



News Release

Media line: (916) 206-7777

@CoveredCANews

media@covered.ca.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 7, 2020

Covered California and Top State Health Care Leaders Urge Californians to “Do the Right Thing, Right Now” by Staying Home and Staying Safe to Fight COVID-19

- *Physicians and health centers across the state announce they are reaching out personally to all their patients to encourage them to stay safe from COVID and get insurance coverage if they are eligible — many will receive Covered California’s masks to get the message out that now is the time to get covered and stay covered.*
- *California’s leading provider organizations — including the California Hospital Association, California Medical Association, California Academy of Family Physicians, the California Primary Care Association and America’s Medical Groups — are making sure the trusted voice of physicians and other health care heroes are speaking to millions of Californians with the message of remaining vigilant until the vaccine arrives.*
- *According to a survey conducted by Covered California, the pandemic continues to touch most Californians, finding that 52 percent of Californians say the pandemic has affected their lives significantly, more than 40 percent personally know someone who has tested positive for the virus, and more than one in four people knows someone who has died from COVID-19.*
- *The Latino population has been the most affected, having suffered 58 percent of California’s over 1.3 million COVID-19 cases and 48 percent of the nearly 20,000 deaths.*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — With the surge of COVID-19 throughout California leading to stay-at-home orders covering almost 90 percent of Californians, top health care leaders and Covered California have joined forces to urge Californians to stay home, wear a mask and get insured.

(more)

Covered California announced today its partnership with top medical groups and physicians' associations and their members to reach Californians with important messages promoting COVID-19 safety. It also asked for all Californians to do the right thing to protect themselves and their communities. As part of this effort, physicians from across the state are reaching out to their patients with emails to drive this message home, including nearly 38,000 active physicians and residency students from the California Medical Association's nearly 50,000 members, another 10,700 physicians, residents and students from the California Academy of Family Physicians and another almost 9,000 clinicians in the California Primary Care Association membership of community health centers.

"Normally in this time of year during open enrollment, we'd be talking about health care coverage, but this year, that means wearing a mask and staying safe first," said Covered California Executive Director Peter V. Lee. "Wearing a mask isn't a political statement, it's a pro-community statement. Covering up with a mask will help protect Californians and their families and friends, and getting covered with a health plan will help protect people if they get sick or injured in 2021."

Covered California began mailing its members masks two weeks ago, and over 1.5 million will have been delivered by the end of this week. Covered California is also sending masks to more than 50,000 doctors on the front lines, and asking them to wear their Covered California masks, so the message of being covered reaches their patients.



"These are not ordinary masks, but masks with a message," Lee said. "We're all wearing masks, it's hard and we're tired of it, but these masks are a reminder that we're wearing them for our community and those we care about. We're joined in this effort by those on the front lines, who want to implore Californians to continue doing the right thing."

Carmela Coyle, president and CEO of the California Hospital Association, has seen the situation worsen in hospitals over the past month, and she's asking more from Californians for the sake of frontline workers.

"This has been a grueling year for every Californian, but our health care workers need more from all of us," Coyle said. "With vaccine approvals in sight, there may be a light at the end of the tunnel, but we must get through the next few months. That will take cooperation, sacrifice and a real understanding that whatever this virus may have delivered in the past, it is likely to pack an even stronger punch now."

(more)

“We will only survive if all of us stand together to ‘clear the decks’ for health care providers; health care partners, to be supportive and flexible as they undertake their vital work; and all of us, who have an imperative duty to do our part by wearing a mask and staying home this holiday season. We implore every Californian to do just a bit more, for just a bit longer, to help health care workers and their families stay safe.”

With more than 1.3 million Californians infected by the virus, and a death toll that is closing in on 20,000, [the survey](#), taken by more than 3,000 Californians in both English and Spanish between Oct. 28 and Nov. 11, sheds new light on who is being hit hardest during the pandemic.

It found that COVID-19 has disproportionately affected the Latino community, with 33 percent saying they know someone who has died from COVID-19, higher than the statewide average of 28 percent. According to most recent data from the California Department of Public Health, Latinos in California make up 58 percent of California’s 1.3 million COVID-19 cases and 48 percent of the nearly 20,000 deaths.

Dr. Melissa Campos, a family medicine specialist at Scripps Valley Memorial, has seen some of the devastation and complications caused by COVID-19 firsthand in the San Diego area, including in the maternity ward.

“Just last week, I was treating a pregnant woman with COVID-19 who was very ill and needing oxygen in her third trimester. She was terrified she would not be strong enough to deliver her baby, and that experience will stick with me forever,” said Dr. Campos. “It’s hard, and it’s honestly frightening to see the number of cases increasing so quickly. That’s why I’m pleading with all Californians to stay home and stay covered with a mask.”

Even with the ongoing pandemic, an estimated 1.2 million uninsured people in the state are either eligible for financial help through Covered California, or they qualify for low-cost or no-cost coverage through Medi-Cal. Of those eligible for subsidies through Covered California, more than half are believed to be Latino.

The importance of health care coverage has been illuminated in 2020 with the COVID-19 outbreak. Coverage for 2021 is available through Covered California’s open enrollment until Jan. 31. Lee encouraged Californians to stay covered with a mask until the vaccine arrives and get covered for next year.

“Up until now this was a race without a finish line, but we now have an end in sight,” Lee said. “With a vaccine becoming more widely available by the spring, we have to be vigilant and make sure we do not spread the virus for the next few months and overwhelm the hospitals and the estimated 2.4 million Californians who are part of the state’s medical workforce. Let’s get to this finish line — safely and together.”

(more)

Covered California also announced its participation in a national effort called [Get Covered 2021](#) to promote the message of “Stay Healthy,” by practicing COVID prevention, and “Get Insured,” reminding them to get insurance coverage if they are among the 1.2 million Californians and 16 million Americans uninsured, but eligible for financial help or potentially free Medicaid.

This national effort will be promoted this coming Thursday on Get Covered America Day, when Californians will be hearing from celebrities, athletes and their friends and neighbors.

“We’re calling on all Californians to share a message of health this Thursday — reminding all those they know to keep at it and wear a mask,” said Lee. “Californians can join athletes, celebrities, doctors and neighbors to get the word out this week by sharing www.getcovered2021.org and #getcovered2021.”

Consumers can visit www.CoveredCA.com and find out if they are eligible for either lower-cost private plans through Covered California or free coverage through Medi-Cal (which is open year-round). Californians who sign up for health insurance through Covered California by Dec. 15 will have coverage that begins on Jan. 1, 2021.

Those interested in learning more about their coverage options can also:

- Visit www.CoveredCA.com.
- Get free and confidential assistance over the phone, in a variety of languages, from a certified enroller.
- [Have a certified enroller call them](#) and help them for free.
- Call Covered California at (800) 300-1506.

About Covered California

Covered California is the state’s health insurance marketplace, where Californians can find affordable, high-quality insurance from top insurance companies. Covered California is the only place where individuals who qualify can get financial assistance on a sliding scale to reduce premium costs. Consumers can then compare health insurance plans and choose the plan that works best for their health needs and budget. Depending on their income, some consumers may qualify for the low-cost or no-cost Medi-Cal program.

Covered California is an independent part of the state government whose job is to make the health insurance marketplace work for California’s consumers. It is overseen by a five-member board appointed by the governor and the Legislature. For more information about Covered California, please visit www.CoveredCA.com.

###