



SAN FRANCISCO
HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

Public Benefit Policy Changes

San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission
September 14, 2026

The meeting will begin shortly.



Agenda

1. Public Charge
2. State and Federal Policy Changes to Medi-Cal
3. Client Impacts
4. Our HR1 Action Plan
5. How Partners Can Help



What is Public Charge?

- Public charge is an immigration policy impacting immigrants:
 - Applying for a green card through a family petition or an employer petition
 - Applying for a visa to enter the US
- Also applies to some green card holders who leave the U.S. for more than six months.
- By law, immigration officers must look at a person's age, health, family, financial status, education, and work skills to decide if they can get a green card, including whether a family member or someone else has promised to support that person financially.

The public charge test looks at whether a person is likely to depend on the government at any time in the future.



Public Charge Rule

Dispelling Rumors

“Public Charge” rules do not change who is eligible for public benefits

- There is no public charge test to become a citizen. A person can use benefits and apply for citizenship once they have a green card.
- Public Charge does **not apply** when:
 - Refugees, asylees, Special Immigrant Juvenile (SIJ) Status, and certain other statuses apply for a green card
 - You have no pathway to obtain a green card or you do not plan to apply for a green card in the future
 - You’re applying for TPS, U or T Visa, Asylum or Refugee status, or SIJ Status



Current Public Charge Rule

Now: Before September 18, 2026

Historically, the public charge test has been limited to cash assistance programs and long-term institutional care paid for by Medi-Cal.



New Public Charge Rule

Implementation Date: September 18, 2026

- Allows immigration officials to look at many factors, including use of any income-based benefit, when making a public charge determination.
- Non-cash benefits received *prior* to September 18, 2026 can *not* be considered
- Income-based benefits received after 9/18/26 can count
 - Includes benefits by family members if the green card applicant is legally obligated to support the family member.
- Rule does not name any specific programs and allows officials to use their own judgment
- Barring a court injunction, change is in effect on September 18, 2026





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Resources

**Bay Area Legal Aid's Legal Advice Line:
(800) 551-5554
[Immigrants.sfgov.org](https://immigrants.sfgov.org)**

Questions?

www.sfhhsa.org



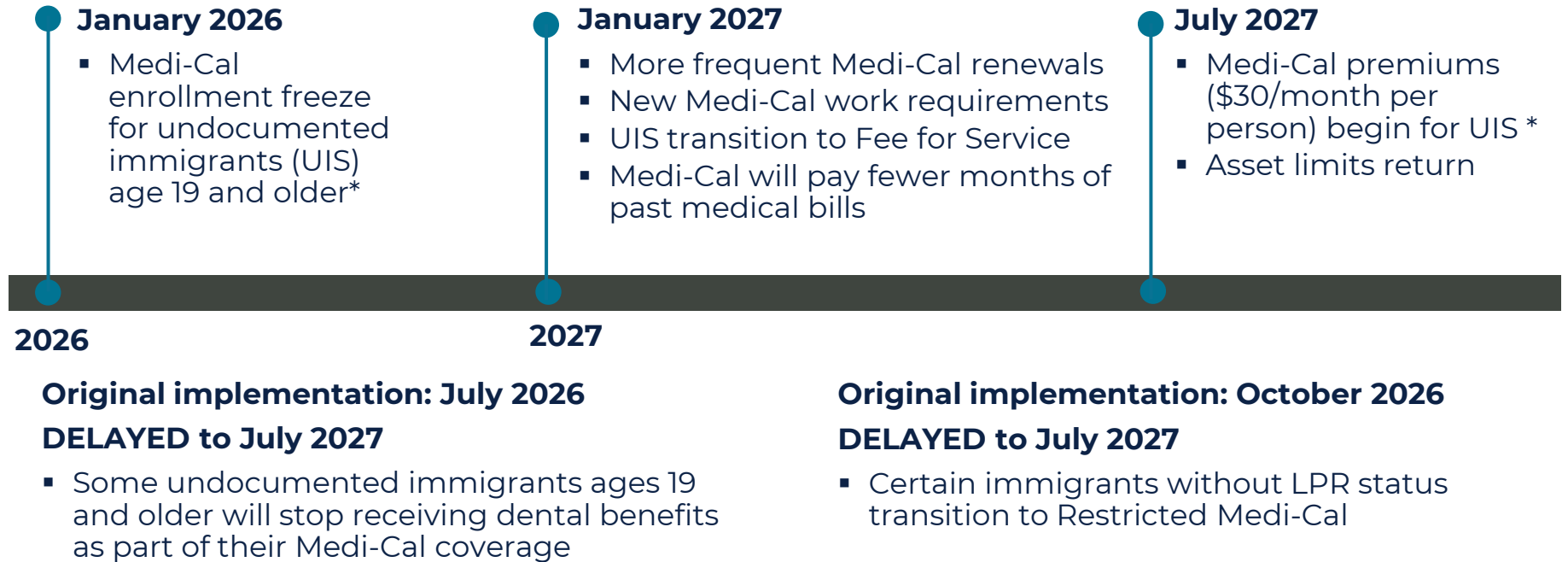


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Medi-Cal: State and Federal Policy Changes Updates



Medi-Cal Policy Changes

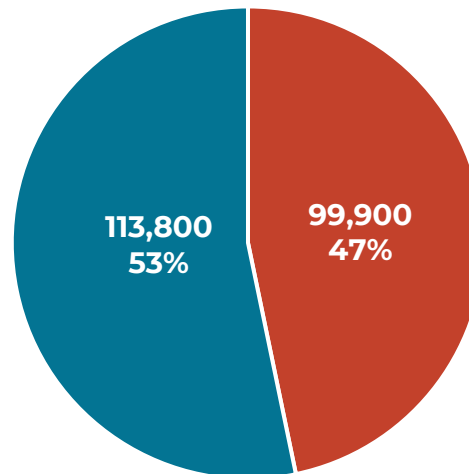


** Current and former foster youth who are undocumented are excluded from the state's enrollment freeze and new premiums until they turn 26. Pregnant people are also excluded.*



Total Medi-Cal Caseload: Nearly Half Subject to H.R. 1 Requirements

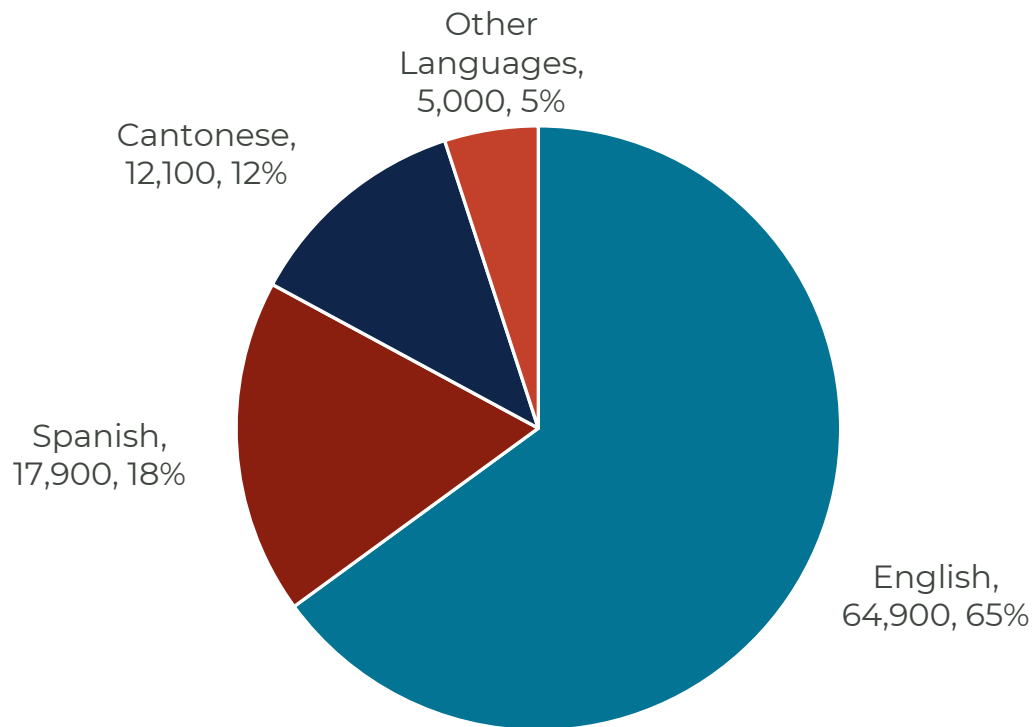
- Medi-Cal ACA Expansion, Group, age 19-64 (Subject to HR1 requirements)
- Estimated Medi-Cal, clients not affected



Source: CalSAWS March 2026



Medi-Cal HR1 Clients by Language



Source: CalSAWS March 2026

Other languages include Vietnamese (1,400 clients), Russian (700), and Filipino (300) among others





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SFHSA's H.R. 1 Action Plan: What We're Doing and Partnerships



HR1 Action Plan: Guiding Principle and Goals

Principle

- Access to basic needs such as food and health care should **not** be dependent on additional paperwork or work requirements.

Goals

- **Minimize benefit loss:** Help eligible individuals and families maintain access to food and health care coverage.
- **Support pathways to employment:** Connect clients with workforce services, training, education, and resources that promote long-term economic stability.



Our H.R. 1 Action Plan

Mitigating Harm Through Collective Action

1. **Analysis:** To inform plans, policies, staffing, outreach, workforce supports, and advocacy
2. **Stakeholder, Community and Client Engagement:** Targeted outreach to clients, CBOs, City departments, other stakeholders
3. **Workforce Services Expansion:** Expand supports to help clients meet requirements
4. **Innovation:** New technology pilots and process improvements
5. **Advocacy:** Funding for increased state and local resources



Spotlight: Expansion of Workforce Services

CalFresh Workfare Options

CalFresh Community Works Program

- Structured workfare program coordinated by SFHSA in partnership with United Way of the Bay Area (UWBA) and Project Open Hand
- Eligible for federal matching dollars so can expand our reach
- United Way of the Bay Area serves as the centralized coordinating body or "hub", while partner host nonprofit organizations supervise participants and complete monthly participation verification
- Nonprofit organizations hosting 15 or more CalFresh clients are compensated through our grant with the UWBA

Complete [this form](#) to become a host organization!



Spotlight: Expansion of Workforce Services

CalFresh Workfare Options

Self-Initiated Workfare

- Flexible client-driven option to meet work requirements
- Clients find their own volunteer placement
- Can include existing activities (e.g., volunteering at church or child's school)
- To document volunteer hours, clients are responsible for completing and submitting this State-issued [participation form](#) monthly to SFHSA



How Partners Can Help

Help clients stay enrolled and avoid benefit interruptions

1. **Become a CalFresh Community Works Site:** via United Way of the Bay Area
2. **Become a Self-Initiated Workfare Site:** help clients directly with volunteering opportunities and signing off on monthly participation
3. **Remind clients to keep their contact information updated**
 - Correct address, phone, and email help ensure clients receive renewal notices
 - Opt-in to receive text messages to receive notifications on renewals and emergencies
4. **Encourage clients to create their own BenefitsCal account**
 - Client accounts have an in-app online renewal and recertification flow
5. **Use client accounts whenever possible to resolve renewal issues**
 - Some renewal steps are only available in the client login
6. **Help clients check notices and submit documents quickly**
 - Responding to requests early can help prevent case closures





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Questions?

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