

Shaping California's Medicaid Community Member Engagement Approach

CHCS supported the California Department of Health Care Services in developing its Medi-Cal Member Advisory Committee, which brings Medicaid member perspectives into policy and program decisions.

California's Medi-Cal program serves more than one in three residents, making meaningful member engagement essential to designing services that reflect the needs of such a large and diverse population. Across the nation, states are increasingly elevating member voices to inform policy and improve care delivery — and California is no exception. When Medi-Cal members share their lived experience, the state gains actionable insights that strengthen program design.

In early 2023, California's Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) launched the [Medi-Cal Member Advisory Committee \(MMAC\)](#), a statewide body designed to bring member perspectives directly into policy and program decisions. DHCS turned to the Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS) for strategic guidance on how to build an advisory structure that was both representative and operationally feasible for California. Partnering with the California Health Care Foundation (CHCF), CHCS conducted a landscape scan, literature review, and stakeholder interviews with Medi-Cal members, DHCS staff and leadership, health plans, and community-based organizations.

[CHCS' final report](#) offered recommendations in key areas including committee composition, recruitment and outreach, meeting and materials design, facilitation, trust building, member supports, and impact evaluation. DHCS adopted all of the report's recommendations. With the release of [CMS' 2024 Access Rule](#), the MMAC now serves as California's Beneficiary Advisory Council (BAC). The BAC is now fully operational, meeting regularly and collaborating with DHCS at both staff and leadership levels.

An external evaluation by [Bright Research Group](#) found that the MMAC/BAC is a successful and effective model of member engagement, driving a cultural shift within DHCS toward more member-centered practices and meaningfully influencing decision making. Members report high satisfaction with participation, and DHCS is better equipped to engage and serve Medi-Cal members. The MMAC/BAC has been [recognized as a best practice model](#) for effective Medicaid member engagement, demonstrating how well-supported member voice can reshape agency culture and improve program outcomes.

AT-A-GLANCE

WHO: California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)

WHAT: Conducted research and stakeholder engagement to develop strategic recommendations for the Medi-Cal Member Advisory Committee

RESULTS: DHCS adopted all recommendations, helping establish a member engagement that evolved into California's Beneficiary Advisory Council and is now recognized nationally as a best practice for engaging Medicaid members in policy and program design.

Partnering with CHCS

This Partner Snapshot highlights how CHCS helps organizations move policy and program priorities from planning to sustainable implementation through tailored, hands-on support. To learn more about *CHCS Implementation & Advisory Services*, visit www.chcs.org/services.

Interested in tailored support? Connect with CHCS to learn how our team can support your organization's priorities. Contact us: www.chcs.org/partner.