



County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY Public Health Division

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Press Release

For Immediate Release

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IMPORTANT MEDI-CAL PROGRAM CHANGES FOR DENTAL COVERAGE COMING IN 2026

With significant changes to federal Medicaid and state Medi-Cal access set to impact many vulnerable people over the coming two and a half years, Santa Cruz County Public Health Division's Local Oral Health Program is collaborating with Dientes Community Dental Care to educate the community on upcoming changes to dental benefits.

Starting July 1, 2026, new state and federal rules will change Medi-Cal coverage. Some members will lose full-scope dental benefits, but emergency dental care will still be available. This change only affects certain adults ages 19 and older who have an [unsatisfactory immigration status](#) (UIS). All children and individuals who are pregnant or postpartum within the UIS category are exempt.

"Taking care of your teeth is always important, but with upcoming Medi-Cal Dental cuts, it's more important than ever to see your dentist," said Dr. Sepideh Taghvaei, Executive VP of Operations at Dientes. "It is particularly important for adults who meet the unsatisfactory immigration status to see a dentist now and to complete all treatment plans as soon as possible before dental benefits end."

"Preventive dental care can help prevent health problems and unnecessary trips to the emergency room, benefiting both individuals and the community," said Connie Moreno-Peraza, Health Services Agency Director. "We encourage everyone to check their Medi-Cal enrollment or renewal options so their benefits do not end on July 1, 2026."

Beginning January 1, 2026, there will be an enrollment freeze, meaning individuals will not be able to apply for full-scope (non-emergency) Medi-Cal benefits, if an adult 21 years or older with an Unsatisfactory Immigration Status. **Those considered UIS should enroll in Medi-Cal as soon as possible to access their dental benefits before they end on July 1, 2026.**

Resources:

- To find a Medi-Cal Dental provider, visit: <https://smilecalifornia.org/find-a-dentist/> or call the Call the Customer Service Center at 1-800-322-6384 for assistance.
- Find local resources to access critical health care or social safety net services at santacruzcountyca.gov/sanctuary.
- [What Medi-Cal Members Need to Know](#) | California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)
- Free, confidential support for your Medi-Cal enrollment questions: [Santa Cruz County Employment and Benefits Services Division](#). 1-888-421-8080.