

# MEDI-CAL CALL WAIT TIMES PREVENT CALIFORNIANS FROM KEEPING THEIR COVERAGE

Medi-Cal is a major source of coverage in California, covering over half of all children in the state. All Medi-Cal enrollees are required to renew their coverage annually, and federal Medicaid requires states to make renewals accessible via phone. But new research shows many Californians who are trying to renew their coverage over the phone are unable to do so.

To understand Medi-Cal enrollees' experience renewing their health coverage over the phone, The Children's Partnership (TCP) commissioned WestGroup Research to survey county Medi-Cal call lines in more than 30 counties.



California has one of the country's **higher "procedural" disenrollment rates** due to administrative barriers such as long call wait times.

## KEY FINDINGS REVEAL SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS TO RENEWAL ASSISTANCE

**Callers were on hold for an average of 55 minutes across the counties measured.**

Average wait time in Kern, Fresno, and Sacramento counties exceeded 90 minutes.

"The only bad thing about calling is that they take very long to pick up; about two hours."

**Spanish-speaking Latina parent/guardian, LA**



**Many enrollees' calls were disconnected due to high call volumes without enrollees being given another option.**

More than 30% of surveyed counties (14 of 44) – including 6 of the 10 counties with the highest enrollment – disconnected callers due to high call volume.

In Alameda and San Bernardino, over 44% of calls were disconnected due to high call volume.

"They're busy, so they just hang up."

**Male parent/guardian with child who has special health care needs**

**Non-English support is insufficient, despite 35% of Medi-Cal enrollees having a language other than English as their primary language.**

Even callers who selected non-English phone options received lengthy instructions in English first, which can lead callers to wrongly conclude that support in their preferred language is not available.





## EFFICIENT SYSTEMS IN SOME COUNTIES SHOW THAT A GOOD EXPERIENCE IS POSSIBLE.

Three of the top enrollment counties – San Diego, Santa Clara, and Riverside – and many smaller enrollment counties maintained call wait times under 15 minutes.

## THIS SURVEY ISN'T THE ONLY EVIDENCE OF BARRIERS TO PHONE ASSISTANCE.

California's June 2024 [disenrollment survey](#) showed enrollees who tried to renew over the phone had difficulty getting assistance. This barrier was echoed by community assisters and [focus groups with Medi-Cal families](#) who reported long call wait times and dropped calls.

### WE CAN MAKE MEDI-CAL WORK BETTER FOR FAMILIES



Senate Bill 1289 (Roth) County Medi-Cal Call Center Standards and Reporting directs the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to set new standards for county call center wait times and requires the results to be publicly posted. This bill provides an important step toward accountability and making Medi-Cal **work** for enrollees.

Read the full report findings and methodology: <https://bit.ly/MediCalWaitTimes>

