

For immediate release

5/11/2018

Judge Orders County to Halt Unlawful Practice of Terminating Patients from Medi-Cal

Children, pregnant women and people with serious conditions and disabilities will no longer be left without medication and care simply because the county failed to process their Medi-Cal renewals

LOS ANGELES, CA – A judge ordered Los Angeles County to halt its unlawful practice of terminating Medi-Cal recipients from critical coverage after failing to process their annual renewal forms. The ruling Thursday is the result of a 2016 lawsuit accusing the county’s Department of Public Social Services of failing to timely process renewal applications and then terminating Medi-Cal—leaving people without the health care they need and lawfully deserve—in clear violation of state law.

The lawsuit—filed in Los Angeles Superior Court by Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, and Western Center on Law & Poverty—demonstrated the harm suffered by sick and disabled Medi-Cal recipients who were unexpectedly cut from life-sustaining medications and care.

“We are relieved the county will no longer be allowed to leave people stranded without care,” said Neighborhood Legal Services attorney David Kane. “These unlawful policies were putting lives on the line.”

More than three million L.A. County residents depend on Medi-Cal to access medical care. Among them is Thaddeus Moncrief, a plaintiff in the case who suffered a spinal cord injury that left him paralyzed in 1989. When he was cut off from coverage, he could no longer get his medication, colostomy bags and catheters. Hilda Rodriguez, also a plaintiff, depends on Medi-Cal to cover the dialysis that’s keeping her alive. Carol Northern, another plaintiff, has a heart condition and depends on oxygen and nitric oxide to breathe. Like thousands across the County, they lost their coverage and their care, despite submitting their forms on time.

“In the time since we filed this lawsuit, more than 20,000 people have been unlawfully dropped from Medi-Cal coverage in Los Angeles County,” said Kirkland & Ellis partner Sharre Lotfollahi.

California law provides Medi-Cal patients with the right to continue their health insurance coverage while the county completes its processing of paperwork. But L.A. County has been terminating Medi-Cal coverage for thousands of patients each month in violation of state law. The judge’s order prohibits the county from continuing this harmful practice, and requires the county to remedy systemic issues that have long-plagued the Medi-Cal renewal and eligibility process.

“We look forward to working with the county as it addresses these systemic issues,” said Western Center attorney Mona Tawatao.

Jim Mangia, director of plaintiff St. John’s Wells Child and Family Center, agreed. “I think the court’s order will help ensure the county’s Medi-Cal process is working for the families we serve,” he said.

Organizational Information and Press Contacts

Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County

Contact David Kane, attorney: 818-834-7524

Neighborhood Legal Services is a steadfast advocate for individuals, families and communities throughout Los Angeles County. Each year NLSLA provides free assistance to more than 100,000 individuals and families through innovative projects that address the most critical needs of people living in poverty. Through a combination of individual representation, high impact litigation and public policy advocacy, NLSLA expands access to housing, health, opportunity, and justice in Los Angeles' neighborhoods. Consumers seeking assistance with health insurance can call NLSLA's Health Consumer Center for free help at 1-800-896-3202.

www.nlsla.org

Kirkland & Ellis LLP

Contact Olivia Clarke: +1 312-862-2461

Kirkland & Ellis is a 1,900-attorney law firm representing global clients in litigation and dispute resolution/arbitration, intellectual property, private equity, M&A and other complex corporate transactions, and restructuring matters. The Firm has offices in Los Angeles, Beijing, Chicago, Hong Kong, Houston, London, Munich, New York, Palo Alto, San Francisco, Shanghai and Washington, D.C. Kirkland is committed to providing legal services without charge to those who cannot afford counsel, with the goals of improving lives, bettering communities and deepening our attorneys' professional experience. Kirkland attorneys at all levels pursue pro bono matters dealing with a variety of issues such as immigration, disability rights, civil rights, prisoner rights, death penalty cases and criminal appeals, guardianship, veterans' benefits, and the representation of nonprofit organizations, among other areas.

www.kirkland.com

Western Center on Law and Poverty

Contact Mona Tawatao, attorney: 916-215-1438

Since 1967, Western Center on Law and Poverty has led the fight in the courts, counties and capital to secure housing, healthcare and a secure safety-net for low-income Californians. Western Center's attorneys and advocates are the impact litigation lawyers for the poor and their voice in Sacramento.

www.wclp.org

**For interviews with plaintiffs please contact David Kane at Neighborhood Legal Services
of Los Angeles County at 650-814-0422**