

Timely Access to Care

My daughter is enrolled in a MediCal Managed Care Plan and needs to see a therapist as soon as possible. I keep calling for an appointment, but so far the only thing that is available is in 6 weeks. What can I do?

The California Department of Managed Health Care, which regulates most of the MediCal Managed Care plans, has set out the following maximum timeframes for getting an appointment with a medical or mental health provider.¹

Appointment Type	Timeframe
Urgent Care (prior authorization not required by health plan)	48 hours from request
Urgent Care (prior authorization required by health plan)	96 hours from request
Non-Urgent Doctor Appointment (primary care physician)	10 business days
Non-Urgent Doctor Appointment (specialty physician)	15 business days
Non-Urgent Mental Health Appointment (non-physician) ²	10 business days
Non-Urgent Appointment (ancillary provider) ³	15 business days

As the above chart indicates, you should have an appointment with a mental health provider within 10 business days of the request. If it is taking longer, file a complaint by contacting the Health Center at the California Department of Managed Health Care at 1-888-466-2619 or at www.HealthHelp.ca.gov.

¹ Thanks to Mary Watanabe, Deputy Director, Health Policy and Stakeholder Relations, California Department of Managed Health Care

² Examples of non-physician mental health providers include counseling professionals substance abuse professionals and qualified autism service providers.

³ Examples of a non-urgent appointment for ancillary services include lab work or diagnostic testing, such as a mammogram or MRI or treatment of an illness or injury such as physical therapy.