



Coveredtil26 Toolkit

# Medi-Cal Coverage until Age 26 for Former Foster Youth

June 2014



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## Background

Each year, over 20,000 youth age out of foster care in the United States. In California alone, that number is between 2,700 and 5,000 each year. These vulnerable youth too often lack adequate supports to navigate the transition to adulthood successfully. For example, they are much less likely than their peers to have health insurance, but tend to have more health care needs due to abuse, neglect, or trauma experienced during childhood. The Congressional Research Service reports that between 35 and 60 percent of youth who enter foster care have at least one chronic or acute physical health condition that needs treatment, and that the significant physical and mental health issues faced by foster children often continue into adulthood.<sup>1</sup>

Now, thanks to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), states are required to provide youth who age out of foster care with health coverage until the age of 26. This extension of coverage to age 26 fills a critical need for former foster youth who do not have the same option as their peers to stay on a parent's insurance plan.

While the ACA provision extending health coverage for former foster youth took effect on January 1, 2014, young adults, organizations, and county agencies are still learning about this exciting new opportunity for coverage. To raise awareness about the Medi-Cal extension for former foster youth, Children Now has developed this toolkit which provides sample language and tools for outreach to a variety of audiences, including former foster youth.

Please join us in making sure all former foster youth in California get the health care coverage they need and deserve.

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## About Us

Children Now is the leading, nonpartisan, umbrella research, policy development, and advocacy organization dedicated to promoting children's health and education in California and creating national media policies that support child development. The organization also leads The Children's Movement of California.

The Coveredtil26 campaign is funded by a grant from The California Wellness Foundation (TCWF). Created in 1992 as a private independent foundation, TCWF's mission is to improve the health of the people of California by making grants for health promotion, wellness education, and disease prevention.

<sup>1</sup>Baumrucker, Evelyne p., Adrienne L. Fernandes-Alcanatara, Emilie Stoltzfus, and Bernadette Fernandez. Child Welfare: Health Care Needs of Children in Foster Care and Related Federal Issues. Congressional Research Service, July 2012. Available at: [http://greenbook.waysandmeans.house.gov/sites/greenbook.waysandmeans.house.gov/files/2012/documents/R42378\\_gb\\_0.pdf](http://greenbook.waysandmeans.house.gov/sites/greenbook.waysandmeans.house.gov/files/2012/documents/R42378_gb_0.pdf)



## Sample Website Content

### General Audiences

Former foster youth in CA are now eligible for Medi-Cal coverage until age 26

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), youth who were in foster care at age 18 or older qualify for free health care until age 26. Former foster youth living in California are covered under the Medi-Cal program. Prior to the ACA, Medi-Cal coverage for this vulnerable population ended at age 21. The ACA's extension of coverage fills a critical need for former foster youth who do not have the same option as their peers to stay on a parent's insurance plan until age 26.

Former foster youth are eligible for Medi-Cal coverage until age 26 if they:

- Were in foster care in any state at age 18 or older;
- Currently live in California; and
- Are under the age of 26.

Former foster youth qualify for Medi-Cal regardless of income.

Help spread the word about this new and exciting opportunity for coverage!

Youth "aging out" of foster care after January 1, 2014 should be automatically enrolled in the Medi-Cal program for former foster youth upon emancipation, with no new application needed. Former foster youth not currently enrolled in Medi-Cal can sign up using a simple, [one-page form](#). Once enrolled in Medi-Cal, former foster youth stay covered until age 26 with no need to reapply each year. To find out more, visit [www.coveredtil26.org](http://www.coveredtil26.org).

### For Youth

New Law Gives Former Foster Youth FREE Health Care until age 26

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, you get free Medi-Cal coverage in California if you were in foster care at age 18 or older in any state. Having Medi-Cal coverage until age 26 means you can save your money for school, rent, food, and other things you need.

You qualify if you:

- Were in foster care in ANY state at age 18 or older,
- Currently live in California, AND
- Are under the age of 26.

As a former foster youth, you qualify for Medi-Cal no matter how much money you make.

If you "age out" of foster care after January 1, 2014, you should be automatically enrolled in the Medi-Cal program for former foster youth when you emancipate. You do not need to reapply and will stay covered until you turn 26. If you previously aged out of foster care and are not yet enrolled in the Medi-Cal program for former foster youth, you can sign up using a simple, [one-page form](#). To learn how you can sign up, visit: [www.coveredtil26.org](http://www.coveredtil26.org).



## Sample Newsletter Content

### General Audiences

#### Title: **Former foster youth living in CA are now eligible for Medi-Cal coverage until age 26**

Each year, over 20,000 youth age out of the foster care system in the U.S. Between 2,700 and 5,000 youth do so in California alone. These vulnerable youth too often lack adequate supports to navigate the transition to adulthood successfully. For example, they are much less likely than their peers to have health insurance, but tend to have more health care needs due to trauma experienced during childhood.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, youth who were in foster care at age 18 or older now qualify for health care until they turn 26. Previously, Medi-Cal coverage for former foster youth ended at age 21. The ACA's extension of coverage to age 26 fills a critical need for former foster youth who haven't had the same option as their peers to stay on a parent's insurance plan.

Help educate youth about this new and exciting opportunity for coverage! Once enrolled in Medi-Cal, former foster youth stay covered until age 26. Youth "aging out" of foster care after January 1, 2014, should be automatically enrolled in the Medi-Cal program for former foster youth upon emancipation, with no new application needed. Former foster youth not currently enrolled in Medi-Cal can sign up using a simple, [one-page form](#). Once enrolled in Medi-Cal, former foster youth stay covered until age 26 with no need to reapply each year. To find out more, visit [www.coveredtil26.org](http://www.coveredtil26.org).

### For Youth

#### Title: **New Law Gives Former Foster Youth FREE Health Care until age 26**

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, you can get FREE Medi-Cal coverage if you were in foster care in any state at age 18 or older. Having Medi-Cal until age 26 means you can save your money for school, rent, food, and other things you need.

You qualify for Medi-Cal coverage for former foster youth if you:

- Were in foster care in ANY state at age 18 or older;
- Currently live in California; and
- Are under the age of 26.

As a former foster youth, you get Medi-Cal no matter how much money your make. If you "age out" of foster care after January 1, 2014, you should be automatically enrolled in the Medi-Cal program for former foster youth when you emancipate. You do not need to reapply and will stay covered until you turn 26. If you previously aged out of foster care and are not yet enrolled in the Medi-Cal program for former foster youth, you can sign up using a simple, [one-page form](#). Be sure to say you are a former foster youth when you go to sign up to get all of the advantages of Medi-Cal for former foster youth. For more sign-up tips and answers to frequently asked questions, visit: [www.coveredtil26.org](http://www.coveredtil26.org).



## Sample Letter to the Editor

You have likely read an article recently in your local newspaper about new health coverage benefits available to Californians as a result of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Every article or publication you come across that discusses the ACA and health coverage benefits for Californians creates an opportunity for you to highlight and spread the word about Medi-Cal coverage up to age 26 for former foster youth. Here are some tips and a sample Letter to the Editor (LTE) to help you spread the word about Medi-Cal for former foster youth in your community.

### Tips\*

- **Refer to a recent story.** Whenever possible, reference a recent article when writing your LTE. Because information about the extension of Medi-Cal for former foster youth is still getting out, you can refer to any article that is focused on the ACA more broadly or one that is focused on a specific event/convening regarding the ACA when writing your LTE. Submitting an LTE soon after an article is published will increase the chances of your letter being published (e.g. response to an article published within the last week).
- **Be brief and concise.** Letters to the Editor tend to have word limits that can vary between 150-250 words. Make sure your letter is brief and concise to increase the probability of it being published.
- **Provide contact information.** Provide your contact information (e.g. name, address, phone number, etc.) when submitting an LTE so staff at the newspaper can contact you if necessary. Do not worry, the newspaper will only publish your name and hometown, not your complete personal information.

### Sample for you to personalize

[Name of Article and Publish Date] shows that millions of Californians are benefiting directly from new coverage available as a result of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Thanks to the ACA, former foster youth now qualify for Medi-Cal coverage until age 26. Each year in our state, between 2,700 and 5,000 youth age out of foster care. These youth too often lack adequate supports to make the transition to adulthood successfully. The extension of Medi-Cal coverage until age 26 fills a critical need for former foster youth who haven't had the same option as their peers to stay on a parent's insurance plan. Community members can help spread the word about this exciting new opportunity for former foster youth. Visit [www.coveredtil26.org](http://www.coveredtil26.org) for more information. [137 words]

\* Letter to the Editor tips adapted from the American Public Health Association's 2013 PHACT Toolkit available at <http://www.apha.org/NR/rdonlyres/01FA79D6-5C17-4312-9A5C-783B2CC14A0E/0/PHACTtoolkit2013.pdf>



## Sample Social Media Content

There are many social media channels you can use to spread the work about Medi-Cal coverage for former foster youth. We have provided sample posts for Facebook and Twitter channels, but this content can be repurposed to post on Google +, Pinterest, Instagram and other social channels.



### Facebook

- In California between 2,700 and 5,000 youth age out of foster care every year. Help spread the word about Medi-Cal coverage for former foster youth! Visit [www.coveredtil26.org](http://www.coveredtil26.org).
- Former foster youth in CA are now eligible for Medi-Cal coverage until age 26. Youth can sign-up using a simple one-page form. Visit [www.coveredtil26.org](http://www.coveredtil26.org) to learn more.
- When getting health care isn't a worry, you can focus on school, work, friends and the other building blocks of a great adult life. Medi-Cal for former foster youth has you covered til 26. Find out more here: [www.coveredtil26.org](http://www.coveredtil26.org)
- Former foster youth are significantly less likely than their peers to have health insurance and often have greater health care needs because of trauma experienced during childhood. In CA, former foster youth are now eligible for Medi-Cal until age 26. Help spread the word about Medi-Cal coverage for former foster youth, visit: [www.coveredtil26.org](http://www.coveredtil26.org)



### Twitter

- If you were in foster care in any state at age 18, you can get #Medi-Cal until age 26. One less worry! [www.coveredtil26.org](http://www.coveredtil26.org) #Coveredtil26
- Former #fosteryouth now qualify for #Medi-Cal coverage until age 26. Learn more here: [www.coveredtil26.org](http://www.coveredtil26.org) #Coveredtil26
- Former #fosteryouth can sign-up for #Medi-Cal using a simple one-page form. Get #Coveredtil26 [www.coveredtil26.org](http://www.coveredtil26.org)
- Your 20s are your first chance to build a life of your own. Don't let medical bills get in the way. [www.coveredtil26.org](http://www.coveredtil26.org) #Coveredtil26
- There's no open enrollment for #Medi-Cal for former #foster youth. Learn how you can sign-up [www.coveredtil26.org](http://www.coveredtil26.org) #Coveredtil26

## Coveredtil26.org Website Badge

Link to [www.coveredtil26.org](http://www.coveredtil26.org) from your website using the code file below. The badge image below will appear on your website and direct users to [www.coveredtil26.org](http://www.coveredtil26.org) when they click on the image.



### Code for Badge

```
<a href="http://coveredtil26.childrennow.org/" title="Covered til 26 - Health Care for Former Foster Youth" target="_blank"></a>
```



## Other Resources

(For the most up-to-date resources, visit [www.coveredtil26.org](http://www.coveredtil26.org))

### Free Coveredtil26 Outreach Materials

Download and print the Coveredtil26 factsheet and youth flyer at

<http://coveredtil26.childrennow.org/spread-the-word> (available in English and Spanish).

County specific youth flyers are also available for the following counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno, Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, San Francisco, San Joaquin, Santa Clara, and Solano.

### County contact list

Find out the best way to sign up for Medi-Cal for former foster youth in your county.

Visit: [http://www.childrennow.org/uploads/documents/Coveredtil26\\_CountyContactList.pdf](http://www.childrennow.org/uploads/documents/Coveredtil26_CountyContactList.pdf)

### Legal resources

Youth Law Center, the Health Consumer Alliance, and National Health Law Program have developed a list of programs that provide legal assistance for people having trouble getting Medi-Cal or other health care services. Available here: [http://www.childrennow.org/uploads/documents/MCFFY-County\\_Health\\_Advocates.pdf](http://www.childrennow.org/uploads/documents/MCFFY-County_Health_Advocates.pdf).

### Webinar

Medi-Cal coverage until age 26 for former foster youth presented by Children Now, the Youth Law Center, and the CA Department of Health Care Services.

- Webinar Recording: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1udL2WovV4&feature=youtu.be>
- Webinar Presentation: <http://www.childrennow.org/uploads/documents/Medi-Cal-Coverage-FFY.pdf>

### Public Service Announcements

California Youth Connection Public Service Announcements on Medi-Cal for former foster youth:

- Public Service Announcement #1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE655tAjIOg>
- Public Service Announcement #2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hJyxssXgWE>
- Public Service Announcement #3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BWYTVUt36k>
- Public Service Announcement #4: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUqwmS3u2Dc>
- Public Service Announcement #5: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDFxLwjnGJQ>

### State and County Resources

- **Medi-Cal MC 250A form:** The MC 250A is the one-page form youth can use to apply for coverage directly through the county. Access the MC 250A here: <http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/forms/Forms/mc250a2014.pdf>
- **Former Foster Care Children's Program (FFCC) Desk Aid:** View the guide sent by the County Welfare Directors Association to county workers with information on how to enroll former foster youth into Medi-Cal coverage. Available here: <http://coveredtil26.childrennow.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/FFCC-Desk-Aid-3.pdf>
- **Medi-Cal Eligibility Division Information Letter No. 14-05:** View state guidance issued to counties on the Medi-Cal for former foster youth program. Available here: <http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/eligibility/Documents/MEDIL2014/MEDILI14-05.pdf>