

# Progress Notes

FALL 2022 • VOLUME 17 • ISSUE 4

## Celebrating the Fifth Year of Awarding Full-Ride Medical School Scholarships



L.A. Care marked its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary with two major announcements during a celebration held on July 22, at Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science.

First, the health plan announced that its *Elevating the Safety Net* initiative would hit a \$100 million milestone by the end of its anniversary year. The funds supported its efforts to boost the number of new physicians in the L.A. County safety net, those clinics and practices that offer care regardless of an individual’s ability to pay.

The \$155 million initiative, which launched in 2018, offers grants for clinics and practices to recruit new physicians into the safety net, and it offers medical school loan repayment for physicians who commit to working in the safety net for three years. So far, 139 physicians have been recruited into the L.A. County safety net and 144 physicians have been offered loan repayment grants.

The second announcement involved another program in the initiative — eight full medical school scholarships which are awarded each year. L.A. Care announced the fifth cohort of L.A. Care scholars, with four attending the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and four attending the Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science (CDU).

*“CDU is committed to cultivating diverse health professional leaders who are dedicated to social justice and health equity for underserved populations. The amount of hard work, perseverance, and sacrifice it takes for a student to become a physician comes with its own set of hurdles that can impact and distract from the learning experience,”* shared Deborah Prothrow-Stith, Dean and Professor of Medicine for CDU’s College of Medicine and the university’s Interim Provost. *“As the University diligently works to train these future physicians, the scholarships provided by L.A. Care Health Plan’s ‘Elevating the Safety Net’ initiative helps them gain peace of mind to remain focused on this important mission.”*

Like CDU, the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA is committed to diversity in the medical workforce.

*“L.A. Care continues to elevate our community in meaningful ways. We share a commitment to reducing barriers to high-quality health care,”* said Steven Dubinett, MD, Interim Dean of the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. *“This generous scholarship program alleviates the financial burden of medical school for our student recipients and allows them to pursue positions in historically underserved communities in Los Angeles, leading to better health outcomes for the communities we serve.”*

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## L.A. Care Commits \$55,000 to Help Close the Digital Divide for Low-Income Communities



The Pew Research Center reports that about a quarter of adults with household incomes below \$30,000 a year say they do not own a smartphone. About 40% of adults with lower incomes do not have home Internet service, a desktop or laptop computer.

Researchers say this so-called digital divide makes it difficult to climb out of poverty. To address this challenge, L.A. Care Health Plan, which serves more than 2.5 million low-income Medi-Cal beneficiaries, has committed \$55,000 to Human-I-T for the 2022 Technology Justice Partnership, which will provide computers, laptops or tablets to 200 low-income residents in Los Angeles County.

Through this partnership, which was initiated by the L.A. Care Community Outreach and Engagement Department, Human-I-T will also help individuals sign up for free or low-cost Internet, and will provide them with digital literacy training. The company will also participate in a digital literacy event that will provide digital literacy education to up to 250 L.A. Care consumer advisory committee members.



This new partnership is building on last year's \$25,000 investment for a similar project. It also aligns with L.A. Care's commitment to health equity, which means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw a shift to telehealth because of the need to maintain social distance. Lack of access to the technology needed to allow a telehealth visit exacerbates health inequity. This partnership is one step toward improving health equity for those who will benefit from new digital devices and training.

# The Great American Smokeout

Each year, the American Cancer Society designates the third Thursday in November as **the Great American Smokeout**, an opportunity for individuals to start their journey towards a smoke-free life and reduce the risk of cancer. This year the Great American Smokeout is on **Thursday, November 17**.

L.A. Care is encouraging members to work with their doctors if they need help quitting. Providers are in a unique position to offer tobacco-cessation counseling and medication per All Plan Letter (APL) 16-014 *Comprehensive Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Services for Medi-Cal Beneficiaries*. A quick reference guide to APL 16-014 is presented here. You can view the APL in its entirety on the DHCS website under MMCD APLs and Policy Letters.



APL 16-014 Requirement*	Provider Strategy and/or Resource
<p>Conduct an initial and annual assessment of tobacco use for each adolescent and adult beneficiary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administer the Staying Healthy Assessment (SHA) Tool, which assesses smoking status/exposure to tobacco smoke.</li> <li>• Add tobacco use as a vital sign.</li> <li>• Use ICD-10 codes to document tobacco use.</li> <li>• Place an identifying stamp or sticker on patient’s medical record.</li> </ul>
<p>Prescribe FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications (for non-pregnant adults of any age)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prescribe medications using the formulary found on the L.A. Care website.</li> <li>• Prescribe a 90-day treatment regimen of medication as appropriate.</li> </ul>
<p>Provide or refer patients to tobacco cessation counseling (four counseling sessions of at least ten minutes must be offered).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer L.A. Care patients to individual, group or telephonic tobacco cessation services using the L.A. Care online health education referral form.</li> <li>• Refer to the CA Smoker’s Helpline, <b>1-800-NO-BUTTS</b>.</li> <li>• Use the 5A’s (Ask, Advise, Assess, Assist, and Arrange) or the “5 R’s” (Relevance, Risks, Rewards, Roadblocks, Repetition) to provide individual counseling to patients during office visits.</li> </ul>
<p>Assess pregnant patients’ tobacco status and offer face-to-face cessation counseling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask all pregnant patients if they use tobacco or are exposed to tobacco smoke.</li> <li>• Offer at least one face-to-face counseling session per quit attempt.</li> </ul>



# Vital Signs

## Do Your Patients Have a Dental Home?

Similar to a medical home, a dental home is a dental office where your patients feel safe and comfortable visiting regularly. Having an established dental home allows your patients to develop trust with the dental staff and will help reduce fear. Children who develop a familiar relationship with their dentist are less likely to experience dental anxiety and are more likely to visit the dentist regularly into adulthood.

Oral health can be a window to our overall health. Medi-Cal provides free or low-cost dental check-ups every six months for members under the age of 21 and once every 12 months for members 21 and older.

Help your patients find a Medi-Cal dental provider accepting new patients in their area by guiding them to the “**Find a Dentist**” page on [SmileCalifornia.org](https://www.smilecalifornia.org). There is a video for members to learn how to navigate the “Find a Dentist” tool.

Please let your patients know that they can also like *Smile, California* on Facebook (@SmileCalifornia) or follow on Instagram (@SmileOnCalifornia) to learn more about the Medi-Cal Dental Program or their benefits.

There is also a “**Primary Care Physician Toolkit**” available on [SmileCalifornia.org](https://www.smilecalifornia.org) that includes fluoride varnish and other oral health resources for you and your team to explore. You can find this toolkit on the “Partner & Providers” page of the website.

Visit the “**Sign up for our Smile Alerts**” tab on [SmileCalifornia.org/Partners-and-Providers](https://www.smilecalifornia.org/Partners-and-Providers) to sign up to receive future *Smile, California* campaign updates and materials.

If you have questions, please e-mail [hello@smilecalifornia.org](mailto:hello@smilecalifornia.org). Smile On!



## Flu Facts

L.A. Care asks providers to schedule flu shot appointments for all patients **six months of age and older**. For patients who may be reluctant to be vaccinated, please share these flu facts:

- ✓ **Influenza is serious.** Each year the flu kills 3,000 to 49,000 people in the U.S. and sends about 200,000 to the hospital. Even healthy people get the flu, but those with chronic conditions and people with weakened immune systems are at higher risk.
- ✓ **You cannot get the flu from the vaccine.** The injected flu vaccine contains an inactivated virus that cannot give you influenza.
- ✓ **The flu vaccine is safe.** Severe side effects are extremely rare.
- ✓ **The flu vaccine is effective.** Each year the flu vaccine is formulated to protect against the most prevalent strain. This is why patients need to get the vaccine every year.
- ✓ **Pregnant women should get the flu vaccine.** The inactivated flu vaccine is safe at any stage of pregnancy and offers protection for both mother and baby.

### Additional helpful tips for your practice:

- Remind your patients by phone, text, mail, and/or email to get the flu shot.
- Emphasize that the vaccine is offered at no cost to L.A. Care members, and is important to protect children, seniors, and high-risk patients.
- Schedule vaccinations as soon as the vaccine is available (typically in September).
- Utilize scheduled visits as an opportunity to vaccinate.
- Remember that providers are the most trusted source of vaccine information and advice.



You can find flu and COVID-19 resources and tools under Provider Resources on [lacare.org](https://lacare.org) or visit the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health at <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/a/cd/Flu.html>.



# Vital Signs

## The Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences



Individuals who experience Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are at a greater risk for 9 out of 10 of the leading causes of death in the United States including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and suicide.

Those who had adverse experiences at an early age and received limited support may have elevated levels of toxic stress that can lead to lifelong mental and physical health problems. Often overlooked in the health care system, an understanding of ACEs can help providers bridge the gap between mental and physical health to better treat the whole person.

A provider who is ACEs aware must complete a training, which can be found on the DHCS website. Providers can use appropriate screening tools such as PEARLS or a qualifying ACEs questionnaire to screen and assess the risk for toxic stress experienced by an individual. Recommendations for treatment can then be provided using Evidenced –Based Interventions for trauma care. Finally, a provider who completes a successful screening is able to receive a Medi-Cal reimbursement of \$29 using the HCPCS code G9919 OR G9920.

Implementing ACEs screenings in daily practice helps identify traumatic events that have affected individuals throughout their life. Utilizing ACEs helps identify trauma, provide treatment and seek to improve the health outcomes of individuals in the public health system.



For more information visit: <https://www.acesaware.org/learn-about-screening/training/>

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## No-Cost Doula Services for Your Pregnant Patients

Your perinatal patients might be eligible for no-cost doula services. A doula provides physical and emotional support before, during, and after birth. Women who enroll in doula services are more likely to have a good birth experience and better birth outcomes. As you assess the clinical needs of your patients, please consider referring eligible members to the L.A. County AAIMM Doula Program.



### Eligibility:

- Black and African American pregnant women
- Must live in South Los Angeles, the South Bay, Antelope Valley or San Fernando Valley
- Clients are welcome at any stage of pregnancy

### Referrals:

Email [AAIMMDoulas@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:AAIMMDoulas@ph.lacounty.gov) OR Ashley Skiffer-Thompson: [ASkiffer-Thompson@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:ASkiffer-Thompson@ph.lacounty.gov) or call **1.213.639.6448**. Please include client name, phone number, zip code, and estimated due date (EDD).

## Stay Updated on Pharmacy and Formulary at L.A. Care



The L.A. Care Formulary is a preferred list of covered drugs. It applies to outpatient and self-administered drugs and does not apply to medications used in the inpatient setting or medical offices. L.A. Care Health Plan has an active Pharmacy Quality Oversight Committee comprised of physicians and pharmacists who review and approve the drugs that are included on the Formulary, which is updated monthly. Revisions are based on safety, clinical efficacy, and cost-effectiveness. Updates to the Formulary are available online at [lacare.org](https://www.lacare.org).

### How to Use the Formulary

Medicines on the Formulary are listed in alphabetical order and by class or category. Both brand name and generic medications are covered by L.A. Care. However, FDA approved generics should be used when available. Generics are generally more cost-effective than brand named drugs. A prescriber may request a brand name product in lieu of an approved generic, if the prescriber determines that there is a documented medical need for the brand equivalent. This type of request for coverage may be made by completing a Medication Request Form.

Some Formulary medicines require prior authorization. These drugs are listed throughout the Formulary, and on a separate list within it called the “Prior Authorization Drug List”. You can determine if a drug requires a Prior Authorization by referring to the Formulary on the L.A. Care website at [lacare.org](https://www.lacare.org). Some drugs require “Step Therapy” which involves one or more “prerequisite” first step drugs being tried first. Some drugs have “Quantity Limits” which means that coverage is limited to specific quantities per prescription and/or time period.

Any drug not found in the Formulary listing published by L.A. Care Health Plan shall be considered a non-Formulary drug. A prescriber may request an exception to coverage for a non-Formulary drug if the prescriber determines that there is a documented medical need. Request for coverage may be made by completing a Medication Request form.





# Vital Signs

## Nurse Advice Line

L.A. Care offers its members a Nurse Advice Line (NAL) service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A team of registered nurses is available to answer any health-related questions. L.A. Care members can access this service by phone or chat live with a nurse using their L.A. Care *Connect* online member account.

As a complement to your service, please encourage your patients to call the NAL for free health advice. If your patient is an L.A. Care member or a Medi-Cal member with one of our Plan Partners, they can call the NAL at the numbers listed below:



### **Anthem Blue Cross:**

**1.800.224.0336 TTY 1.800.368.4424**

### **Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan**

**1.800.609.4166 TTY 1.800.735.2929**

### **Kaiser Permanente:**

**1.888.576.6225**

### **L.A. Care Health Plan:**

**1.800.249.3619 TTY 711**



The NAL phone number is also located on the back of the patient's health plan member ID card. Additionally, the NAL phone numbers can be found on the L.A. Care websites: **[lacare.org](http://lacare.org)**, **[lacarecovered.org](http://lacarecovered.org)**, and **[calmediconnectla.org](http://calmediconnectla.org)**.



# Claim Your Supplemental Payment for Developmental Screenings

Did you know that developmental screenings during well-child visits are eligible for a supplemental payment for children enrolled in Medi-Cal?

That's right! Medi-Cal reimburses providers a supplemental incentive payment of \$59.90 for developmental screenings with funds from Proposition 56. A developmental screening is the use of a standardized set of questions to see if a child's motor, language, cognitive, social, and emotional development are on track for their age.

Providers must use a standardized screening tool and adhere to American Academy of Pediatrics/Bright Futures guidelines for well-child visits at:

- 9 months
- 18 months
- 30 months
- When medically necessary

The following documentation is required for billing and should remain in the beneficiary's medical record:

- Screening tool used
- Review of completed screening
- Results of the screening
- Interpretation of the results
- Results discussed with the child's family and/or caregiver
- Any appropriate actions taken

All children enrolled in Medi-Cal are entitled to receive developmental screenings as part of the Medicaid Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit.

To support your efforts in implementing developmental screenings, visit [www.lacare.org/ChildDevelopment](http://www.lacare.org/ChildDevelopment) for standardized screening tools and other resources to help you achieve better outcomes for your youngest patients.

## Need Educational Materials for Your Office?

Visit our health education portal for FREE children's early development materials in multiple languages to distribute in your office. To order materials, visit [www.lacare.org/ChildDevelopment](http://www.lacare.org/ChildDevelopment).



# Getting to Know Your Members: Social Determinants of Health Data



Understanding members' Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) is a critical part of evaluating population health across the state and to analyze members' health, social and risk needs. This allows for appropriate focus on programs to improve health equity and target health disparities.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHCS) released All-Plan Letter 21-009 on August 10, 2021. Also, as of January 1, 2023, Covered California requires members must be screened for food insecurity. The chart below details the requirements for providers to submit SDoH data to health plans.

## How can you help?

You can collect and submit complete, accurate and timely encounter data with appropriate SDoH codes. Below is a table with the eighteen priority SDoH codes. If you need assistance with submitting encounters, please review the L.A. Care website <https://www.lacare.org/providers/claims-edi/submitted-encounter-data>.

Code	Description
Z55.0	Illiteracy and low-level literacy
Z58.6	Inadequate drinking-water supply
Z59.00	Homelessness unspecified
Z59.01	Sheltered homelessness
Z59.02	Unsheltered homelessness
Z59.1	Inadequate housing (lack of heating/space, unsatisfactory surroundings)
Z59.3	Problems related to living in residential institution
Z59.41	Food insecurity
Z59.48	Other specified lack of adequate food
Z59.7	Insufficient social insurance and welfare support
Z59.811	Housing instability, housed, with risk of homelessness
Z59.812	Housing instability, housed, homelessness in past 12 months
Z59.819	Housing instability, housed unspecified
Z59.89	Other problems related to housing and economic circumstances
Z60.2	Problems related to living alone
Z60.4	Social exclusion and rejection (physical appearance, illness or behavior)
Z62.819	Personal history of unspecified abuse in childhood
Z63.0	Problems in relationship with spouse or partner
Z63.4	Disappearance & death of family member (assumed death, bereavement)



Progress Notes is a publication of L.A. Care Health Plan for our Medi-Cal and Cal MediConnect provider networks.

If you have questions or comments about topics in this issue, please write to us at [editor@lacare.org](mailto:editor@lacare.org) or call us at **1.866.LA.CARE6 (1.866.522.2736)**.



### IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS

**L.A. Care Compliance Helpline: 1.800.400.4889**  
24 hours a day, 7 days a week

**Provider Solution Center: 1.866.LA.CARE6, 1.866.522.2736**  
(Eligibility & Claims questions only)

**Medical Management: 1.877.431.2273**  
fax **213.438.5777** for authorization requests

**LTSS Department: 1.855.427.1223** for Long-Term Services and Supports

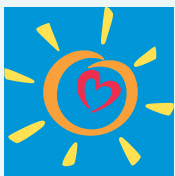
**HCC Outreach Specialist, Betty Garcia: 213.694.1250 x4935**  
fax **213.438.4874** for Annual Wellness Exam (AWE) forms

**Health Education: 1.855.856.6943** for forms and programs

**Nurse Advice Line:**  
L.A. Care – **1.800.249.3619**  
Kaiser – **1.888.576.6225**,  
Care1st – **1.800.609.4166**  
Anthem Blue Cross – **1.800.224.0336**

**Beacon Health Options: 1.877.344.2858**  
**(TTY 1.800.735.2929)** for behavioral health services  
24 hours a day, 7 days a week

**L.A. Care Covered™: 1.855.270.2327** (Providers: Option “2”)



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HEALTH PLAN®

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# Progress Notes

A NEWSLETTER FOR OUR PHYSICIAN PARTNERS

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## News Alert



## Great American Smokeout

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