

In California, health care consumers have the right to an appointment when needed.

The law requires health plans licensed by the DMHC to make primary care providers and hospitals available within specific geographic and time-elapsd standards. Health plans must ensure their network of providers, including doctors, can provide enrollees with an appointment within a specific number of days or hours.

Urgent Care	
prior authorization not required by health plan  2 days	prior authorization required by health plan  4 days
Non-Urgent Care	
Doctor Appointment	
PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN  10 business days	SPECIALTY CARE PHYSICIAN  15 business days
Mental Health Appointment (non-physician ¹)  10 business days	Appointment (ancillary provider ²)  15 business days

¹ Examples of non-physician mental health providers include counseling professionals, substance abuse professionals and qualified autism service providers.

² Examples of non-urgent appointment for ancillary services include lab work or diagnostic testing, such as mammogram or MRI, and treatment of an illness or injury such as physical therapy.

Timely Access to Care Requirements



DISTANCE

Provide access to a primary care provider or a hospital within 15 miles or 30 minutes from where enrollees live or work.



AVAILABILITY

Your health plan should have telephone services available on a 24/7 basis.



INTERPRETER

Interpreter services must be coordinated with scheduled appointments for health care services to ensure interpreter services are provided at the time of the appointment.

Unable to get an Appointment Within the Timely Access Standard?



If you are not able to get an appointment within the timely access standard, you should first contact your health plan for assistance at the toll-free number listed on your health plan card. The DMHC Help Center is available at 1-888-466-2219 or www.HealthHelp.ca.gov to assist you if your health plan does not resolve the issue. The DMHC Help Center will work with you and your health plan to ensure you receive timely access to care.

If you believe you are experiencing a medical emergency, dial 9-1-1 or go to the nearest hospital. If your health issue is urgent, but not an emergency, and does not require prior approval or authorization from your health plan, you have the right to get care within 48 hours.

The waiting time for an appointment may be extended if a qualified health care provider has determined and made record that a longer waiting time will not be harmful to the enrollee's health.