

MLRI Health Update: October 2019

Open Enrollment 2020: November 1, 2019 to January 23, 2020

In 2019 ConnectorCare was an important source of affordable health insurance for over 220,000 Massachusetts residents with incomes of 300% of poverty or less. The Health Connector is able to automatically renew about 69% of 2019 ConnectorCare members into continued ConnectorCare coverage for 2020.

About 26% will be losing their subsidies for 2020; however, in most cases the reason is missing income information. Many of these ConnectorCare members will be able to retain 2020 ConnectorCare coverage by just updating their income or supplying other missing information.

Open enrollment is also an important time for ConnectorCare members to compare plans and make sure they are enrolled in the best plan for them. And it is an opportunity for those who were found eligible in 2019 but missed the enrollment deadline to update their information and, if still qualified, sign up for ConnectorCare in 2020.

More information about Open Enrollment for 2020 including links to resources for individual assistance are posted here: <https://www.masslegalservices.org/content/open-enrollment-2020-connectorcare>

Other MassHealth Changes

- Elimination of copayments for smoking cessation products & drugs, Sept. 26, 2019 Eligibility Letter 234 amending 130 CMR 506.015(B)
- Three new affidavit forms that can be used when applicants or members are asked to verify zero income, Massachusetts residence or Incarceration status (not being incarcerated). The new affidavit forms are scribed in an October 2019 Provider Bulletin, and the forms themselves are the last three on the MassHealth member forms page: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/masshealth-member-forms>

2019 Cost Trends Hearings Oct 22 and 23

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/2019-cost-trends-hearing>

Governor's Oct. 18, 2019 Health Care Bill

<https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-announces-health-care-legislation-aimed-at-addressing-key>

Public Charge

Multiple federal courts have blocked the Trump administration's final public charge regulations from going into effect on October 15, 2019.

This means most non-citizens can continue using the nutrition, health and housing benefits for which they are eligible without fear of public charge.

Federal courts in New York, Washington and Maryland entered nation-wide injunctions that prevent the rule from taking effect anywhere in the US including Massachusetts. (Federal courts in California and Illinois also enjoined the rule but not nation-wide).

The longstanding public charge test which only considers receipt of cash welfare for income maintenance or long term institutional care at government expense as evidence of public charge remains in effect.

If non-citizens will be applying for a visa from *outside* the U.S. or leaving the U.S. in order to obtain the visa abroad, U.S. consular offices abroad use different rules in making the public charge decision. Non-citizens should talk with an expert for advice if they are in this situation.

A litigation tracker & resource list for expert advice are posted here:

<https://www.masslegalservices.org/publiccharge>