



**COVERED
CALIFORNIA**

Immigration and Eligibility

**Advanced Study Course
Participant Guide**

Version 1.0



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1. COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- ✓ Understand the basic differences between US citizens, US nationals and “lawfully present” immigrants and what health coverage they are eligible for.
- ✓ Understand how state residency, citizenship and immigration status is verified for Covered California health plans and Medi-Cal.
- ✓ Understand what other health coverage options exist for those who are not eligible for Covered California based on their immigration status, including immigrants with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status, undocumented immigrants, and those with other ineligible immigration statuses.
- ✓ Describe the various immigration documents that consumers can use to complete the application.
- ✓ Understand the term Mixed-Immigration Status Family and how different family members may qualify for different health coverage due to citizenship or immigration status.

2. IMMIGRATION AND ELIGIBILITY

The Affordable Care Act requires almost everyone to have health care coverage as of March 31, 2014 or pay a tax penalty when filing their 2014 taxes. This requirement is often referred to as the individual mandate. Individuals who are not US citizens, US nationals, or “lawfully present” in the United States (US), including undocumented immigrants, are exempt from any penalties associated with not having health insurance. Other individuals may also qualify for an exemption from the mandate due to low-income, or if they face a hardship. More information in the individual mandate can be found in Certification Course 1, *Introduction to the Affordable Care Act and Covered California*.

All California residents, regardless of their immigration status, may apply through CoveredCA.com, to find out what affordable health coverage options they are eligible for. California residents who are US citizens, US nationals, or individuals who are considered “lawfully present,” are generally eligible for affordable, quality health coverage through Covered California health plans and may be eligible for financial assistance, including premium assistance and cost-sharing reductions. Medi-Cal uses somewhat different eligibility criteria for “qualified aliens” to determine immigration eligibility.

Immigrants who are not considered “lawfully present,” including undocumented immigrants, are not eligible to purchase a Covered California health plan. These individuals should indicate on the application that they do not have “eligible status.” This only means the individual does not have an immigration status that makes them eligible for health coverage with Covered California; it is not a declaration that the individual is undocumented.

Individuals who are not US citizens, US nationals, or considered “lawfully present,” may be eligible for health coverage through Medi-Cal, although the benefits may be limited. Other health coverage options may also be available through an individual’s county of residence or the private insurance market outside of Covered California.

IMPORTANT NOTE

US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will not use information about individuals or household members obtained through the CoveredCA.com application as a basis for pursuing any immigration enforcement action. Information about applicants can be shared with the Department of Homeland Security to verify citizenship or immigration status with the sole purpose of verifying eligibility for Covered California health plans or Medi-Cal. Citizenship and immigration status will not be verified for family members on the application *not* seeking coverage.

WHOSE INFORMATION IS NEEDED ON THE APPLICATION

Only those individuals of a household who are applying for coverage must provide their citizenship or immigration status on the application. If a family member is not seeking health coverage, he or she is considered a non-applicant. This person may be the application filer. Non-applicants or application filers in the tax household who are not seeking health coverage must be included in the application, but these individuals do not have to provide information about citizenship or immigration status. Whether or not an individual is undocumented, they may apply and be considered a non-applicant. For example, an undocumented parent may be applying for health coverage for a citizen child.

Applicants who have a social security number (SSN), must provide it on the application. If individuals wish to obtain an SSN, they can apply for one at their local Social Security Administration office. Individuals seeking coverage who have applied for an SSN but do not have it at the time of application may still apply. They can update their information with Covered California within 90 days.

Non-applicants are also recommended to provide their SSN. It is not required of non-applicants, but it is highly recommended because it gives Covered California the ability to electronically verify household income. Non-applicants who do not have an SSN may provide alternate documents, such as an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN), or paycheck stubs, to help verify their income. An SSN is not used to verify citizenship or immigration status for non-applicants.

USING SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS AND INDIVIDUAL TAXPAYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS

Citizens and “lawfully present” immigrants will most likely have an SSN issued to them by the Social Security Administration. Certain “lawfully present” immigrants may have their SSN pending or do not need an SSN (e.g., child seeking asylum) so a lack of a SSN does not necessarily indicate the individual is undocumented.

For individuals who do not have an SSN, the Internal Revenue Service issues an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) to allow those individuals to file taxes. The ITIN and SSN both contain nine numbers and function as tax identification numbers. The ITIN always begins with the number nine and the fourth and fifth digits are always a seven or an eight.

The Internal Revenue Service discontinued issuing cards imprinted with ITINs and now issues a letter instead. However, an example of an ITIN card is shown below:



An example of a social security card is shown below:



Immigrants may also have valid Social Security Cards that read:

- NOT VALID FOR EMPLOYMENT
- VALID FOR WORK ONLY WITH INS AUTHORIZATION
- VALID FOR WORK ONLY WITH DHS AUTHORIZATION

3. DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

VERIFYING CITIZENSHIP, IMMIGRATION STATUS, AND STATE RESIDENCY

Covered California is required to verify US citizenship, US nationality, or “lawfully present” immigration status for applicants who apply for Covered California health plans. In most cases, Covered California is able to electronically verify an applicant’s attestation of US citizenship, US nationality, or immigration status using available data from the Social Security Administration and the Department of Homeland Security.

The following table lists the electronic databases that make up Covered California’s federal data services hub that is used to verify certain eligibility information for applicants only:

Eligibility Factor	Data Source
Social Security Number	Social Security Administration
Citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Security Administration • Department of Homeland Security
Immigration Status	Department of Homeland Security
Residency	Applicant’s (and only applicant’s) attestation is accepted unless the information does not match other data records (e.g., DMV)

If an individual's citizenship or immigration status cannot be verified electronically or the application information is not compatible with the information collected, the individual is notified in writing and asked to provide additional documentation. The applicant has 90 days to provide additional documentation. If the applicant has requested documents from the relevant agency, but is unable to get the documents within 90 days, he or she may be provided additional time to provide the documents if a "good faith effort" is made. If an individual provided the necessary documentation, but his or her application was subsequently denied, he or she has the right to appeal.

REMOTE IDENTITY PROOFING

Anyone submitting an application or reporting a change to Covered California must now provide proof of identity. This is a one-time requirement and only applies to the household's primary contact person. The identity proofing process can only be completed if, on the Apply for Benefits page, the Application Source selected is "Phone".

Once an applicant's identity is proven he or she will not need to verify their identity again, even if details such as their name, address, phone number or Social Security number change.

One method of Identity Proofing is visual verification, also known as Administrative User Attestation. You can help the applicant with the visual verification process by uploading the document from the consumer which you visually verify to prove their identity. Assuming the consumer has delegated the application access to you, you may also help them complete the identity verification process online without having to upload documents. This process starts on the Household Primary Contact page of the CoveredCA.com application. On this page the applicant is asked for permission to confirm their identity. To continue, they have to click the 'Yes' radio button.

This triggers a connection to an online service run by a credit reporting company called Experian. Experian confirms identity by checking information about the applicant against data in their system. The applicant has to answer a few multiple choice questions about themselves to verify their identity. The Experian service then sends the results back to Covered California.

If the service is able to confirm the consumer's identity based on how they answer the questions, the application process continues. If not, the applicant is given a referral code and asked to call a customer service representative at Experian. The representative uses the referral code to guide their effort to confirm the applicant's identity. During the phone call, they ask the applicant further questions that can confirm the person's identity. Representatives are available who can communicate in multiple languages.

If the consumer cannot complete the process – either by visually verifying with an in-person assister or online through Experian – they can mail in a paper application to be verified and processed by Covered California staff. A paper application is **not** the preferred verification method for verification, and should only be done if the consumer does not have documentation on-hand or cannot complete the process online.

Once the identity proofing is complete, enter the primary contact's information and language preferences, and then click 'Continue'.

US CITIZENS AND US NATIONALS

Definition

A US citizen is an individual who was conferred US citizenship at birth, including those who were born in the United States, or naturalized as a US citizen. A naturalized citizen is an individual who was not born in the US but who became a US citizen after birth. Under the law, both types of citizens are treated the same and have the same rights.

A US national is either a US citizen or a person who owes permanent allegiance to the US, like those individuals born in American Samoa or Swains Island (the two unincorporated territories of the US).

The following table includes a list of various documents that may be used as proof of citizenship or nationality:

Status	Documents*	Program Eligibility
US Citizen or US National		
Born in the US or a person who owes permanent allegiance to the US (i.e. those born in American Samoa or Swains Island)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Security Number • Birth Certificate • Certificate of US Citizenship (N-560 or N-561) • U.S. Passport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covered California health plan, with or without financial assistance • Full-scope Medi-Cal
US Naturalized Citizen		
Naturalized as a US citizen (became a US citizen after birth)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate of Naturalization (N-550 or N-570) • Certificate of US Citizenship (N-560 or N-561) • US Passport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covered California health plan, with or without financial assistance • Full-scope Medi-Cal

*Note: Photocopies of these documents are permitted to use by Covered California for eligibility determination

A current US passport may be used to prove identity and US citizenship or nationality; an expired passport may only be used to verify identity. If a US passport is not available, an individual can obtain a new or replacement passport from the United States Department of State. A certificate of US citizenship or naturalization may be obtained through the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

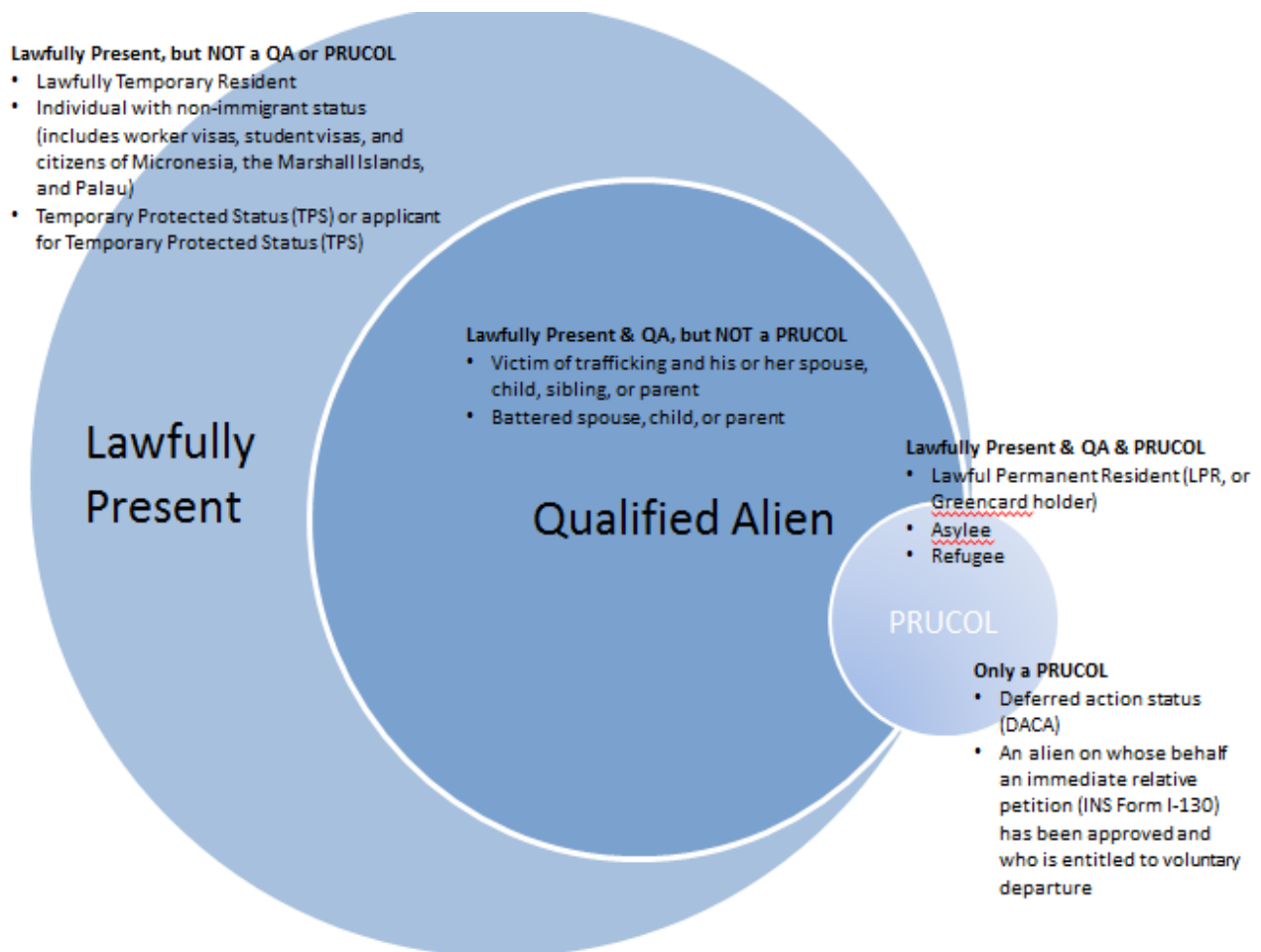
LAWFULLY PRESENT INDIVIDUALS, QUALIFIED ALIENS, AND PRUCOL

There are three types of immigration categories relevant to health coverage eligibility for Covered California and Medi-Cal: “Lawfully Present,” Qualified Aliens, and individuals Permanently Residing in the US Under the Color of Law (PRUCOL).

- **“Lawfully Present”**: A broad immigration category developed under the ACA and used for Covered California eligibility purposes.

- **Qualified Aliens:** A slightly less broad immigration category developed under federal law and used for Medi-Cal federal funding purposes and the “five-year bar” from receiving federal means-tested public benefits. All qualified aliens are “lawfully present,” but not all “lawfully present” individuals are qualified aliens.
- **Permanently Residing in the US Under the Color of Law (PRUCOL):** An immigration status used by Medi-Cal to determine eligibility. PRUCOLs who are not also considered qualified aliens may be eligible for state-only funded Medi-Cal, but not Covered California.

The diagram below illustrates the general relationship of these immigration categories. It does not include all immigration statuses in these categories; there are many more not included.



“LAWFULLY PRESENT” INDIVIDUALS

“Lawfully present” individuals are immigrants or non-citizens who have permission to live or work in the US and are eligible for health coverage through Covered California health plans.

Individuals with these statuses qualify for Covered California:

- Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR/Green Card holder)
- Asylee
- Refugee
- Cuban/Haitian Entrant
- Paroled into the U.S.
- Conditional Entrant Granted before 1980
- Battered Spouse, Child and Parent
- Victim of Trafficking and his/her Spouse, Child, Sibling or Parent
- Granted Withholding of Deportation or Withholding of Removal, under the immigration laws or under the Convention against Torture (CAT)
- Individual with Non-immigrant Status (includes worker visas, student visas, and citizens of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau)
- Temporary Protected Status (TPS)
- Deferred Enforced Departure (DED)
- Deferred Action Status (However, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is not an eligible immigration status for applying for health insurance with Covered California)
- Lawful Temporary Resident
- Administrative order staying removal issued by the Department of Homeland Security
- Member of a federally-recognized Indian tribe or American Indian Born in Canada
- Resident of American Samoa

Individuals who have applied for these statuses qualify to for Covered California:

- Temporary Protected Status with Employment Authorization
- Special Immigrant Juvenile Status
- Victim of Trafficking Visa
- Adjustment to LPR Status
- Asylum (see note below)
- Withholding of Deportation, or Withholding of Removal, under the immigration laws or under the Convention against Torture (CAT) (see note below)
- Applicants for asylum are eligible for Marketplace coverage only if they’ve been granted employment authorization or are under the age of 14 and have had an application pending for at least 180 days.

Individuals with the following statuses and who have employment authorization qualify for Covered California:

- Registry Applicants
- Order of Supervision
- Applicant for Cancellation of Removal or Suspension of Deportation
- Applicant for Legalization under IRCA
- Legalization under the LIFE Act

It is important to remember that this list of “lawfully present” immigrants is solely for purposes of determining eligibility for health care coverage through a Covered California health plan. Individuals whose immigration status is not listed above may otherwise have a valid status for immigration purposes and are not necessarily undocumented.

Documentation

The majority of individuals who have a “lawfully present” status listed above will have an Alien Registration Number, also referred to as an “A number.” This is now known as an immigrant’s USCIS number, which is how it appears on more recent immigration documents. Other individuals who have a “lawfully present” status may have an I-94 number on their visa.

The following table is a non-exhaustive list of various immigration statuses and documents that may be used as proof of “lawful presence”:

Status	Documentation*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lawful permanent residents (LPR/Green Card Holders) • Asylees • Refugees • Cuban/Haitian entrants • Individuals paroled into the US for at least one year • Individuals with conditional entry granted before 1980 • Battered non-citizens, spouses, children, or parents • Victims of trafficking along with their spouses, children, siblings, or parents, or individuals with a pending application for a victim of trafficking visa • Individuals granted withholding of deportation • Members of federally recognized Indian tribes or American Indians born in Canada • Humanitarian statuses or circumstances (including Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Enforced Departure, Special Juvenile Status, asylum applicants, Convention Against Torture, victims of trafficking) • Valid non-immigrant visas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent Resident Card/Resident Alien Card/“Green Card” with expiration date (I-551) • Machine Readable Immigrant Visa (with temporary I-551 language) • Temporary I-551 Stamp (on passport or I-94) • Permit to Reenter US (I-327) • Refugee Travel Document (I-571) • Employment Authorization Document (I-766) • Arrival/Departure Record (I-94) • Arrival/Departure Record in foreign passport (I-94) • Unexpired Foreign Passport • Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status (I-20) • Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status (DS2019) • Notice of Action (I-797) • Document indicating membership in a federally recognized Indian tribe or American Indian born in Canada • Certification from US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) • Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) eligibility letter (if under 18)

Status	Documentation*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal status conferred by other laws (lawful temporary resident status, LIFE Act, Family Unity individuals) • Individual with a work or student visa who intends to become a permanent resident of California 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document indicating withholding of removal • Administrative order staying removal issued by the Department of Homeland Security

*Note: Photocopies of these documents are permitted to use by Covered California for eligibility determination

For a comprehensive list of “lawfully present” individuals and corresponding documentation evidencing eligible status under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) please visit the In-Person Administrative System (IPAS): <https://ipas.ccgrantsandassistors.org/> and access “[Categories of Lawful Presence Documentation](#)” and “[Commonly Used Immigration Documents](#).”

LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENT CARDS (“GREEN CARDS”)

Individuals who are lawful permanent residents (LPRs) will most often have a Permanent Resident Card (Form I-551). The current card that was first issued in May 2010 is green in color and provides the individual’s name, photo, card number and other items. The 13-character document number, or card number, is printed on the back of the card, and the expiration date on the bottom of the front of the card. Older versions of the Permanent Resident Card are still in circulation, which have the card identification number printed on the front. Some Permanent Resident Cards, issued before December 1997 do not have a document number and/or an expiration date.

Examples of Permanent Resident Cards (front and back) issued in May 2010 with the document ID number circled in red and the expiration date circled in blue are shown below:



Examples of Permanent Resident Cards issued in May 2004 (left) and December 1997 (right), which are still in circulation



On the CoveredCA.com application, if a Permanent Resident Card does not have a document number, an individual should enter 3 letter 'ZZZ's followed by 10 zeros (e.g. ZZZ0000000000) in the document ID number field in the application. If the LPR card does not have an expiration date, the date of 12/31/9999 should be entered in the expiration date in the application.

Please be aware, the CoveredCA.com application will not be able to automatically verify any consumer and they will require a manual verification (e.g. uploading documents) if any of the following values are entered:

- Alien Number: 999999999
- Card Number: ZZZ9999999999
- Expiration Date: 12/31/9999

QUALIFIED ALIENS

Qualified alien statuses are used to determine eligibility for Medi-Cal.

- Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR/Green Card holder)
- Asylee
- Refugee
- Paroled into the U.S.
- Granted Withholding of Deportation or Withholding of Removal, under the immigration laws or under the Convention against Torture (CAT)
- Conditional Entrant Granted before 1980
- Cuban/Haitian Entrant
- Battered Spouse, Child and Parent
- An alien granted nonimmigrant status or who has a pending application

NOTE: Unlike the federal requirements for Medicaid, there is no five-year waiting period for qualified aliens in California to enroll in Medi-Cal. For example, “green card” holders can receive full-scope Medi-Cal coverage even if they have held permanent resident status in the US for less than five years.

PERMANENTLY RESIDING IN THE UNITED STATES UNDER THE COLOR OF LAW (PRUCOL)

Medi-Cal recognizes individuals Permanently Residing in the U.S. Under the Color of Law (PRUCOL) for eligibility purposes. If an individual's immigration status is not listed in the above list of “lawfully present” statuses he or she may be considered PRUCOL and eligible for Medi-Cal even if ineligible for coverage through a Covered CA health plan.

The following is a list of immigration statuses considered PRUCOL per Medi-Cal's definition. It is not a comprehensive list of PRUCOL categories.

- A conditional entrant admitted to the US before April 1, 1980
- An alien paroled into the US, including Cuban/Haitian entrants
- An alien subject to an Order of Supervision
- An alien granted an indefinite stay of deportation
- An alien granted an indefinite voluntary departure
- An alien on whose behalf an immediate relative petition (INS Form I-130) has been approved and who is entitled to voluntary departure

- An alien who has properly filed an application for lawful permanent resident status
- An alien granted a stay of deportation for a specific period
- An alien granted asylum
- A refugee admitted to the US since April 1, 1980
- An alien granted voluntary departure who is awaiting issuance of a visa
- An alien in deferred action status
- An alien who entered and has continuously resided in the US since before January 1, 1972, who would be eligible for an adjustment of status to lawful permanent resident pursuant to INA Section 249 (eligible as a Registry Alien)
- An alien granted a suspension of deportation whose departure INS does not contemplate enforcing
- An alien granted withholding of deportation pursuant to INA Section 243(h)
- An alien, not in one of the above categories, who can show that (1) INS knows he/she is in the US; and (2) INS does not intend to deport him/her, either because of the person's status category or individual circumstances

Individuals claiming PRUCOL status for Medi-Cal eligibility purposes will be screened directly by the counties. Medi-Cal will later send them a Medi-Cal form, known as the MC-13 or "Statement of Citizenship, Alienage, and Immigration Status," to complete. For a copy of the MC-13 form, please visit: <http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/forms/Forms/mc13.pdf>.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

Individuals with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status are considered PRUCOL, as are other individuals with "deferred action status." DACA does not provide "lawful status" or US citizenship; instead, if eligible, an individual will not be deported from the US.

DACA individuals are not eligible to obtain health coverage through Covered California because they are excluded from the definition of "lawfully present" under federal law. Nevertheless, they may be eligible to obtain coverage for full-scope Medi-Cal because "deferred action status" is one of the PRUCOL immigration statuses discussed above.

Documents that may be used by DACA individuals to prove their status include: an Employment Authorization Document/Work Permit (Form I-766) with a status code of "C-33;" or Form I-210, Form I-797 Notice of Action, or a letter indicating that the alien has been granted deferred enforced departure/deferred action.

UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

Undocumented immigrants do not qualify for Covered California health plans but may qualify for restricted-scope Medi-Cal, if otherwise eligible for Medi-Cal. Restricted-scope Medi-Cal is limited to coverage for emergencies and pregnancy. Although undocumented immigrants are not eligible for Covered California health plans, they should apply for other family members who may be eligible, like their U.S. citizen children. See below regarding mixed status families.

The following table outlines Restricted-scope Medi-Cal:

Status	Valid Documentation	Program Eligibility
Undocumented Immigrants		
An individual who is not considered “lawfully present,” a qualified alien, or PRUCOL for health coverage through Covered California or Medi-Cal.	Not applicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricted-scope Medi-Cal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Emergency-related services, including dialysis ○ State-funded long-term care (LTC) ○ Pregnancy-related services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Labor and delivery ▪ Up to 60 days of post-partum care • Family planning services Medi-Cal Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Program (BCCTP) (limited time period) Family Planning Access, Care, and Treatment (Family PACT) Child Health and Disability Prevention Program (CHDP) edi-Cal Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Program (BCCTP) (limited time period) • Medi-Cal Access Program (formerly the AIM program) • Family Planning Access, Care, and Treatment (Family PACT) • Child Health and Disability Prevention Program (CHDP)

Pregnancy-Related Medi-Cal

Pregnant women, regardless of immigration status, with incomes up to 213% of the FPL are eligible for pregnancy-related coverage through Medi-Cal. In 2015, pregnant women who are citizens or lawfully present immigrants, with incomes up to 138% FPL will be eligible for full-scope Medi-Cal; those with incomes between 138% and 213% FPL can qualify for pregnancy-related Medi-Cal as well as a Covered California health plan with premium assistance if they choose to do so. Pregnant women who are undocumented will remain eligible for pregnancy-related Medi-Cal up to 213% FPL, which in 2015 will be shifting to 138%.

Pregnancy-related coverage is defined as anything that is either caused by, or will affect, the outcome of the pregnancy. Therefore, most medical needs of the pregnant women will be covered. Pregnancy Medi-Cal will cover labor, delivery and up to 60 days post-partum coverage, in addition to certain dental benefits, including cleaning and treatment for gingivitis.

It is important to remember that for determining household size for Medi-Cal eligibility purposes, a pregnant woman is counted as herself and the total number of babies she is expecting. In contrast, she is counted as one person for Covered California household size and eligibility purposes. For more information on Pregnancy Medi-Cal see the Advanced Study Course: *Medi-Cal*

Non-Immigrants

Non-Immigrants who have certain visas, including work visas or student visas are considered “lawfully present.” However, they may not be eligible for Covered California or Medi-Cal if they do not meet state residency requirements for either program. It is recommended that non-immigrants seek advice from an immigration attorney before they apply.

The following table includes a list of various documents that may be used to verify non-immigrant status:

Status	Documentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with temporary visas • Individuals with temporary visas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment Authorization Card (I-766) • Temporary I-551 Stamp (on passport, I-94, or I-94A) • Arrival/Departure Record (I-94, I-94A) issued by USCIS • Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status (I-20)(with A number or I-94 number) • Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status (DS2019)(with A number or I-94 number)

For additional non-immigrant statuses, including S, T, and U visas, and corresponding documentation of “lawful presence” please see: [“Categories of Lawful Presence Documentation.”](#)

4. MIXED-IMMIGRATION STATUS FAMILIES

Mixed-immigration status families, or mixed status families, refer to households living in the U.S. whose family members have different citizenship or immigration statuses. For example, a common mixed status family may include an undocumented father, a “lawfully present” mother, and a child that is a US Citizen. Each member of a mixed-status family may be eligible for a different health insurance program, but they all can apply through CoveredCA.com on one application.

Undocumented family members in a mixed status family may be listed on the application as either a non-applicant or the application filer if they are not applying for themselves. For example, an undocumented parent may apply for coverage for an eligible child and be the application filer. However, the parent may also apply for coverage to see if they are eligible for health coverage options through Medi-Cal, regardless of immigration status.

Whether or not applying on behalf of themselves, undocumented immigrants should leave the social security number field blank rather than entering a false SSN.

Public Charge

Immigrants may be reluctant to apply for health coverage because they think doing so may harm their or their family members’ immigration status or future permanent resident or citizenship applications. The “public charge test” is used by immigration authorities when an individual is applying for a green card or a visa to determine if an immigrant may need to rely on government benefits in the long-term. Use of government benefits by an immigrant is one factor of the public charge test.

Per immigration, if they are otherwise eligible, immigrants can apply and use traditional health care coverage from Covered California or Medi-Cal, without it affecting the public charge test. Immigrants who receive premium assistance can do so without it affecting their immigration status. The one exception is if an immigrant receives long-term institutionalized care through Medi-Cal (e.g. residential nursing homes and mental health facilities) which may lead to a determination that the immigrant is likely to become a public charge. Finally, immigrants do not

have to worry about public charge if they are applying for coverage for citizen family members since the public charge test does not apply to them.

Individuals who are concerned about how applying for health coverage may affect their immigration status should be referred to the Health Consumer Alliance for additional assistance and should seek advice from an immigration attorney.

5. SPECIAL ENROLLMENT DUE TO CHANGE IN CITIZENSHIP OR IMMIGRATION STATUS

Most individuals enroll in a Covered California health plan during the open enrollment period, but can enroll in Medi-Cal anytime during the year. To enroll in coverage outside of Covered California's open enrollment period, an individual must experience a "qualifying life event." A special enrollment period (SEP) is allowed for individuals who experience a qualifying life event, to allow enrollment in a Covered California health insurance plan. All special enrollment periods last 60 days from the date of the qualifying life event.

One of the qualifying events is becoming newly eligible for a Covered California health plan due to a change in immigration or citizenship status. Most changes in immigration or citizenship status will not trigger a special enrollment period since "lawfully present" immigrants who move from one status to another or become citizens should already have been eligible to enroll in coverage. However, there may be instances during the year where an individual who was not an immigrant or was previously undocumented, may gain lawful immigration or citizenship status and becomes newly eligible to enroll in a Covered California health plan.