



California's protection & advocacy system

Consumer Information for Complaints about Health Care Professionals, Facilities, and Programs

June 2018, Pub # 5287.01

This publication may be helpful to you if you need information or have a complaint regarding health care providers, programs, facilities, or services you have received. We have listed the government agencies with specific responsibility for addressing complaints first. We have also included a list of some of the advocacy organizations and sources of information about your rights that may also be helpful.

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INTRODUCTION

Health and residential care in California is regulated by many different agencies. Below is a brief summary of the agencies which regulate health care services. People often use confusing acronyms or nicknames to identify these organizations so we have included them in **bold** also.

Most health-related professional services delivered by clinicians are regulated by the California Department of Consumer Affairs (**DCA**), and the licensing divisions or "**Boards**" pertaining to the type of service. These include the Board of Medical Examiners, the Board of Dentistry, the Board of Psychology, the Board of Behavioral Services, the Board of registered Nurses and others. Some of them are listed below. All of the types of professionals licensed by the Department of Consumer Affairs are listed on its website. [click here for DCA's website](#)

Hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes including subacute facilities are licensed and regulated by the California Department of Public Health (**CDPH**). General complaint information and links for specific complaints are found at [click here for CDPH's website](#)

The Community Care Licensing (**CCL**) Division of the California Department of Social Services (**CDSS**) licenses and regulates most residential, day and child care services. Residential care facilities include board and care homes, community care facilities (**CCFs**), residential care facilities for the elderly (**RCFE**) and assisted living facilities. [click here for CCLD's website](#)

Private or commercial managed care plans are regulated by the California Department of Managed Health Care (**DMHC**). [click here for DMHC's website](#)

Medi-Cal, Denti-Cal, and Mental Health care, whether managed care or fee-for-service, are regulated by the California Department of Health Care Services (**DHCS**). [click here for DHCS' website](#)

Many Medi-Cal managed care plans are licensed by DMHC and therefore the consumer protections available in private or commercial plans are also available to Medi-Cal beneficiaries.

There are no DMHC licensed plans under Denti-Cal, county Mental Health Medi-Cal Managed Care, and, except for the San Mateo county health plan, County Operated Health Systems (COHS) covering Medi-Cal recipients in the following counties: Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Marin, Mendocino, Merced, Modoc, Monterey, Napa, Orange, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbra, Sa

Several agencies such as the Department of Health Care Services (**DHCS**) and the California Department of Public Health (**DPH**) have an “**Ombudsman**” office which is an office assigned to answer consumer questions and to resolve complaints. In addition, there is an independent **long-term care Ombudsman** program to help persons in nursing and other health facilities and in residential care facilities.

Private health insurance plans not involving managed care, including many Preferred Provider Organizations or PPOs and some other insurance plans, are regulated by the California Department of Insurance (**CDI**). [click here for CDI's website](#)

Compliance with the consumer protections required under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is enforced by Covered California, the Department of Managed Health Care and the Department of Insurance. Examples of ACA consumer protections include covering children under a parent’s policy to age 26, elimination of lifetime cost caps, and coverage of preventive care without copay or deductible.

Medicare is regulated primarily by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (**CMS**) [click here for CMS' website](#)

Medicare Supplemental Insurance or MEDIGAP coverage is administered in California through the Department of Insurance (CDI). [click here for the MEDIGAP coverage page on CDI's website](#)

There are also other government agencies, advocacy organizations and other sources of consumer information for Californians about healthcare services, rights and complaints and other options.

Below are specific contacts for these and other agencies and some of the advocacy organizations and sources of information which you may find

useful if you have concerns about your health care. We have included most of the main websites as well as a link to the complaint departments. The complaint forms can be found on these websites and will be kept up-to-date by the agencies or organizations.

If you need assistance finding the appropriate reference online, don't have a computer or printer and need a hard copy of the complaint forms, or have other questions, please call the agency toll free number for information and help filing a complaint if that is what you decide to do.

You can also call Disability Rights California at 800-776-5746 about your health care services problems. There are usually multiple ways you may address a health care services problem as illustrated in the problem examples included at the end of the enclosed charts. For all TTY calls to DRC, dial 800-719-5798

HEALTH PLANS AND HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS

Managed Care Plans

Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC)

DMHC Help Center

888-466-2219

[DMHC's homepage](#)

[The 'File A Complaint' page on DMHC's website](#)

Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans

Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)

Medi-Cal Ombudsman

888-452-8609

Email MMCDOmbudsmanOffice@dhcs.ca.gov

[The 'MMCD Office of the Ombudsman' page of DHCS' website](#)

General information:

[The general MMCD page of DHCS' website](#)

Veterans Health and Attendant Care Benefits

Veteran's Administration (VA)

877-327-0022

800-877-8339 (TTY)

[VA's website](#)

CalVet for assistance in accessing both VA benefits and California veterans' benefits:

Local Cal Vet Service Officers: 844-737-8368

[The Local Cal Vet Service Officers webpage](#)

Find your local Disabled American Veterans (DAV):

[The 'Find Your Local Office' page of the DAV website](#)

Paralyzed Veterans of America

Benefits Helpline: 866-734-0857; TTY 800-795-4327

Medical Services Healthcare Helpline: 800-232-1782

[The 'Veterans Benefits' page of the Paralyzed Veterans of America website](#)

Veteran Aid Organization: 1-866-584-7191

Help in applying for Aid & Attendance and other benefits: [The 'Apply' page of the Veteran Aid Organization website](#)

Medi-Cal Eligibility and complaints at County Level

Department of Social Services (CDSS)

916-636-1980

Medi-Cal Eligibility

[The Medi-Cal Eligibility Contacts page on the DHCS website](#)

Contact County Dept. of Social or Human Services - see link for local numbers

[The 'County Offices to Apply for Health Coverage, Medi-Cal, and Other Benefits' page of DHCS website](#)

Medicare

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (**CMS**)

877-267-2323

[The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services website](#)

Filing complaints about your Medicare health or drug plan:

[The 'Filing Complaints about your Health or Drug Plan' page on the Medicare website](#)

Medicare identified California resources:

[The 'Find Someone To Talk To' page on the Medicare website](#)

[The 'Appeals and Grievances' page of the CMS website](#)

Medicare, Medi-gap, Long Term Care

California Dept. of Aging
800-510-2020

[The 'Where to Call for Services' Page of the CA Department of Aging website](#)

California Dept. of Insurance re Medicare supplemental plans. Consumer Hotline 800-927-4357.

[The California Department of Insurance 'Guide to Medicare Supplement' website page](#)

Long-term Care Ombudsman Crisis Line
800-231-4024

Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Project (HICAP)
800-434-0222

[The 'HICAP' webpage on the California Health Advocates site](#)

Mental Health Care

California Department of Health Care Services
(DHCS)

Mental Health Ombudsman

800-896-4042

800-896-2512-TTY

Email: MHombudsman@dhcs.ca.gov

[The 'Mental Health Ombudsman's Services' page on DHCS' website](#)

Health Insurance

State Dept. of Insurance
California Insurance-Getting Help
800-927-4357

[The 'Getting Help' page of the CA Department of Insurance website](#)

[The CA Department of Insurance 'Consumer Complaint Center' log-in page](#)

HOSPITALS, NURSING HOMES, RESIDENTIAL AND OTHER
INSTITUTIONS, FACILITIES & SERVICES

**Hospitals, Medical Clinics, Home Health Agencies, Home Health
Aides, Nursing Assistants, Nursing Homes**

California Dept. Of Public Health (DPH)
Licensing and Certification Program
Health Facilities/Consumer Information Systems
916-552-8700
800-236-9747

General Licensing Information: [The 'Licensing and Certification Program' page on CA Department of Public Health's website](#)

Complaint filing information: [The 'Complaint Against a Health Facility/Provider' page on CA Department of Public Health's website](#)

In addition to State Licensing, many health facilities and providers are also accredited and certified by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations - JCAHO. [The Joint Commision 'About' webpage](#)

Report about a patient safety event or concern about a health care organization: ['Report a Patient Safety Event' Complaint page on The Joint Commission site](#)

Go here to check on a health care organization's accreditation and certification status: [The Quality Check website](#)
630-792-5800

Cemeteries and Funeral Establishments

Dept. of Consumer Affairs (DCA)
Cemetery and Funeral Bureau
800 - 952 - 5210
(916) 574-7870

['Complaints' page on the Department of Consumer Affairs Cemetary and Funeral Bureau site](#)

Long Term Care/ Nursing Homes

See *above* about filing a licensing complaint or a complaint with The Joint Commission.

Long-term Care Ombudsman

800 – 231 – 4024

[The 'Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program' page on CA Department of Aging website](#)

Pharmacy

Dept. of Consumer Affairs (DCA)

CA State Board of Pharmacy

Consumer inquiries or about filing a complaint: 916–574–7900

Filing a complaint against a pharmacy: ['Filing a Complaint' on the CA State Board of Pharmacy website](#)

If you run into a problem with a local pharmacy that is part of a chain, call the chain headquarters.

In Medi-Cal cases, almost any drug that is medically necessary can be covered with plan or Medi-Cal authorization if not on the formulary of drugs covered without prior authorization. If you are told that “Medi-Cal does not cover” a prescribed drug, that is usually incorrect. Ask for help from your doctor and the pharmacy to get authorization.

Community Care Facilities, Child Care, Residential homes Adult Day Care

California Dept. of Social Services (CDSS)

[CA Department of Social Services website](#)

Community Care Licensing Division (CCL)

844–LET US NO

844–538–8766

cclid.ca.gov/

[The 'Community Care Licensing Division' page on the CDSS site](#)

CLINICIANS AND LICENSED HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

**Counselors –Marriage/Family/Child Counselors /Therapists (LMFT/),
Clinical Social Workers (LCSW), etc.**

California Dept. of Consumer Affairs (DCA)

Board of Behavioral Sciences

916–574–7830

916–445–4933

[The CA Board of Behavioral Sciences website](#)

[The 'Consumer Complaints' page on the BBS website](#)

**Doctors, Physician Assistants (PAs) and
Other Medical Assistants and Health Personnel**

Medical Board of California

800– 633–2322

916–263–2424

[The Medical Board of California's website](#)

[The 'Consumer Information' page on the CA Medical Board website](#)

Optometry

Dept. of Consumer Affairs (DCA)

CA State Board of Optometry

optometry@dca.ca.gov

916–575-7170

866–585–2666

[The CA State Board of Optometry website](#)

[The Complaints page on the CA Department of Consumer Affairs BreEZe
Online Services](#)

Psychologists (PhD, PsyD) and Psychological Assistants

Dept. of Consumer Affairs (DCA)

California Board of Psychology

866 – 503 -3221

[The DCA Board of Psychology website](#)

['Filing a Complaint' webpage on the DCA Board of Psychology site](#)

Regional Centers and Regional Center Vendors

Department of Developmental Services (DDS)

General Information: 916-654-1690

Hearing Impaired: 916-654-2054

[The DDS website](#)

Find your local regional center at

[The 'Regional Centers Directory' on the DDS website](#)

Registered Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, Nurse Midwives , etc.

Board of Registered Nurses (BRN)

(916) 322-3350

TTY: (800) 326-2297

[California Board of Registered Nursing website](#)

['The Complaint Process' page on CA BRN website](#)

Speech Pathologists (SPL)

California Dept. of Consumer Affairs (DCA)

Speech Language Pathology & Audiology & Hearing Aid Dispensers Board

916-263-2666

[The DCA Speech Language Pathology & Audiology & Hearing Aid
Dispensers Board website](#)

['Complaint Process' page of the DCA Speech and Hearing Board website](#)

Vocational Nurses and Psychiatric Technicians

California Dept. of Consumer Affairs (DCA)

Board of Vocational Nurses and Psychiatric Technicians

916-263-7827

[The DCA Board of Vocational Nurses and Psychiatric Technicians website](#)

Filing a complaint against a LVN or PT:

['How to File a Complaint' page on the BVNPT website](#)

Dentists (DDS)

California Dept. of Consumer Affairs (DCA)

Board of Dental Examiners

916-263-2300

[The DCA Dental Board of California website](#)

Consumer complaints:

[The Dental Board of CA's 'Consumer Complaint Form' PDF document](#)

ADVOCACY, ADVICE, AND INFORMATION

Advocacy, Legal Counseling, and &/or Legal Referrals

Disability Rights California (**DRC**)

800-776-5746

[Disability Rights California website.](#)

On banner across the top, click on “Publications” for information on Medical and health care rights among other topics.

DRC’s Office of Clients’ Rights Advocacy (**OCRA**)

Provides free legal information, advice and representation to regional center clients: [The Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy page on the DRC website](#)

LawHelp.org

[The LawHelpCA website](#)

An interactive website of The California State Bar and Legal Aid Association of California that identifies legal assistance or advice options by geographic area and subject matter.

Legal Aid Association of California

[The Legal Aid Association of California website;](#)

On the right side of the website under “select a region,” click on a region for a list of legal services programs in that area.

Health Consumer Alliance – help to consumers on Medi-Cal, Covered California health plans, and more

[The Health Consumer Alliance website](#) – Click on “local help centers” for your local HCA contact information.

Click on “publications” for HCA’s excellent written materials

HCA Consumer Hotline
888–804–3536

Medicare Advocacy

California Health Advocates

Call HICAP for an individual appointment:

800–434-0222

HiCAP offices by county: <http://cahealthadvocates.org/hicap/>

Consumer information:

[California Health Advocates' 'Medicare Basics' webpage](#)

Nursing Homes

California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform (CANHR)

916 – 322 – 3350

[The CANHR website](#)

Website information on Medicare, Medicaid, veterans, elder law and elder abuse and referrals to private attorneys for reduced rate initial consultations

Western Center on Law & Poverty -

[Western Center on Law & Poverty's website](#)

[The '2016 Health Care Eligibility Guide' page on the WCLP website](#)

Back-up center that does not provide direct representation or consumer advice; website a good source of information including 2016 advocates manual “Getting and Keeping Health Care Coverage for Low-Income Californians.”

National Health Law Program - NHeLP

[The NHeLP website](#) – under issues, click on California and then search for “Medi-Cal.”

Back-up center that does not provide direct representation or consumer advice; website a good source of information

Justice in Aging

[The Justice in Aging website](#)

Backup center that does not provide direct representation or consumer advice but is good source of materials about addressing common problems in nursing homes:

[Justice in Aging's '20 Common Nursing Home Problems and How to Resolve Them' page](#)

Medicare Rights Center -

About National Helpline 800-333-4114

[The 'Contact Us' page on the Medicare Rights Center site](#)

[The Medicare Rights Center website](#)

Check out the website’s online “Medicare Interactive” online reference tool.

Website a source of information plus a multi-lingual helpline for consumers.

Family Care Givers Caring for Brain Impaired Adults

Re: Care Giver Resource Center:

800 – 445 – 8106

[The 'California's Caregiver Resource Centers' page on the Family Caregiver Alliance website](#)

[The 'Contact' page of the Family Caregiver Alliance - National Center on Caregiving website](#)

Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders

Alzheimer’s Assoc. chapters

[The Alzheimer's Association website](#)

800-272-3900 – national

[The 'Alzheimer's Disease Program' page on the CA Department of Public Health website](#)

800-660-1993—to locate a local chapter

Links to California Chapters:

[The 'In My Community' search page on Alzheimer's Association website](#)

[The 'Alzheimer's Association Chapters' webpage](#)

Civil Rights

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (**HHS**)

Office of Civil Rights

800 – 368 – 1019

[The HHS Office of Civil Rights website](#)

['Filing a Civil Rights Complaint' page on the HHS Office of Civil Rights website](#)

In addition, each county has an office of civil rights, when you call the county, ask for that unit.

If you are dissatisfied with the results of a civil rights complaint filed with the county, and the complaint is about a state and/or federal program overseen by either the Department of Health Care Services or the Department of Social Services you can appeal the complaint filed with the county to DSS or DHCS.

Department of Health Care Services'

Office of Civil Rights – 916-440-7370

[The CA Department of Health Care Services' "DHCS Language Access Discrimination Complaint Process" PDF document](#)

Department of Social Services'

Office of Civil Rights – 916-654-2098

[The HHS Department of Social Services' "Your Rights: Under California Welfare Programs" pamphlet PDF](#)

Or you can file a complaint initially with either state department.

Fire Safety Laws

Office of State Fire Marshall

916-445-8200

[The Office of the State Fire Marshal website](#)

Medi-Cal Fraud

Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)

800-822-6222

[DHCS' website's 'Stop Medi-Cal Fraud' page](#)

California Attorney General (CAG)

800-722-0432

['Medi-Cal Fraud' page on the CA Department of Justice Office of the Attorney General website](#)

Medicare/Medicaid Fraud

US Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Office of Inspector General

800-700-5952

[The Office of Inspector General HHS website](#)

HIV

AIDS Hotline

800 - 367 - 2437

['State HIV/AIDS Hotlines' information page on the Health Resources & Services Administration website](#)

Social Security

Social Security Administration (SSA)

800-772-1213

[The 'Contact Social Security' page on the SSA website](#)

We want to hear from you! Please complete the following survey about our publications and let us know how we are doing! [\[Take the Survey\]](#)

For legal assistance call 800-776-5746 or complete a [request for assistance form](#). For all other purposes call 916-504-5800 (Northern CA); 213-213-8000 (Southern CA).

Disability Rights California is funded by a variety of sources, for a complete list of funders, go to [The 'List of Funding Grants and Contracts' page on the DRC website](#).