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EXPEDITED MEDI-CAL IS AVAILABLE NOW FOR HURRICANE KATRINA SURVIVORS IN CALIFORNIA

The California Department of Health Services (DHS) acted in record speed to approve an expedited process to enroll Hurricane Katrina survivors in California in Medi-Cal, as urged by Western Center advocates. The new interim procedures are in ACL 05-30, available at <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/mcs/mcpd/MEB/ACLs/PDFs/ACWDLs/2005ACLS/30thru39/c05-30.pdf> and will remain in effect until Congress passes Medicaid legislation to instruct states how they can provide extraordinarily relief to hurricane victims, at which time we urge California to adopt the most generous policy allowed under a new federal law. The ACL is available at:

Highlights of the new policies and procedures include:

- **Residency Requirement:** Evacuees will be treated as California residents and may receive Medi-Cal even if they are unsure how long they will be staying. This is essential so evacuees can get necessary medical care now before they know whether they will permanently relocate here, return to the Gulf Coast, or relocate elsewhere.
- **Proof of Financial Eligibility:** A signed sworn statement by the applicant is sufficient documentation of financial eligibility if the evacuee does not have paperwork to show how much income and property she has. WCLP applauds DHS for adopting this self-verification policy in recognition of the fact that hurricane survivors who have lost everything should not be required to produce pay stubs or other paperwork to show their incomes are low enough to qualify for Medi-Cal.
- **Expedited Enrollment:** Evacuees' applications are to be expedited and provide for same day eligibility determinations. Evacuees will be provided with immediate proof of their Medi-Cal eligibility so they can get care without delay.
- **Treatment of Disaster Assistance:** Any federal disaster assistance in cash or in-kind is exempt and does not count toward income and property limits.
- **Aid codes:** Applicants will be put in Aid Code 65 if they are eligible for full scope Medi-Cal; for Restricted Medi-Cal, they will be in whichever aid code would normally apply.
- **"Household" Units:** Ordinarily, families' financial eligibility is measured based on who lives in the household, an inappropriate measure for evacuees. Therefore, all families affected by Katrina are placed in their own Medi-Cal Budget Units, regardless of where they are staying or who else they live with.

(see reverse)

Through these procedures, hurricane survivors can get Medi-Cal in California if they meet all other ordinary Medi-Cal requirements, including linkage (establishment that they are in appropriate categories such as families, seniors, and persons with disabilities), income, and property limits.

Jen Flory, our health advocate coordinating disaster relief health care efforts for WCLP, urged DHS to act quickly and fairly to expedite enrollment and to minimize procedural and paperwork burdens on beneficiaries. DHS responded quickly and completely. WCLP is also working with counties as they implement these procedures. For example, we have coordinated with the Medi-Cal Division of Los Angeles County's Department of Public Social Services, which has already assigned outstation workers with official policies and procedures to aid Katrina survivors.

If anyone assisting an evacuee with a Medi-Cal application needs technical assistance, please contact Jen Flory (jflory@wclp.org, (213) 487-7211 x 34) or Katie Murphy (kmurphy@wclp.org, (213) 487-7211 x 26). We also encourage any community groups, organizers, advocates, or other stakeholders who would like to assist in monitoring implementation in California of this and any subsequent disaster relief Medi-Cal to contact us to coordinate efforts.

WCLP applauds DHS, Los Angeles County DPSS, and any other government agencies who are responding quickly and compassionately to welcome Hurricane Katrina victims to California and to provide relief when they are in greatest need.