

Progress Notes

FALL 2020 • VOLUME 15 • ISSUE 4

Innovations in Safety Net Care Result in 93,000 Fewer Unnecessary Hospital Visits in L.A. County

L.A. Care has successfully completed a federally funded program designed to help clinicians achieve large-scale health care transformation and improve the quality of care.

In 2015, L.A. Care received a \$16 million grant under the **Transforming Clinical Practice Initiative** (TCPI) from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The funding allowed L.A. Care to assist 3,200 primary and specialty care clinicians in improving care for their patients with diabetes and/or depression.

The four-year program produced more than 93,000 fewer hospital admissions and emergency room visits. For the clinicians caring for patients with diabetes, this program helped to keep those patients healthier and out of the hospital, reducing costs by more than \$197 million.

“L.A. Care is proud of the myriad ways this program has positively impacted L.A. County clinicians, our members and the community at large, providing the tools and support necessary to assist L.A. County safety-net providers in running their practices,” said John Baackes, L.A. Care CEO. *“This sort of innovation is exactly what helps us maintain and continually improve upon the high-quality care L.A. County has come to expect.”*



L.A. Care was one of the top performers among 39 health care organizations in TCPI. L.A. Care continues to participate in federal quality improvement initiatives as a Network of Quality Improvement and Innovation Contractor (NQIIC) awardee. This designation allows NQIICs, such as L.A. Care, to pursue future CMS innovation programs to improve care in L.A. County.

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**ELEVATING
HEALTHCARE**
IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY
SINCE 1997

news in BRIEF

L.A. Care Accelerates Additional \$7 Million in Grant Payments to Clinics and Community-Based Organizations



Providers, clinics, and hospitals are heroically serving our members and we are here to support them. In April, L.A. Care announced that it was accelerating hospital claims payments and providing other financial support to its provider network to help address the financial pressure caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes the safety-net providers, clinics and hospitals that meet the needs of Los Angeles County's underserved communities.

L.A. Care provided more than \$85 million in accelerated claim payments to hospitals, and more than \$21 million in advanced incentive payments to individual primary care physicians and clinics.

In addition, L.A. Care has now accelerated more than \$7 million in grant payments to 138 clinics and community-based organizations. The health plan is also committing more than \$6 million in targeted grant support for its most vulnerable members and communities, including some who are experiencing homelessness.



L.A. Care Commits Up to \$550,000 to Reduce Food Waiting List

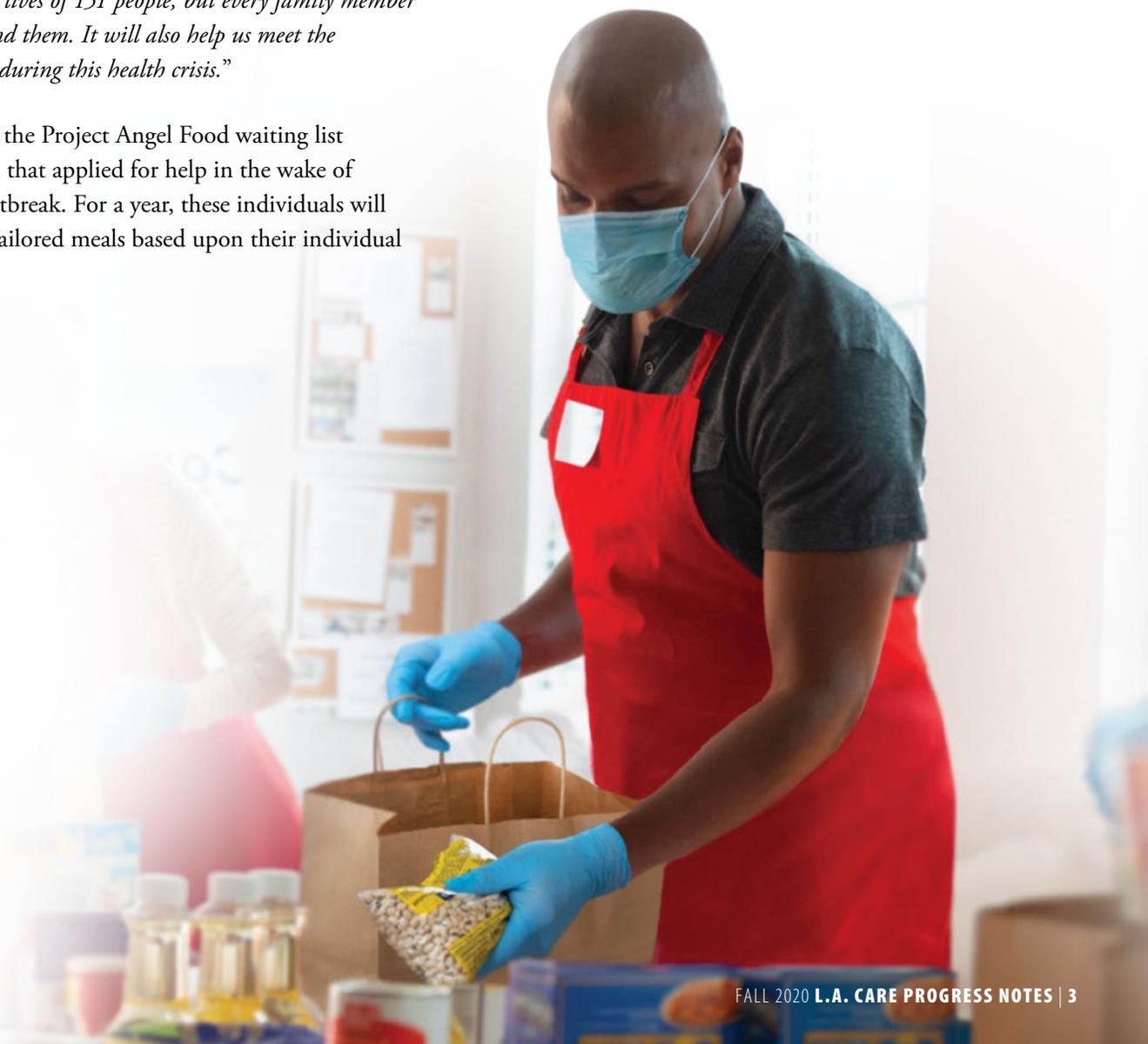
Food insecurity has long been a major deterrent to good health outcomes for low-income individuals, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the problem. To help ensure that those with chronic illnesses receive the nutritious meals they need, L.A. Care Health Plan committed grant funding of up to \$550,000 to Project Angel Food. It provides medically tailored meals and nutritional counseling weekly to 2,000 Los Angeles County low-income individuals affected by life threatening illnesses. L.A. Care is helping Project Angel Food reduce their waiting list.

“L.A. Care has just delivered Project Angel Food the largest health-care grant in our history,” said Richard Ayoub, Executive Director of Project Angel Food. *“This grant will not only impact the lives of 151 people, but every family member and caregiver around them. It will also help us meet the increasing demand during this health crisis.”*

The 151 people on the Project Angel Food waiting list were part of a rush that applied for help in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak. For a year, these individuals will receive medically tailored meals based upon their individual health conditions.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is shining a spotlight on just how great the need is for medically tailored meals, and we are grateful that we can help at this time,” said John Baackes, L.A. Care CEO.

“Project Angel Food is doing a wonderful job building the proof needed to gain more state and federal funding for meals for the most vulnerable in our community.”





Vital Signs

Clinical Practice and Preventive Health Guidelines

L.A. Care systematically reviews and adopts evidence-based Clinical Practice and Preventive Health Guidelines disseminated from peer-reviewed sources and from organizations like the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. Guidelines for disease and health conditions identified as most salient to L.A. Care members for preventive, acute or chronic medical and behavioral health services are regularly reviewed by L.A. Care’s Joint “Performance Improvement Committee” and “Physician Quality Committee” to help improve the delivery of health care services to members.



Review of the following guidelines will assist you in your practice to provide evidence-based care and be informed on changes regarding these guidelines. The most current

list of Clinical Practice and Preventive Health Guidelines adopted by L.A. Care is available at lacare.org in the *For Providers* section under *Tools and Toolkits*. For hard copies, please email us at quality@lacare.org.

Guideline Focus Areas	
Clinical Practice	Preventive Health
Behavioral Health	U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) A and B Recommendations
Cardiovascular	Recommendations for Preventive Pediatric Health Care, Bright Futures from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
Endocrine	American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, Guideline on Periodicity of Examination, Preventive Dental Services, Anticipatory Guidance Counseling and Oral Treatment
Infectious Diseases	Recommended Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule for ages 18 years or younger (CDC)
Pain Management	L.A. Care Health Plan. Health Education Tools. Fluoride Varnish Application Video
Obstetrics and Perinatal Care	Recommended Adult Immunization Schedule (CDC)
Respiratory	National Cancer Institute. Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Tool
Musculoskeletal	
Obesity	

L.A. County Department of Public Health Update: COVID-19

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LAC DPH) issued a health update in early June. With the relaxation of Safer at Home order, more businesses and workplaces were allowed to reopen. The mass protests recently held throughout L.A. County increased the potential for community transmission of COVID-19.

Because guidance for the prevention and management of COVID-19 may change, providers and staff are encouraged to visit the [Los Angeles Health Alert Network \(LAHAN\)](#) website frequently. You can also subscribe to the LAHAN to receive alerts, advisories, and updates from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. Keep up to date by visiting the [LAC DPH Coronavirus Webpage for Health Professionals](#).



! Key Messages

- With more businesses and workplaces reopening, it is important to emphasize to patients the importance of personal prevention actions including wearing a face covering, physical distancing, and handwashing.
- All laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases and their close contacts will be contacted by LAC DPH for an interview. Please provide accurate patient contact information on laboratory test requisition forms and on the COVID-19 case report form. Please ask your patients to be responsive to LAC DPH calls.
- Health care providers should continue to instruct outpatients with presumed or suspected COVID-19 to immediately follow home isolation instructions and to give all of their close contacts home quarantine instructions. Please make note that the definition of a close contact has been revised.
- LAC DPH now recommends the testing of asymptomatic close contacts of a confirmed case. In the absence of a known exposure, however, routine testing of asymptomatic persons in the general population is still not recommended.
- Serology tests: Both the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the CDC have released guidance on the use of serology tests. In addition, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is now publishing serology test performance data on all authorized tests.
- Direct viral detection methods: The FDA has recently issued an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for the first antigen test and anticipates more will be authorized. While antigen tests are often faster and simpler to run than molecular (e.g. PCR) tests, they are less sensitive.
- COVID Watch: LAC DPH is now publishing COVID Watch, a summary of COVID-19 related surveillance. It includes data on pneumonia, influenza, and COVID-19 mortality as well as emergency department visits for influenza-like illness.

In order to prevent a new surge in hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19, it is critical that we remind everyone of the need to redouble our prevention and control efforts.



Vital Signs

Coping With Seasonal Affective Disorder

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that typically occurs during late fall or early winter and usually fades away during the sunnier days of spring and summer. There are fewer cases in which people's symptoms occur in spring or summer.

Treatment for SAD may include psychotherapy and medication. Symptoms can impact motivation and ability to do the things that are normally enjoyable. Members can contact **Beacon Health Options**, L.A. Care's contracted provider, at **1.877.344.2858** to access behavioral health services.



Symptoms of SAD:

- Depressed mood most of the day, almost every day
- Loss of interest/pleasure in activities once enjoyed
- Sleep disturbance
- Appetite and/or weight changes
- Low energy
- Agitation
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness or guilt
- Thoughts of suicide

Fall/Winter Symptoms

- Sleeping more than usual
- Increased appetite
- Weight gain
- Fatigue or decreased energy

Spring/Summer Symptoms

- Difficulty sleeping
- Poor appetite
- Weight loss
- Agitation or anxiety

Vaccinate Your Patients Against the Flu

As flu season approaches, L.A. Care Health Plan asks providers to use scheduled appointments as an opportunity to provide education about the importance of the flu shot and vaccinate patients six months of age or older.

- Emphasize that the vaccine is needed every year, is no cost to L.A. Care members, and is important to protect children, seniors, and high-risk patients.
- Utilize scheduled visits as an opportunity to vaccinate.
- Although flu activity peaks between December and February, be sure to keep the vaccination stocked as flu season can last until May.
- Remember that providers are the most trusted source of vaccine information and advice.



Stay Updated On Pharmacy and Formulary



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. This type of request for coverage may be made by completing a Medication Request form.

The Great American Smokeout



Each year the American Cancer Society sets aside one day, called the Great American Smokeout, for smokers to commit to quit for just one day. This year, that day is Thursday, November 19. 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 Department of Health Care Services 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"> • Administer the Staying Healthy Assessment (SHA) Tool which assesses smoking status/exposure to tobacco smoke. • Add tobacco use as a vital sign. • Use ICD-10 codes to document tobacco use. • Place an identifying stamp or sticker on patient’s medical record.
<p>Prescribe FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications (for non-pregnant adults of any age)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prescribe medications using L.A. Care’s formulary guide found on L.A. Care’s website. • Prescribe a 90-day treatment regimen of medication as appropriate.
<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"> • Refer L.A. Care patients to individual, group or telephonic tobacco cessation services using L.A. Care’s online health education referral form. • Refer to the CA Smoker’s Helpline, 1.800.NO.BUTTS. • Use the 5As (Ask, Advise, Assess, Assist, and Arrange) or the “5Rs” (Relevance, Risks, Rewards, Roadblocks, Repetition) to provide individual counseling to patients during office visits.
<p>Assess pregnant patients’ tobacco status and offer face-to-face cessation counseling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask all pregnant patients if they use tobacco or are exposed to tobacco smoke. • Offer at least one face-to-face counseling session per quit attempt.
<p>Provide education or counseling to school-aged children and adolescents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide anticipatory guidance and risk-reduction counseling regarding tobacco use to children and adolescents.
<p>Participate in provider training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in one or more of the provider trainings listed in Attachment B of APL 16-014.

*Table does not include all APL 16-014 requirements, please refer to the actual policy letter for details.

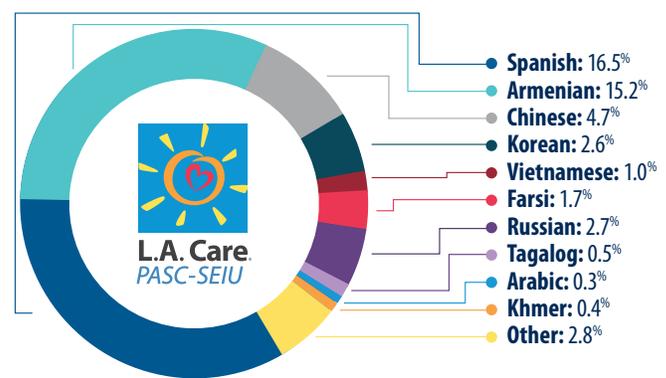
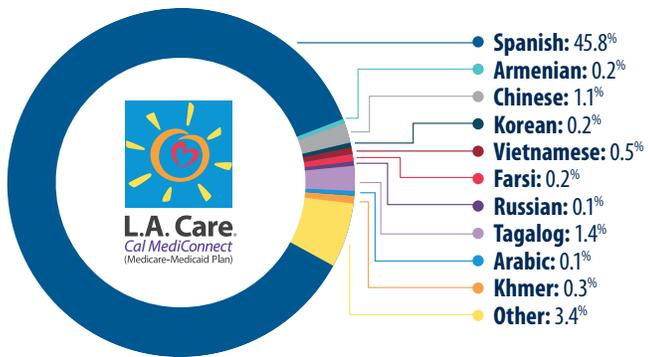
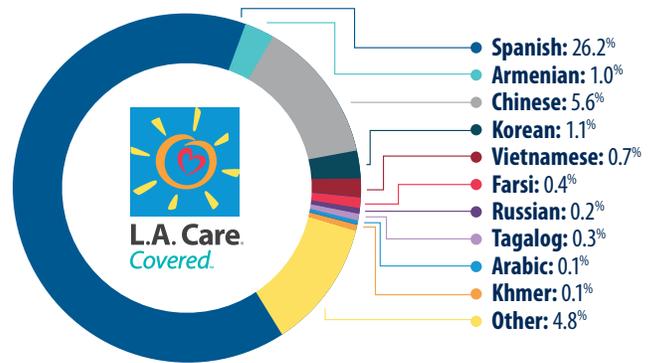
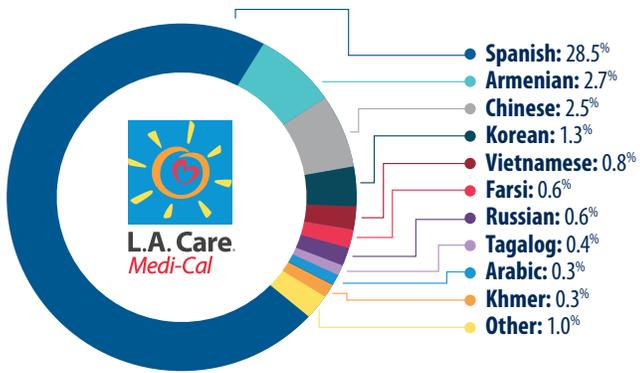


Multiple Languages: One Standard of Care

In these unprecedented times, members with limited English proficiency (LEP) can face additional challenges when it comes to health disparities caused by inadequate access to health information. Amid a pandemic, this can become a matter of life and death. Without the assistance of professional interpreters, LEP members may have a difficult time making informed decisions about medical care in an increasingly uncertain time.

As you continue to deliver the best care to our diverse membership, remember that family and friends, especially minors, should never serve as interpreters, except in emergency situations. Professionally trained interpreters can help build a bridge of communication between providers and their patients. These interpreters can clarify information and advocate for patients in what could be critical moments.

L.A. Care wants to ensure that all our members have access to the information they need to protect themselves, their families and their communities. Please call **Member Services** at **1.888.839.9909** (TTY 711) to request no-cost, face-to-face interpreting services, including American Sign Language.



Health Education, Cultural & Linguistic Materials Portal Announcement



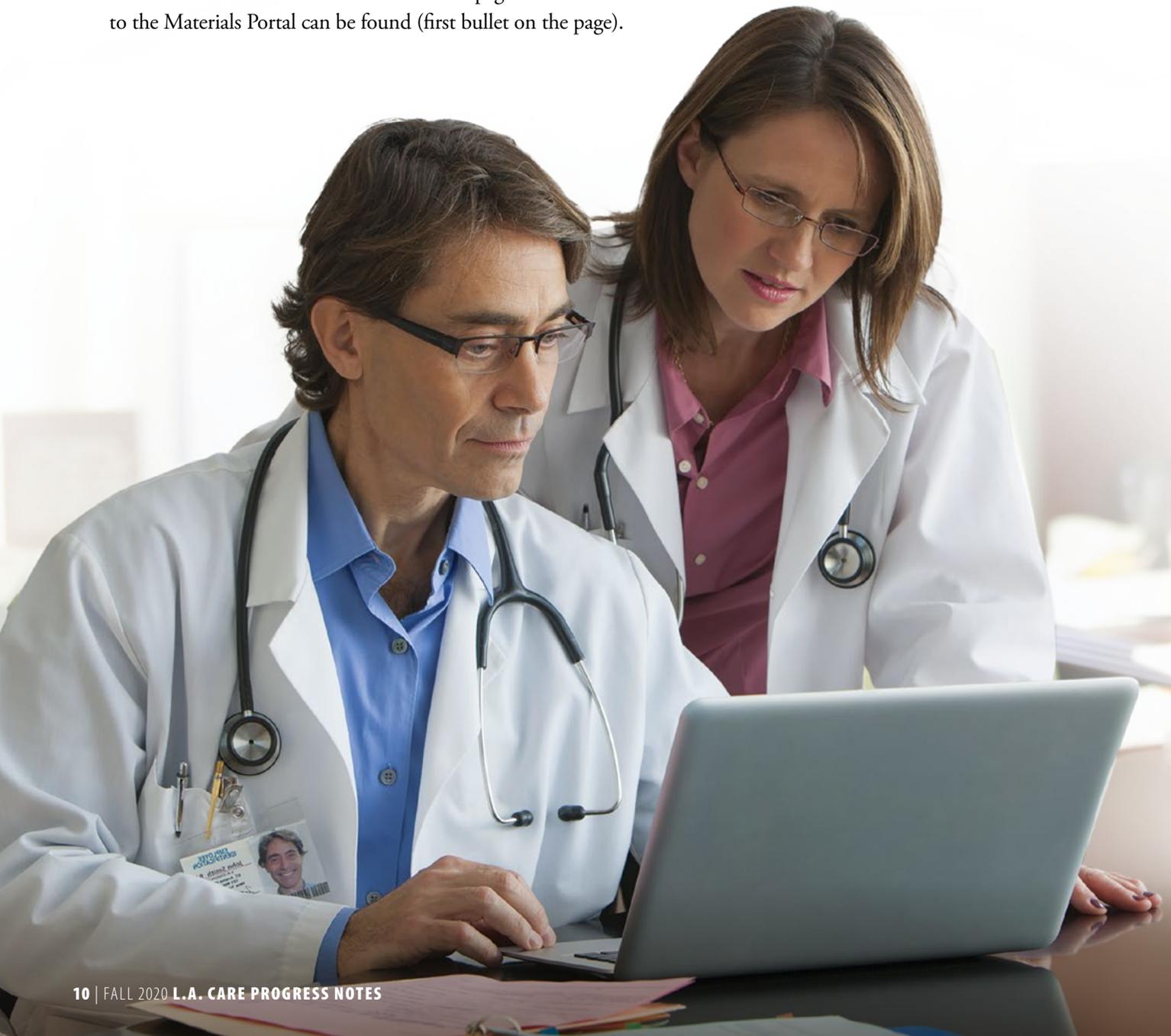
Looking for an easy and effective way to search for member resources? Our Health Education Team has revamped its **Health Education, Cultural & Linguistic Materials Portal** to help both staff and providers.

Hosted on our [lacare.org](https://www.lacare.org) website, the portal is a great tool for both staff and providers to access a variety of member-focused health education materials.

- Under the provider tab, select Tools & Toolkits.
- Next, find and select the Health Education Tools box.
- You will be directed to the Health Education page where the link to the Materials Portal can be found (first bullet on the page).

- To view the materials available and to place orders, you will be prompted to create an account.

L.A. Care's **Health Education Unit** can be reached at **1.855.856.6943** if you have any questions about the materials portal.



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

Kaiser Permanente:
1.888.576.6225

Blue Shield Promise Health Plan:
1.800.609.4166 TTY 1.800.735.2929

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**, **lacarecovered.org**, and **calmediconnectla.org**.

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

If you have any questions or comments about topics in this issue, please write to us at **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: phone 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")



L.A. Care
H E A L T H P L A N®

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Progress Notes

A NEWSLETTER FOR OUR PHYSICIAN PARTNERS

Progress Notes

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News Alert



LACDPH COVID-19 Update

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