



CALIFORNIA COVERAGE NOW INCLUDES MATERNITY CARE FOR INDIVIDUAL & SMALL GROUP HEALTH PLANS

As of July 1, 2012, California requires that all health insurance plans, including in the individual and small group markets, include maternity service as a covered benefit. This key consumer protection will help new mothers get the maternity coverage they need, which will provide a healthier start to their children, financial security for their families, savings for taxpayers, equity for women, and benefits for society into the future.

THE NEED FOR NEW RULES ON MATERNITY

While maternity care is obviously vital to life, in the past few years, insurers have relegated maternity coverage to a rarely-offered benefit. While large group health insurance plans and health maintenance organizations (HMOs) include maternity coverage, private individual plans and small group plans increasingly did not, and prior to July 2012, they were not required to provide coverage for maternity-related expenses. In 2004, 82% of plans included maternity coverage while in 2010, only 12% did. In some parts of the state, it is less than 1%. When women can get Viagra and other erectile dysfunction remedies, a stark gender inequality.

SAVING CONSUMERS MONEY

Several studies show that the lack of access to pregnancy related services can have detrimental effects on the health of mothers and children.

As a result, the state of California allows pregnant women to be covered under Medi-Cal or Access for Infants and Mothers (AIM). When insurers fail to recognize maternity care as an essential health benefit, Medi-Cal, and California taxpayers are then left picking up the tab. In 2006, 41.3%, or 232,241 births to resident Californians were paid by the Medi-Cal program. This number has inevitably grown as fewer and fewer insurers offer this benefit. By providing prenatal care to more women, it will reduce the incidence of premature births which cost an estimated \$2 billion dollars each year for Californians.

ASSURING QUALITY COVERAGE

The effort to pass the maternity coverage requirements was over eight years, five bills, four authors, and three Governors. The Affordable Care Act signed into law by President Obama in March 2010 will define a set of minimum essential benefits that must be covered by all insurance plans by 2014, including maternity care. Two bills passed by the California Legislature and signed by Governor Brown in 2011, AB210 (Hernandez) and SB222 (Evans/Alquist) implements a maternity care mandate 18 months earlier, no later than July 1, 2012, which provides a transition to implementing the full ACA.

The coverage for maternity services will include:

- Prenatal Care
- Ambulatory care maternity services
- Involuntary complications of pregnancy
- Neonatal care
- Inpatient hospital maternity care which include labor and delivery and postpartum care

This law will bring maternity coverage to thousands of women who do not have it now. Every child born in California deserves a safe and healthy start to life.

For more info, contact Health Access (916) 497-0923 or www.health-access.org