

§ 1368.05. Direct consumer assistance activities by Department of Managed Health Care; Contracts with community-based consumer assistance organizations

(a)(1) By enacting this section, which was originally enacted by Assembly Bill 922 (Chapter 552 of the Statutes of 2011), the Legislature recognizes that, because of the enactment of federal health care reform on March 23, 2010, and the implementation of various provisions by January 1, 2014, and the ongoing complexities of health care reform, it is appropriate to transfer the direct consumer assistance activities to the Department of Managed Health Care, and the Legislature recognizes that these new duties are necessary to be carried out by the department in partnership with community-based consumer assistance organizations for the purposes of serving California's health care consumers.

(2) In addition to maintaining the toll-free telephone number for the purpose of receiving complaints regarding health care service plans as required in Section 1368.02, the department and its contractors shall carry out these new responsibilities, which include assisting consumers in navigating private and public health care coverage and assisting consumers in determining the regulator that regulates the health care coverage of a particular consumer. In order to further assist in implementing health care reform, the department and its contractors shall also receive and respond to inquiries, complaints, and requests for assistance and education concerning health care coverage available in California.

(b)(1) The department shall annually contract with community-based organizations in furtherance of providing assistance to consumers as described in subdivision (a), as authorized by and in accordance with Section 19130 of the Government Code.

(2) These organizations shall be community-based nonprofit consumer assistance programs that shall include in their mission the assistance of, and duty to, health care consumers.

(3) Contracting consumer assistance organizations shall have experience in assisting consumers in navigating the local health care system, advising consumers regarding their health care coverage options, assisting consumers with problems in accessing health care services, and serving consumers with special needs, including, but not limited to, consumers with limited-English language proficiency, consumers requiring culturally competent

services, low-income consumers, consumers with disabilities, consumers with low literacy rates, and consumers with multiple health conditions, including behavioral health. The organizations shall also have experience with, and the capacity for, collecting and reporting data regarding the consumers they assist, including demographic data, source of coverage, regulator, type of problem or issue, and resolution of complaints.

HISTORY:

Added Stats 2014 ch 31 § 7 (SB 857), effective June 20, 2014. Amended Stats 2015 ch 303 §

256 (AB 731), effective January 1, 2016; Stats 2021 ch 696 § 8 (AB 172).