



ASSEMBLY MEMBER

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DISTRICT 25

AB 318

**ENSURING READABILITY
OF MEDI-CAL DOCUMENTS**

Bill Version: March 26, 2019

SUMMARY

AB 318 ensures fair access to benefits for Medi-Cal recipients by improving the readability of the most important Medi-Cal documents for consumers through a workgroup and expert review. The bill also establishes a transparent process for improving the readability of materials in all other threshold languages through field testing of translated documents.

BACKGROUND

At least one in three Medi-Cal beneficiaries speaks a language other than English as their primary language. In comparison with their English-speaking counterparts, limited English proficient (LEP) individuals are more likely to have low literacy levels and/or low health literacy. This can limit an individual's ability to effectively communicate with their health care provider and access their benefits, which can lead to lower quality health care and poor health outcomes.

PROBLEM

Due to low health literacy, low literacy, or limited English proficiency, many Medi-Cal beneficiaries do not understand the materials they receive that explain their benefits. Additionally, translated materials are often not tested among the populations that they are intended to serve. Even if a translation is accurate, it may be written at too high of a reading level or use confusing word choices that are not culturally appropriate. Furthermore, due to the complexity of the Medi-Cal program, even beneficiaries whose primary language is English have difficulty understanding their benefits. Finally, translated materials often are not culturally sensitive to the ethnically and linguistically diverse Medi-Cal population. These problems limit an individual's ability to navigate a complex health system, which creates a significant barrier to accessing meaningful health care and positive health outcomes.

SOLUTION

Medi-Cal beneficiaries will have greater access to needed health care services if the materials they receive are written in plain, simple, and culturally appropriate language. AB 318 will improve access for all Medi-Cal recipients by:

- Requiring field testing for readability and cultural appropriateness of all translated materials released by the State Department of Health Care Services and managed care plans, respectively, to Medi-Cal recipients.
- Requiring the Department to conduct a readability workgroup and engage a readability expert to make recommendations to improve the readability of key Medi-Cal documents, including the 5 documents that are specified in the bill.
- Requiring the Department to revise and reissue the key informing documents based on the recommendations of the workgroup and readability expert.

SPONSORS

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