

LATEST HEADLINES

Guest Commentary | Key Medi-Cal enrollment changes on horizon. Here's what to know

By **SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL**

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By Monica Martinez and Felipe Hernandez

Recent state and federal changes are bringing important updates to Medi-Cal, which provides health care coverage for 31% of Santa Cruz County residents, more than 80,000 people. Some of these changes are coming soon, and it is important that we act now as a community.

First, if you are an undocumented adult who is not yet enrolled in Medi-Cal, you must apply before Jan. 1, 2026, to keep full benefits after that date. This includes medical, behavioral health and dental coverage. As long as you stay enrolled, your benefits will continue. If you do not enroll by Jan. 1, 2026, you will only receive emergency and pregnancy-related care. Coverage for children will stay the same

Second, all Medi-Cal members, especially adults, should schedule dental visits now and finish any needed work before changes take effect. Starting July 1, 2026, undocumented adults will lose full dental benefits, though emergency dental care will still be covered. Appointments can take months to schedule, so we urge everyone to make a dental checkup as soon as possible.



It is important that we help as many people as possible keep their health care coverage. When more people are insured, hospitals and clinics have fewer unpaid medical bills. When those costs go down, premiums and rates for other patients stay more stable. A healthier, better insured community also helps keep our local health system strong for everyone who relies on it. Supporting access to care is part of building a community where all residents can stay healthy and thrive.

We understand that some residents may worry about sharing information with the government. These concerns are real. Each person and family must balance those concerns with their need for health care and their right to stay healthy.

For undocumented residents who do not yet have Medi-Cal, we encourage you to apply now. Call 888-421-8080 for free, confidential help with enrollment and questions.

All Medi-Cal members should review their coverage and make dental appointments soon, especially adults who may lose dental benefits. If you

For local help with health care, food, housing or other services, visit the county's resource page at santacruzcountyca.gov/sanctuary (or santacruzcountyca.gov/santuario for Spanish speakers). For help finding a Medi-Cal Dental provider, visit smilecalifornia.org/find-a-dentist or call 1-800-322-6384.

Together, we can help as many residents as possible get covered and stay covered. The health of our entire community depends on it.

Monica Martinez is a county supervisor representing the Fifth District and the former CEO of Encompass Community Services, a local safety net provider. Felipe Hernandez is a county supervisor representing the Fourth District, which covers much of South County and where residents would be disproportionately impacted by Medi-Cal enrollment.

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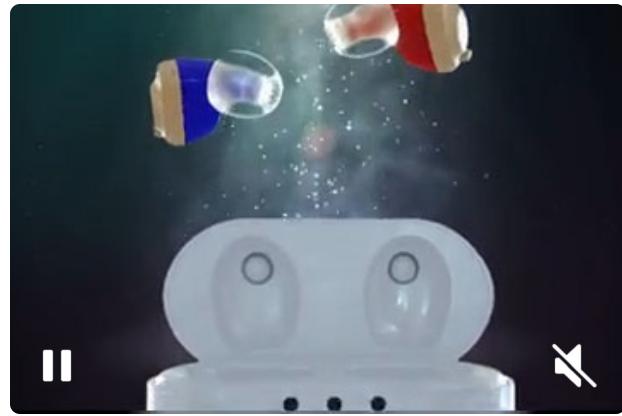
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