



# Texting members equals health equity

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The latest guidance from DHCS regarding texting is an important step forward for health equity.

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The California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) has taken an important step forward on the path to health equity for Medi-Cal members. Following guidance from CMS, DHCS issued an all-plan **letter** on March 17 urging Medicaid plans to use text messaging for:

- Obtaining the correct contact information from members — a task that the State says must begin immediately
- Helping members with renewals once the public health emergency declaration expires

## Why it matters

A hotly debated topic in the healthcare space, the guidance from DHCS is significant because it suggests that the status quo for communicating with members isn't as effective as it could be, particularly when time is of the essence. At some point in the not-so-distant future, the public health emergency is going to end and **up to 15 million Medicaid members** are going to find themselves either needing to renew their coverage, or enroll in their state's health insurance exchange. That is a lot of information to distribute quickly.

The good news? Most people have cell phones – **97% of Americans own a cell phone, and 92% have a smartphone**. This is also true in households making less than \$30K per year, though their smartphone ownership drops slightly to 83%. In our work with health plans, we find time and again that most members (10 to 1) prefer to communicate via text messaging.

Texting members advances health equity, because it inherently makes messaging more readily distributed and accessible. It meets people where they are, with their preferences in mind. When you treat people like they matter, you get higher engagement. In fact, through our own experience with Medi-Cal members, we have found that if you take a culturally and linguistically centered approach to outreach, member engagement is 30% higher.

SameSky Health is ready to advance health equity and meet members where they are; it's essential to connecting people from underserved communities to care. We applaud DHCS for taking this important first step and we look forward to seeing Medi-Cal lead the way for the rest of the country.

Learn more about our approach [here](#).