Expansion. The Alliance is now "Central California Alliance for Health" and is on track to start operating in Merced County on October 1<sup>st</sup>. The Alliance will work with Merced providers to improve access and quality of care for our 66,000 new members there. The Alliance's incentive programs will reward physicians' cost-effective care.
- Lab Vendor Changes. On August 1<sup>st</sup> the Alliance transitioned to an open lab network and ended its single lab vendor arrangement. This change will better fit the diverse needs of our members and providers and is facilitated by the Alliance's increasing scale. The Alliance is separately communicating with providers about the details of this change.
- Medi-Cal Optional Benefits. Starting July 1, the Alliance began subsidizing certain Medi-Cal optional benefits for adults that the State cut. Podiatry, Audiology, Speech Therapy and incontinence creams/washes continue as Alliance Medi-Cal benefits. Optometry, Acupuncture and Chiropractic services have been eliminated by the State and the Alliance due to Medi-Cal budget pressure. The Alliance board deliberated on the cost effectiveness and affordability of these decisions over several public meetings. Separately, the State also eliminated Medi-Cal adult dental services from the State's Denti-Cal program.
- Health Information Technology. The Alliance has just implemented new electronic tools for inpatient concurrent review that leverage evidence based care guidelines and promote rapid authorization decisions. The plan will make other system changes in the coming year to expand the Alliance's e-commerce with providers and support case/disease management services.
- Children's Coverage. The Alliance's board decided unanimously to contribute back a portion of net income from the Alliance's "Healthy Kids" program in order to support local children's coverage at this time of cutbacks and waitlists.

In the middle of the State's budget storm, the Alliance is navigating to expand and enhance services as best we can. Thank you for your services to Alliance members and for your support for local health care reform.

Alan McKay, Executive Director

## New Alliance Providers

Please join us in welcoming the following new providers to the Alliance:

### Santa Cruz County

#### **Referral Physicians / Specialists**

Nazia Choudhury, MD (*Anesthesiology*)  
Michael Wahlers, MD (*Anesthesiology*)  
Alexis Lane, MD (*Otolaryngology*)  
Nezhat Solimani, MD (*OB-GYN*)

#### **Primary Care Physicians**

Janine Talty, DO (*Family Medicine*)  
Daniel Son, MD (*Family Medicine*)

### Monterey County

#### **Referral Physicians / Specialists**

John Heess, MD (*Anesthesiology*)  
William Benda, MD (*Emergency Medicine*)  
Heather Taher, MD (*Emergency Medicine*)  
Ronald Garren, MD (*Internal Medicine- Hospitalist*)  
Dominic Lai, MD (*Internal Medicine- Hospitalist*)  
Gregg K. Satow, MD (*Orthopedic Surgery*)

#### **Primary Care Physicians**

Jose Amador III, MD (*Family Medicine*)  
Ma Cristina Mercado, MD (*Pediatrics*)

#### **Allied Providers**

Kimble Cater, DC (*HF, HK, IHSS & AIM only*)  
Gemma Badanguio, DC (*HF, HK, IHSS & AIM only*)  
Eldon Dixon, DC (*Medi-Cal, HF, HK, IHSS only*)  
Gregory Cater, DC (*HF, HK, IHSS & AIM only*)  
Jason Myers, PT (*All lines of business*)  
Yogiro Iba, DC (*HF, HK, IHSS & AIM only*)

### **The Alliance Welcomes a New Provider Services Director**

The Alliance is pleased to announce that Stephanie Sonnenshine has taken the helm of the Provider Services department as its new Provider Services Director. Rachael Nava, who formerly directed the department, is now the plan's Chief Operating Officer.



Stephanie brings a strong arsenal of skills and talents to this position including extensive experience in contracting, negotiation, conflict resolution, and provider relations. She most recently practiced family law litigation in Santa Clara County from 2005-2009 and has a Juris Doctorate from University of San Francisco, School of Law. She received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology from U.C. Santa Barbara.

She has a great familiarity with the Alliance as she worked with the plan several years ago as a

Provider Services Representative and Contract Specialist. Stephanie is a skilled communicator with the vision and ability to lead the Provider Services department through new challenges and will help the plan maintain and grow our important provider partnerships. She looks forward to working with the provider network to further the Alliance's mission of creating health care solutions for our members.

### **We are also pleased to introduce new members of the Provider Services Team!**



Ronita Pal joined the Alliance in May 2009 as the Provider Services Supervisor for Merced County. She brings with her an extensive background in physician recruitment and retention and managed care administration. Ronita is a native of California and received her business degree from CSU Stanislaus. Ronita is committed to expanding the Alliance's mission to improve access to quality health care throughout Merced County. In Ronita's

spare time, she enjoys reading, traveling and shopping! Ronita can be reached at (209) 381-5370 or [rpal@ccah-alliance.org](mailto:rpal@ccah-alliance.org).



Flora Lee recently joined our Merced team as a Merced County Provider Services Representative. Flora was born and raised in Merced, CA. She recently moved back to Merced from the Bay Area in June 2009. She has been in the business field for most of

her life, and helped start up her parent's business which has had over 15 years of success. When Flora was a child she would travel with her parents going door to door trying to promote their business. In Flora's spare time, she enjoys going on family trips, fishing, swimming, and great food.

She is very excited about joining the Alliance and is ready to make an outstanding contribution to the Alliance mission. Flora can be reached at (209) 381-5371 or [flee@ccah-alliance.org](mailto:flee@ccah-alliance.org).



Welcome Jeanette Larkin as the Provider Services Representative for north Santa Cruz County. Jeanette is a long time resident of Scotts Valley with strong ties and commitment to the community. She will be responsible for providers in

Aptos, Soquel, Capitola, Santa Cruz, and all areas between Scotts Valley and Boulder Creek. As a former General Manager in the Food & Beverage Industry, a Human Resources Manager, and most recently as an Event Producer for the Downtown San Jose Association, Jeanette brings strong project management skills, training experience and a high level of customer service to this position. In her spare time, she enjoys traveling, reading, and laughing with her family. Jeanette is located in the Scotts Valley office and can be reached at (831) 430-5538 or [jlarkin@ccah-alliance.org](mailto:jlarkin@ccah-alliance.org).

### **National Drug Code Documentation**

Beginning September 1, 2009, Alliance providers are required to begin documenting the National Drug Code (NDC) for physician-administered drugs, in addition to the Health Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) Level I, II, or

III codes, on all Medi-Cal Claims. Claims with dates of service on or after September 1, 2009 that do not meet the above requirements will result in denied claims.

For more detailed information please contact the Provider Services department at (831) 430-5504 or visit [http://www.ccah-alliance.org/providerspdfs/provider\\_memos/2009/Physician\\_Admin\\_Drugs](http://www.ccah-alliance.org/providerspdfs/provider_memos/2009/Physician_Admin_Drugs).

### **When Members have Other Health Coverage: Coordination of Benefits**

When a Medi-Cal member has other health coverage (OHC), the Alliance almost always becomes the secondary payer. State and federal law requires that all available health coverage be exhausted before billing Medi-Cal. Medi-Cal is almost always the payer of last resort.

OHC includes any non Medi-Cal health coverage that provides or pays for health care services. This can include but is not limited to:

- Commercial Health Insurance Plans
- Prepaid Health Plans
- Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs)
- Employee Benefit Plans
- Union Plans
- Tri-Care, Champ VA
- Medicare
- Medicare Supplement Plans and Medicare Advantage Plans

If an Alliance Medi-Cal member also has OHC, he or she must access services under the rules of the other coverage (the primary insurance). For example, if the other coverage is a Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) plan with a closed panel, the member must see a provider within the PPO network. If the other coverage is a Medicare Advantage plan, the member must receive services from his or her provider under that plan. Any referrals or prior authorizations required by the primary insurance must be obtained before providing services. The Alliance is not liable for the cost of services for members with OHC who do not obtain the services in accordance with the rules of their primary insurance. If a member elects to seek services outside of the framework of his or her primary insurance, the member is responsible

for the cost. Therefore we encourage you to verify eligibility and benefits through the primary insurance. Most commercial plans have on-line access for eligibility verification similar to the Alliance Web Services. Here is a sample of websites:

[www.anthembluecross.com](http://www.anthembluecross.com), [www.blueshieldca.com](http://www.blueshieldca.com),  
[www.healthnet.com](http://www.healthnet.com), [www.aetna.com](http://www.aetna.com),  
[www.webopis.wga.com](http://www.webopis.wga.com) (Western Growers).

Once in the website go to the Provider section and register for access with your provider NPI number or your tax ID number. Once signed up, save the web browser to your favorites. It's that easy!

### **Claims Corner**

Reconciling the Remittance Advice weekly is the single most effective way to reduce unnecessary claim resubmission. If your account receivables reconciliation is outsourced, you can make the money you spend go even further by:

- Creating a Web Services Account
- Providing access to the RA
- Training
- Supplying any other useful information

When action on a previously submitted claim appears warranted, consider the most efficient tool to get the job done, including:

- Web Services Claims Search
- Web Services Claim Resubmission
- Adjudicator ACD Line

If hard copy resubmission is necessary, the claim should be identified by stamping or writing "tracer," "second submission", "corrected claim" or "rebill" on the claim. It is helpful to include the original CCN of the claim that is being corrected.

Other best practices that will expedite claims processing:

- **Do not staple claims and/or attachments**
- **Do not fold claims**
- **Do not highlight information**

Please contact Provider Services at (831) 430-5504 if you would like to schedule an in-service with our Claims department staff.

## **Formulary Changes - July 2009**

### **Additions:**

- Terbinafine tablets for fungal infections
- Ropinirole tablets for Parkinsons & Restless Leg Syndrome
- Omeprazole capsules for ulcers or heartburn

## **Reminder: Medversant is CVO for the Alliance**

To better meet the increased credentialing needs of our expanding network, the Alliance has partnered with Medversant, a Credentials Verifications Organization (CVO). It is very important that credentialing applications are returned in a complete manner with all of the requested documentation included. Please note that you may receive correspondence from Medversant requesting information required to complete your credentialing application. Medversant will make 3 attempts (via phone/fax), to collect the completed documents required to process your application. If they are unsuccessful in obtaining all of the necessary information, the application will be returned to the Alliance and processed once the requested information is received. Our goal is to promptly credential and re-credential our providers to ensure that your contract status with the Alliance is not impacted. We appreciate and value you as our partner in providing excellent care to our members. If you would like more information on Medversant, please contact our Credentialing Specialist, Karla Hawkinson, at (831) 430-5539, or Provider Services at (831) 430-5504.

### **\*\*\*Alert\*\*\***

Effective September 1, 2009, the Alliance will be implementing the 2009 CPT-4/HCPSC for the Medi-Cal Lines of Business.

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### **Changing your address, NPI or Tax ID #?**

**To prevent a delay in payment, please contact your  
Provider Services Representative as soon as possible.**

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## Flu Season 2009-2010

### Provider Information

Each year, the Alliance notifies all contracted providers of clinical recommendations for the current influenza season, as well as comprehensive billing guidelines for each line of business and member age group. If you have not received this information by October 15, please contact your Provider Services Representative or call the Provider Services department at (831) 430-5504.



### Patient Education

The Alliance launches a focused outreach and education campaign every year to encourage members to get a flu vaccination. All members receive a copy of our quarterly member newsletter with an updated article on the importance of flu vaccination. In addition, members of any age with diagnoses that put them at particular risk, members over 50 years old, and members enrolled in California Children's Services receive an individualized postcard to reinforce the message. Members can also call our free bilingual **Health Education Line at 1-800-700-3874** for information about flu prevention and treatment.

To print free patient materials from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) go to:  
[www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/flugallery](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/flugallery).

## Prevent Flu Transmission in Your Practice

The CDC recommends the following measures to prevent the transmission of influenza and other respiratory infections in health care settings:

### 1. Visual Alerts

Post visual alerts (in appropriate languages) at all entrances instructing patients and persons who accompany them to immediately inform healthcare personnel of symptoms of a respiratory infection. Post information for staff regarding Personal Protective Equipment. Post information for staff and patients about proper hygiene and cough etiquette.

### 2. Respiratory Hygiene/Cough Etiquette

Provide tissues and no-touch receptacles for used tissue disposal. Provide conveniently located dispensers of alcohol-based hand rub. Ensure that soap dispensers and disposable towels are consistently available in restrooms and near all sinks.

### 3. Masking and Separation of Persons with Respiratory Symptoms

During periods of increased respiratory infection activity in the community, offer masks to persons who are coughing. If possible, encourage coughing persons to sit at least three feet away from others in common waiting areas.

### 4. Droplet Precautions

Advise staff to wear a surgical or procedure mask for close contact, in addition to using Standard Precautions when examining a patient with symptoms of a respiratory infection.

For more information about preventing flu transmission in health care settings go to:  
[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/id\\_influenza.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/id_influenza.html).

For questions about this article or for assistance with locating influenza resources, please contact Lynn Meier, Senior Health Educator, at [lmeier@ccah-alliance.org](mailto:lmeier@ccah-alliance.org) or (831) 430-5570.

# Health Programs Update

## Advance Health Care Directives

Most physicians agree that patients should take an active role in their own health care. One way that physicians can encourage patients to do this is by discussing an Advance Health Care Directive (AHCD) during the office visit.

*With an Advance Health Care Directive, everyone involved in the patient's care should have a common understanding of the patient's health care wishes.*

According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), patients who discussed advance health care planning with their physicians continued to talk about these issues with their families. These conversations allow patients and families to reconcile their differences about end-of-life care. They may even help the family and physician come to agreement should they need to make decisions for the patient in the future.

The AHRQ also found: "Patients who talked with their physicians about their preferences for end-of-life care had less fear and anxiety, felt they had more ability to influence and direct their medical care, believed that their physicians had a better understanding of their wishes, and indicated a greater understanding and comfort level than they had before the discussion."

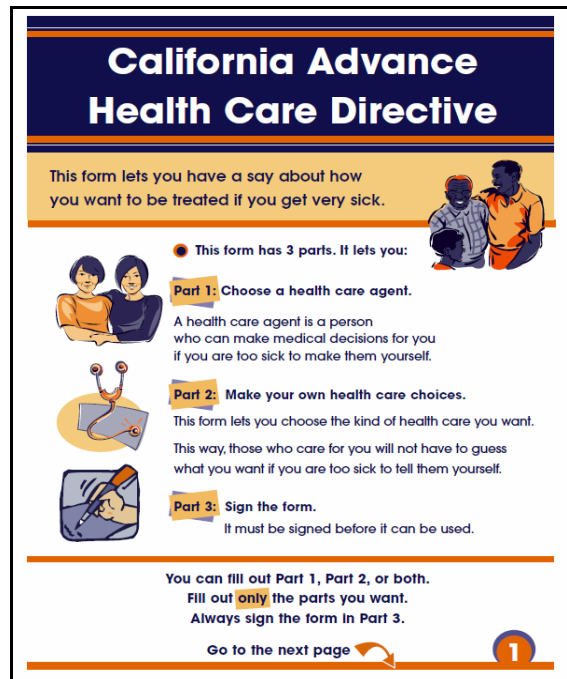
AHCDs should be encouraged for all patients over the age of 18. Previously, AHCDs were only encouraged for aged or terminally ill patients. But unfortunately, anyone can have a sudden and critical injury or illness that could render them

incapable of making determinations regarding their medical care. The process of completing an AHCD

enables patients of any age to consider their values, beliefs, and preferences surrounding health care, illness, and death. It also allows individuals to communicate their wishes to their physician, their proxy or agent, and their loved ones. With an Advance Health Care Directive, everyone involved in the patient's care should have a common understanding of the patient's health care wishes.

## California Health Care Decisions Week is October 25 – 31

Use this opportunity to discuss AHCDs with your patients and clients. You can download the easy-to-read California forms (shown below) in English or Spanish\* from the Alliance website at [www.ccah-alliance.org](http://www.ccah-alliance.org). Just click on "Providers," then "Download Alliance Forms," and scroll down to the "Health Services Department" section.



**California Advance Health Care Directive**


This form lets you have a say about how you want to be treated if you get very sick.

**Part 1: Choose a health care agent.**  
A health care agent is a person who can make medical decisions for you if you are too sick to make them yourself.

**Part 2: Make your own health care choices.**  
This form lets you choose the kind of health care you want. This way, those who care for you will not have to guess what you want if you are too sick to tell them yourself.

**Part 3: Sign the form.**  
It must be signed before it can be used.

You can fill out Part 1, Part 2, or both. Fill out **only** the parts you want. Always sign the form in Part 3.

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\* For information about bulk orders or Advance Health Care Directives in Hmong, Chinese, or Vietnamese, please contact Lynn Meier, Senior Health Educator, at (831) 430-5570 or [lmeier@ccah-alliance.org](mailto:lmeier@ccah-alliance.org).

# Cultural Crossroads

*Tips and Resources to Help You Communicate Better with Alliance Members*

## How to Access Free Interpreter Services for Alliance Members

### Interpreter Services

#### • **Telephone Interpreting Services**

The Alliance provides telephone interpreter services for Alliance members with limited English proficiency. Providers may access Language Line Services 24 hours a day for immediate access to an interpreter.

1. **Dial:** 1-800-523-1786
2. **Give information:**
  - **Client ID number:** 501115
  - **Organization name:** Central California Alliance for Health
  - Language needed
  - Caller's first name
  - Physician's last name, first name, and city
3. **An interpreter will be connected to the call.**

#### • **Face-To-Face Interpreting Services**

The Alliance provides face-to-face interpreters under special circumstances:

- **Services for hearing impaired members**
- **End of life issues**
- **Abuse or sexual assault issues**
- **Complex courses of therapy or procedures**

Prior authorization via phone is required. To request a face-to-face interpreter, contact the Alliance Transportation and Language Coordinator at **1-800-700-3874 x5625**.



### Services for the Hearing Impaired

- **Members** who are hearing impaired may contact the Alliance on our **TDD Line** at **1-877-548-0857**.
- **Providers** may use the free **California Relay Service** at **1-800-735-2922** to communicate with a hearing-impaired member via phone. For office visits, follow the instructions above to request a sign language interpreter.

### **Tips for Working with Interpreters**

These tips will help you when working with face-to-face interpreters, as well as telephone interpreters:

- Allow some extra time for the visit if you know an interpreter will be needed.
- Introduce the patient and brief the interpreter about the type of visit or service. Summarize what you wish to accomplish and any special instructions.
- When communicating with the patient, speak directly to the patient, not to the interpreter.
- Frequently ask the patient if he or she has any questions.
- Avoid jargon or technical terms.

For more tips on working with interpreters, or questions about Alliance Cultural & Linguistic Services, please contact Lynn Meier, Senior Health Educator, at [lmeier@ccah-alliance.org](mailto:lmeier@ccah-alliance.org) or (831) 430-5570.

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**Upcoming Meetings**

**Managed Medical Care Commission Meetings**  
October 28, 2009                      December 2, 2009

All Managed Medical Care Commission meetings are open to the public. Contact the Clerk of the Board at (831) 430-5602 for meeting location or cancellation information.

**Physicians Advisory Group**  
Next meeting date is December 9, 2009, 6:30 - 8:30 pm, at Green Valley Grill, 40 Penny Lane, Watsonville.

**Santa Cruz County Member Services Advisory Group**  
Next meeting date is November 17, 2009, 10 am-12 pm, at 75 Nielson Street, Watsonville.

**Monterey County Member Services Advisory Group**  
Next meeting date is December 9, 2009, 12 pm-1:30 pm, at the Alliance Salinas Office; 339 Pajaro Street, Suite. E, Salinas.

**Alliance Holiday Office Hours**  
Central California Alliance for Health will be closed to observe the following holidays:

Veteran’s Day – November 11, 2009  
Thanksgiving - November 26-27, 2009  
Christmas - December 24-25, 2009

