

Assembly Bill No. 1580

CHAPTER 856

An act to amend Section 15926 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to public health.

[Approved by Governor September 30, 2012. Filed with
Secretary of State September 30, 2012.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1580, Bonilla. Health care: eligibility: enrollment.

Existing law provides for various programs to provide health care coverage to persons with limited financial resources, including the Medi-Cal program and the Healthy Families Program. Existing law establishes the California Health Benefit Exchange (Exchange), pursuant to the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), and specifies the duties and powers of the board governing the Exchange relative to determining eligibility for enrollment in the Exchange and arranging for coverage under qualified health plans, and facilitating the purchase of qualified health plans through the Exchange. Existing law, the Health Care Reform Eligibility, Enrollment, and Retention Planning Act, operative as provided, requires the State Department of Health Care Services, in consultation with specified entities, to establish standardized single, accessible application forms and related renewal procedures for state health subsidy programs, as defined, in accordance with specified requirements. Existing law provides that the application or case of an individual screened as not eligible for Medi-Cal on the basis of household income but who may be eligible for Medi-Cal on another basis shall be forwarded to the Medi-Cal program for an eligibility determination.

This bill would make technical and clarifying changes to these provisions.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 15926 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

15926. (a) The following definitions apply for purposes of this part:

(1) "Accessible" means in compliance with Section 11135 of the Government Code, Section 1557 of the PPACA, and regulations or guidance adopted pursuant to these statutes.

(2) "Limited-English-proficient" means not speaking English as one's primary language and having a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

(3) “State health subsidy programs” means the programs described in Section 1413(e) of the PPACA.

(b) An individual shall have the option to apply for state health subsidy programs in person, by mail, online, by telephone, or by other commonly available electronic means.

(c) (1) A single, accessible, standardized paper, electronic, and telephone application for state health subsidy programs shall be developed by the department in consultation with MRMIB and the board governing the Exchange as part of the stakeholder process described in subdivision (b) of Section 15925. The application shall be used by all entities authorized to make an eligibility determination for any of the state health subsidy programs and by their agents.

(2) The application shall be tested and operational by the date as required by the federal Secretary of Health and Human Services.

(3) The application form shall, to the extent not inconsistent with federal statutes, regulations, and guidance, satisfy all of the following criteria:

(A) The form shall include simple, user-friendly language and instructions.

(B) The form may not ask for information related to a nonapplicant that is not necessary to determine eligibility in the applicant’s particular circumstances.

(C) The form may require only information necessary to support the eligibility and enrollment processes for state health subsidy programs.

(D) The form may be used for, but shall not be limited to, screening.

(E) The form may ask, or be used otherwise to identify, if the mother of an infant applicant under one year of age had coverage through a state health subsidy program for the infant’s birth, for the purpose of automatically enrolling the infant into the applicable program without the family having to complete the application process for the infant.

(F) The form may include questions that are voluntary for applicants to answer regarding demographic data categories, including race, ethnicity, primary language, disability status, and other categories recognized by the federal Secretary of Health and Human Services under Section 4302 of the PPACA.

(d) Nothing in this section shall preclude the use of a provider-based application form or enrollment procedures for state health subsidy programs or other health programs that differs from the application form described in subdivision (c), and related enrollment procedures.

(e) The entity making the eligibility determination shall grant eligibility immediately whenever possible and with the consent of the applicant in accordance with the state and federal rules governing state health subsidy programs.

(f) (1) If the eligibility, enrollment, and retention system has the ability to prepopulate an application form for insurance affordability programs with personal information from available electronic databases, an applicant shall be given the option, with his or her informed consent, to have the application form prepopulated. Before a prepopulated renewal form or, if

available, prepopulated application is submitted to the entity authorized to make eligibility determinations, the individual shall be given the opportunity to provide additional eligibility information and to correct any information retrieved from a database.

(2) All state health subsidy programs may accept self-attestation, instead of requiring an individual to produce a document, with respect to all information needed to determine the eligibility of an applicant or recipient, to the extent permitted by state and federal law.

(3) An applicant or recipient shall have his or her information electronically verified in the manner required by the PPACA and implementing federal regulations and guidance.

(4) Before an eligibility determination is made, the individual shall be given the opportunity to provide additional eligibility information and to correct information.

(5) The eligibility of an applicant shall not be delayed or denied for any state health subsidy program unless the applicant is given a reasonable opportunity, of at least the kind provided for under the Medi-Cal program pursuant to Section 14007.5 and paragraph (7) of subdivision (e) of Section 14011.2, to resolve discrepancies concerning any information provided by a verifying entity.

(6) To the extent federal financial participation is available, an applicant shall be provided benefits in accordance with the rules of the state health subsidy program, as implemented in federal regulations and guidance, for which he or she otherwise qualifies until a determination is made that he or she is not eligible and all applicable notices have been provided. Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to grant presumptive eligibility if it is not otherwise required by state law, and, if so required, then only to the extent permitted by federal law.

(g) The eligibility, enrollment, and retention system shall offer an applicant and recipient assistance with his or her application or renewal for a state health subsidy program in person, over the telephone, and online, and in a manner that is accessible to individuals with disabilities and those who are limited English proficient.

(h) (1) During the processing of an application, renewal, or a transition due to a change in circumstances, an entity making eligibility determinations for a state health subsidy program shall ensure that an eligible applicant and recipient of state health subsidy programs that meets all program eligibility requirements and complies with all necessary requests for information moves between programs without any breaks in coverage and without being required to provide any forms, documents, or other information or undergo verification that is duplicative or otherwise unnecessary. The individual shall be informed about how to obtain information about the status of his or her application, renewal, or transfer to another program at any time, and the information shall be promptly provided when requested.

(2) The application or case of an individual screened as not eligible for Medi-Cal on the basis of Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) household income but who may be eligible on the basis of being 65 years

of age or older, or on the basis of blindness or disability, shall be forwarded to the Medi-Cal program for an eligibility determination. During the period this application or case is processed for a non-MAGI Medi-Cal eligibility determination, if the applicant or recipient is otherwise eligible for a state health subsidy program, he or she shall be determined eligible for that program.

(3) Renewal procedures shall include all available methods for reporting renewal information, including, but not limited to, face-to-face, telephone, and online renewal.

(4) An applicant who is not eligible for a state health subsidy program for a reason other than income eligibility, or for any reason in the case of applicants and recipients residing in a county that offers a health coverage program for individuals with income above the maximum allowed for the Exchange premium tax credits, shall be referred to the county health coverage program in his or her county of residence.

(i) Notwithstanding subdivisions (e), (f), and (j), before an online applicant who appears to be eligible for the Exchange with a premium tax credit or reduction in cost sharing, or both, may be enrolled in the Exchange, both of the following shall occur:

(1) The applicant shall be informed of the overpayment penalties under the federal Comprehensive 1099 Taxpayer Protection and Repayment of Exchange Subsidy Overpayments Act of 2011 (Public Law 112-9), if the individual's annual family income increases by a specified amount or more, calculated on the basis of the individual's current family size and current income, and that penalties are avoided by prompt reporting of income increases throughout the year.

(2) The applicant shall be informed of the penalty for failure to have minimum essential health coverage.

(j) The department shall, in coordination with MRMIB and the Exchange board, streamline and coordinate all eligibility rules and requirements among state health subsidy programs using the least restrictive rules and requirements permitted by federal and state law. This process shall include the consideration of methodologies for determining income levels, assets, rules for household size, citizenship and immigration status, and self-attestation and verification requirements.

(k) (1) Forms and notices developed pursuant to this section shall be accessible and standardized, as appropriate, and shall comply with federal and state laws, regulations, and guidance prohibiting discrimination.

(2) Forms and notices developed pursuant to this section shall be developed using plain language and shall be provided in a manner that affords meaningful access to limited-English-proficient individuals, in accordance with applicable state and federal law, and at a minimum, provided in the same threshold languages as required for Medi-Cal managed care plans.

(l) The department, the California Health and Human Services Agency, MRMIB, and the Exchange board shall establish a process for receiving and acting on stakeholder suggestions regarding the functionality of the

eligibility systems supporting the Exchange, including the activities of all entities providing eligibility screening to ensure the correct eligibility rules and requirements are being used. This process shall include consumers and their advocates, be conducted no less than quarterly, and include the recording, review, and analysis of potential defects or enhancements of the eligibility systems. The process shall also include regular updates on the work to analyze, prioritize, and implement corrections to confirmed defects and proposed enhancements, and to monitor screening.

(m) In designing and implementing the eligibility, enrollment, and retention system, the department, MRMIB, and the Exchange board shall ensure that all privacy and confidentiality rights under the PPACA and other federal and state laws are incorporated and followed, including responses to security breaches.

(n) Except as otherwise specified, this section shall be operative on and after January 1, 2014.