

Progress Notes

FALL 2019 • VOLUME 14 • ISSUE 4

A Unique Collaboration to Improve Member and Community Health



We are excited to announce that L.A. Care Health Plan and Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan are committing a combined \$146 million to develop and expand 14 Community Resource Centers across Los Angeles County.

The Community Resource Centers bring health education, nutrition and exercise classes, and health insurance information to Los Angeles County residents. Through our new partnership with Blue Shield Promise, we will be bringing those services and others to even more communities. The new Community Resource Center partnership will allow us to expand both the size and reach of our current centers. We anticipate serving nearly one million health plan and community members annually when fully operational.

Benefits of referring your patients to a Community Resource Center

You can greatly benefit from referring your patients to our local Community Resource Center for health, nutrition and exercise classes, and training and support on wellness tools on a variety of topics.

- The resource centers offer support for your patients in between medical appointments.
- The resource centers are open to all of your patients, not just health plan members.
- Health plan members can receive high-touch, personalized support for their health needs.
- Your patients will also be able to access support for their social needs, such as food and income security, at the resource centers.

The new Community Resource Centers will enhance community connections, address social needs and improve overall health outcomes for members and the entire community. Improved health outcomes will also reduce health care costs over time. This unique collaboration will bring a wide range of free classes and personalized services that will help keep your patients active, healthy and informed.

It also allows us to offer next generation services to members of both health plans, such as additional health screenings, on-site care management, on-site access to community social service organizations (legal aid, vocational training, financial services, etc.), and remote telehealth physician consultations.

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**ELEVATING
HEALTHCARE**
IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY
SINCE 1997

Tobacco Cessation – The Great American Smokeout

Each year, the American Cancer Society sets aside one day, the **Great American Smokeout**, for smokers to commit to quit for just one day. This year, that day is **Thursday, November 21**. L.A. Care is encouraging members to work with their doctors if they need help quitting. Providers are in a unique position to offer tobacco-cessation counseling and medication per All Plan Letter (APL) 16-014 *Comprehensive Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Services for Medi-Cal Beneficiaries*.



Continued from cover page.

A Unique Collaboration to Improve Member and Community Health

What's happening with L.A. Care's current Family Resource Centers?

The L.A. Care and Blue Shield Promise partnership will result in the opening of seven new jointly branded and operated Community Resource Centers, as well as the rebranding and joint operation of our existing six locations and Blue Shield's existing Informational Resource Center.

We're rebranding our **Family Resource Centers (FRCs)** to **Community Resource Centers** to be more inclusive of all the members and communities we serve. The first of these jointly branded Community Resource Centers is slated to open this fall in Pomona.

The two health plans have a long history of working together. Blue Shield Promise is one of the Plan Partners that L.A. Care contracts with to serve Medi-Cal members in Los Angeles County, and this Community Resource Center effort greatly expands our ongoing collaboration.

How do I learn more?

You can keep up with all the latest developments on our website, [activehealthyinformed.org](https://www.activehealthyinformed.org).

Thank you for the work you do every day to help us grow and be a better health plan. Together we are elevating healthcare for all of Los Angeles County!

A quick reference guide to APL 16-014 is presented below. You can view the APL in its entirety on the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) website under MMCD APLs and Policy Letters.

APL 16-014 Requirement*	Provider Strategy and/or Resource
<p>Conduct an initial and annual assessment of tobacco use for each adolescent and adult beneficiary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer the Staying Healthy Assessment (SHA) Tool which assesses smoking status/exposure to tobacco smoke. • Add tobacco use as a vital sign. • Use ICD-10 codes to document tobacco use. • Place an identifying stamp or sticker on the patient’s medical record.
<p>Prescribe FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications (for non-pregnant adults of any age).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prescribe medications using L.A. Care’s formulary guide found on L.A. Care’s website lacare.org. • Prescribe a 90-day treatment regimen of medication as appropriate.
<p>Provide or refer patients to tobacco cessation counseling (four counseling sessions of at least 10 minutes must be offered).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer L.A. Care patients to individual, group or telephonic tobacco cessation services using L.A. Care’s online health education referral form. • Refer to the CA Smoker’s Helpline, 1.800.NO-BUTTS (1.800.662.8887). • Use the 5As (Ask, Advise, Assess, Assist, and Arrange) or the “5 Rs” (Relevance, Risks, Rewards, Roadblocks, Repetition) to provide individual counseling to patients during office visits.
<p>Assess pregnant patients’ tobacco status and offer face-to-face cessation counseling.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask all pregnant patients if they use tobacco or are exposed to tobacco smoke. • Offer at least one face-to-face counseling session per quit attempt.
<p>Provide education or counseling to school-aged children and adolescents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide anticipatory guidance and risk-reduction counseling regarding tobacco use to children and adolescents.
<p>Participate in provider training.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in one or more of the provider trainings listed in Attachment B of APL 16-014.

*Table does not include all APL 16-014 requirements; please refer to the actual policy letter for details.

Tune in to the New Internet Radio for Providers!

L.A. Care live streaming audio is now coming into provider offices and break rooms with Internet Radio, a collaboration between L.A. Care Quality Improvement, Communications, and the office of the Chief Quality and Information Executive.

L.A. Care Internet Radio is available 24 hours a day, and providers can hear tips and information they need to help their patients, improve HEDIS and CAHPS scores, and much more. Find out more at lacare.org/internet-radio.





Vital Signs

L.A. Care Offers Diabetes Self-Management Education

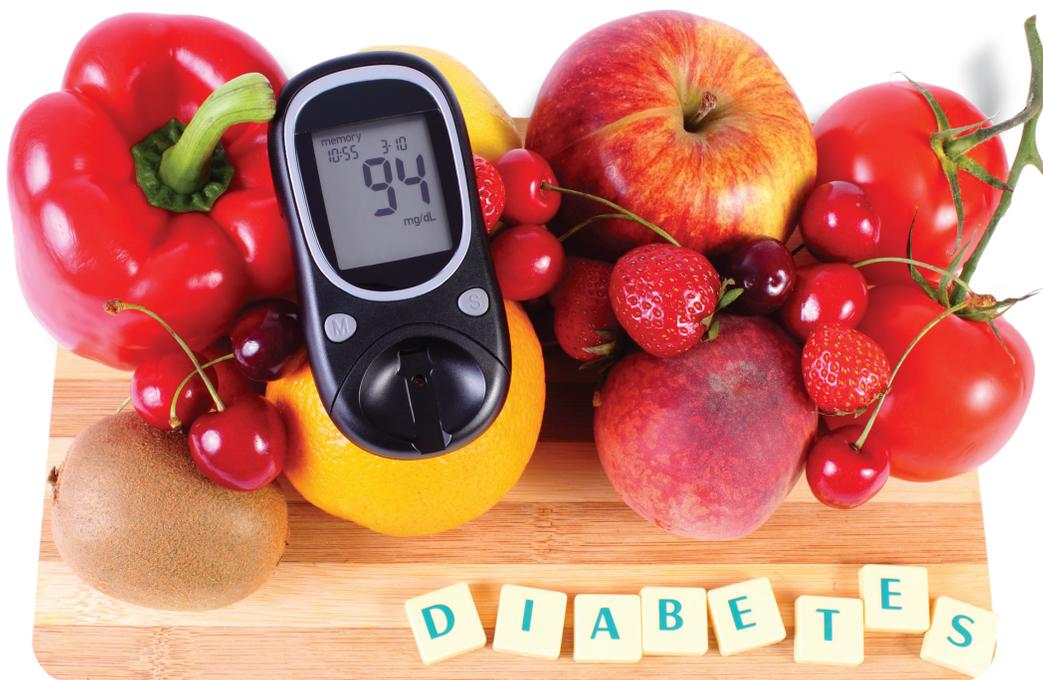
L.A. Care's Diabetes Self-Management Education (DSME) program is American Diabetes Association (ADA)-accredited and available to direct line of business members. Facilitated by our team of in-house registered dietitians (RDs) and Diabetes Educators, participants receive a minimum of four telephonic counseling sessions to help set and achieve individualized self-management goals. DSME is recommended for all patients at the time of diagnosis, annually or sooner if new complicating factors affect treatment, and at transitions of care.

Offer your patients the opportunity to participate in DSME to help reduce their risk of hospitalization and

readmission, reduce cost of care related to complications, and empower them to take control of their health. To refer a member for nutrition services or DSME, please complete and fax the *Health Education Referral Form* found on the Health Education Tools page on L.A. Care's website at lacare.org under the "For Providers/Tools and Toolkits" tab.

If you have any questions, please call the **Health Education Unit** at **1.855.856.6943**, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., or e-mail us at healthed_info_mailbox@lacare.org.

L.A. Care also offers our **L.A. Cares About Diabetes® Disease Management Program** through which members can talk with a nurse for education, coaching and support. To refer your patients, please complete a referral form found at www.lacare.org/sites/default/files/disease-management-referral-form-111617.pdf or call the **Diabetes Resource Line** at **1.877.796.5878**.



Stay Updated on Pharmacy and Formulary at L.A. Care

The L.A. Care Formulary is a preferred list of covered drugs. It applies to outpatient and self-administered drugs and does not apply to medications used in the inpatient setting or medical offices. L.A. Care has an active Pharmacy Quality Oversight Committee comprised of physicians and pharmacists who review and approve the drugs that are included on the Formulary, which is updated monthly. Revisions are based on safety, clinical efficacy, and cost-effectiveness. Updates to the Formulary are available online at lacare.org.



How to Use the Formulary

Medicines on the Formulary are listed in alphabetical order and by class or category. Both brand name and generic medications are covered by L.A. Care. However, FDA-approved generics should be used when available. Generics are generally more cost-effective than brand-name drugs. A prescriber may request a brand-name product in lieu of an approved generic, if the prescriber determines that there is a documented medical need for the brand equivalent.

Some Formulary medicines require prior authorization. These drugs are listed throughout the Formulary, and on a separate list within it called the “Prior Authorization Drug List”. You can determine if a drug requires a

Prior Authorization by referring to the Formulary on the L.A. Care website lacare.org. Some drugs require “Step Therapy” which involves one or more “prerequisite” first-step drugs being tried first. Some drugs have “Quantity Limits” which means that coverage is limited to specific quantities per prescription and/or time period.

Any drug not found in the Formulary listing published by L.A. Care shall be considered a non-Formulary drug. A prescriber may request an exception to coverage for a non-Formulary drug if the prescriber determines that there is a documented medical need.



The Medication Request Form for approval of a brand-name product, for prior authorization, or for an exception to coverage for a non-Formulary drug, can be obtained online at www.lacare.org/providers/provider-resources/pharmacy-services/prior-authorizations.

Nurse Advice Line

L.A. Care offers its members a **Nurse Advice Line** (NAL) service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A team of registered nurses is available to answer any health-related questions. L.A. Care members can access this service by phone or chat live with a nurse using their L.A. Care *Connect* online member account.



As a complement to your service, please encourage your patients to call the NAL for free health advice. If your patient is an L.A. Care member or a Medi-Cal member with one of our Plan Partners, they can call the NAL at the numbers listed below:

Anthem Blue Cross:

1.800.224.0336 TTY **1.800.368.4424**

Kaiser Permanente:

1.888.576.6225

Blue Shield Promise Health Plan:

1.800.609.4166 TTY **1.800.735.2929**

L.A. Care Health Plan:

1.800.249.3619 TTY **711**

The NAL phone number is also located on the back of the patient's health plan member ID card. Additionally, the NAL phone numbers can be found on the L.A. Care websites: **lacare.org** and **lacarecovered.org** or **calmediconnectla.org**.

Health Education Unit Supports Providers and Patients

L.A. Care's Health Education Unit is here to help providers and their patients! Our Registered Dietitians and Health Educators can help with weight and chronic condition management, tobacco cessation, and more.



For patients who prefer online education, we have our health and wellness portal, *My Health in Motion™* (My HIM™), which they can access in the Online Tools section at **www.lacare.org/members/welcome-la-care/getting-started**. To refer your patients or order free health education materials, visit the Health Education Tools page on L.A. Care's website at **lacare.org** under the "For Providers/Tools and Toolkits" tab.

Vaccinate Your Patients Against the Flu

As flu season approaches, L.A. Care asks providers to schedule flu shot appointments for patients six months of age or older.

- Emphasize that the vaccine is needed every year, is no cost to L.A. Care members, and is important to protect children, seniors, and high-risk patients.
- Utilize scheduled visits as an opportunity to vaccinate.
- Although flu activity peaks between December and February, be sure to keep the vaccination stocked as flu season can last until May.
- Remember that providers are the most trusted source of vaccine information and advice.



Better Communication = Better Care

L.A. Care offers no-cost, face-to-face interpreting services, including American Sign Language. The use of trained qualified interpreters not only complies with state and federal regulatory requirements, it also increases patient health knowledge and decreases challenges with patient-provider encounters.

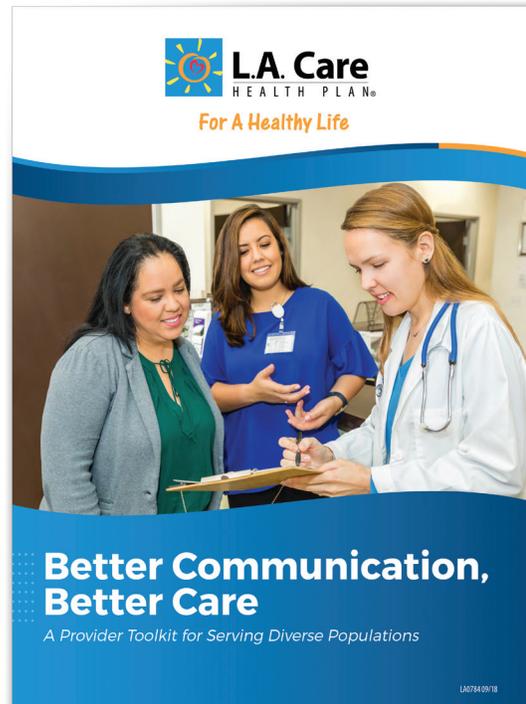
As you continue to deliver the best care to your diverse patients, here are tips on how to request interpreting services and how to cancel or change a request.

Telephonic Appointments:

1. Call **1.855.322.4034** to request a telephonic interpreter. Have your physician's NPI and L.A. Care member's ID ready.

Face-to-Face Appointments:

2. Call **1.866.522.2736** to place your interpreter request. Provide the following information:
 - a. Language requested
 - b. Date, time and length of the appointment
 - c. Provider Specialty
 - d. Purpose of appointment (consultation, annual physical exam, follow-up, etc.)
 - e. Full address and phone number: include suite and floor numbers
 - f. Type of location (hospital, clinic, doctor's office, lab, etc.)
 - g. Provider's name
 - h. Contact person at provider's office (if available)
 - i. Gender preference, if any. If gender preference is not available, is member okay with other gender?
3. **For cancellations or changes:**
Call **1.866.522.2736** at least **24 hours in advance** to notify us of any cancellations, or if the date, time or location of the appointment has changed.



Quality health care depends upon good communication between the physician and the patient. Timely requests for interpreting services and advance cancellation notice helps us ensure that your patients will have access to interpreting services when they need it most.

Best Practices for Working With a Medical Interpreter:

1. Before the patient's appointment, hold a brief introductory session with the interpreter.
2. Allow enough time for the appointment. Remember that messages are conveyed twice.
3. Address and speak directly to the patient. Speak clearly and at a normal speed.
4. Keep it simple: Avoid using acronyms, medical jargon, and technical terms.
5. Speak in short sentences and pause frequently.



Remember: Do not rely on friends and family to interpret for the patient, except in emergency situations!

For more tips and information on providing culturally sensitive care, download our **Provider Toolkit for Serving Diverse Populations:**
lacare.org/providers/provider-resources/tools-toolkits/toolkits.

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) issued an updated health alert on August 27, 2019 regarding 36 cases of vaping-associated pulmonary injury (VAPI) requiring hospitalization across California. These cases have been identified since June 2019. While the exact cause of illness is not yet known, most cases involve vaping the cannabis compounds tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and/or cannabidiol (CBD), with some reports involving vaping nicotine products. At this time, no infectious etiology has been determined and over 200 similar cases are being investigated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in at least 23 other states.

CDPH asks that clinicians be alert for suspected cases presenting with respiratory complaints in both outpatient and inpatient settings in the context of recent use of vaping or “dabbing” devices, and an initial diagnosis of pneumonia or bronchitis that did not respond to antibiotics.

If cases occur locally, clinicians are asked to:

- Collect and hold the original product and/or devices if the patient has on hand so that the product and device can be tested.
- Report the case by phone to the applicable local health department*:
 - County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health: 626.299.3504
 - City of Long Beach Health Department: 562.570.4302
 - City of Pasadena Public Health Department: 626.744.6809

Current Situation

Physicians in California and at least 23 other states have documented over 200 cases of acute pulmonary disease associated with vaping over the past three months. Most patients in California report vaping cannabis products such as THC or CBD, and some report vaping nicotine-containing liquids as well. Some patients have reported using vaping products that they purchased from unlicensed, unregulated entities.

Patients typically present to the hospital with cough, difficulty breathing, fever, and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. In many cases, the initial diagnosis was presumed to be infectious, but no evidence of infection or other process to explain the pulmonary disease was found. All cases in California have been hospitalized, with most requiring respiratory support with supplemental oxygen, high-flow oxygen, or bi-level positive airway pressure (BiPAP). At least 10 patients had respiratory failure requiring mechanical ventilation. No deaths have been reported to date in California. Local health departments are collecting information on vaping habits and products used from patients who are suspected of having vaping-associated pulmonary injury (VAPI).

**The local health department will report the case to CDPH and, if needed, interview patients and/or family members, arrange the transfer of available biospecimens, and collect available vaping products and/or devices.*

The clinical presentation of VAPI can initially mimic common pulmonary diagnoses like pneumonia, but patients typically do not respond to antibiotic therapy. High clinical suspicion is necessary to make the diagnosis of VAPI. In some cases, patients sought care at outpatient clinics in the days prior to hospital presentation and received antibiotics for presumed pneumonia or bronchitis, which did not improve their symptoms.

Clinical Information on Vaping-Associated Pulmonary Injury

Patients typically present for care within a few days to weeks of symptom onset. At the time of hospital presentation, patients are often hypoxic and meet systemic inflammatory response syndrome (SIRS) criteria, including high fever. In some cases, patients had progressive respiratory failure following admission, leading to intubation. Time to recovery for hospital discharge has been from days to weeks.

Symptoms

Commonly reported symptoms include:

- Shortness of breath, cough
- Fatigue, body aches
- Fever
- Vomiting, diarrhea

Diagnosis

VAPI is a clinical diagnosis of exclusion when infectious, rheumatologic, neoplastic, cardiac, or other processes cannot explain an acute pulmonary illness in a patient known to vape cannabinoids and/or nicotine. The diagnosis is commonly suspected when the patient does not respond to antibiotic therapy, and testing does not reveal an alternative diagnosis. Common documented hospital diagnoses for these patients have included: acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), sepsis, acute hypoxic respiratory failure, pneumonitis, and pneumonia.

Treatment

Guidelines for treatment of VAPI are not yet available. Most patients require supplemental oxygen via nasal cannula, high-flow oxygen, bilevel positive airway pressure (BiPAP), or mechanical ventilation. Anecdotally, treating physicians have trialed the use of steroids with some possible benefit. Information on dosing and duration of steroids is not available.

To view a printable PDF of this communication and other LAHAN communications, please visit publichealth.lacounty.gov/lahan.



Valuable Information at Your Fingertips: Available on L.A. Care's Website

L.A. Care's website has information about many different topics that might be helpful to you. It provides a useful way to get information about L.A. Care and its processes. Please visit our website at lacare.org and click on "For Providers" for the following information:

- Quality Improvement Program, including goals, processes and outcomes related to care and services
- Policy encouraging practitioners to freely communicate with patients about their treatment, including medication treatment options, regardless of benefit coverage limitations
- Requirement that practitioners, providers and facilities cooperate with quality improvement activities; provide access to their medical records, to the extent permitted by state and federal law; maintain confidentiality of member information and records, to the extent permitted by state and federal law; maintain confidentiality of member information and records; and allow L.A. Care to use performance data for activities such as quality improvement activities and public reporting to consumers
- Policy on notification of specialist termination
- Access standards
- Case management services and how to refer patients
- Disease Management Program information and how to refer patients
- Health education services and how to refer patients
- Coordination of Medicare and Medicaid benefit
- Care services to members with special needs
- Clinical Practice Guidelines, including ADHD and depression
- Preventive Health Guidelines
- Medical record documentation standards; policies regarding confidentiality of medical records; policies for an organized medical recordkeeping system; standards for the availability of medical records at the practice site and performance goals
- Utilization Management Medical Necessity Criteria, including how to obtain or view a copy
- Policy prohibiting financial incentives for Utilization Management decision makers
- Instructions on how to contact staff if you have questions about Utilization Management processes and the toll-free number to call
- Instructions for triaging inbound calls specific to Utilization Management cases/issues
- Availability of, and the process for, contacting a peer reviewer to discuss Utilization Management decisions
- Policy on denial notices
- Policy regarding the appeals notification process
- Pharmaceutical management procedures and lists of pharmaceuticals included in the benefit plan and Formulary updates
- Policy regarding your rights during the credentialing/recredentialing process, including how to review information and correct erroneous information submitted to support your credentialing application, as well as how to obtain information about the status of your application and how to exercise these rights
- Members' Rights and Responsibilities
- Web-based provider and hospital directory

If you would like hard copies of any of the information available on the website, please contact the L.A. Care Provider Solution Center at **1.213.694.1250**, ext. **4719** or **1.866.LA.CARE6 (1.866.522.2736)**.

Preventing Medical Fraud and Identity Theft



If your patient reports that their member ID has been lost or stolen, you can help your patients protect their health and avoid health care fraud or abuse. Here are some ways to assist them:

1. Check medical records to make sure they match the patient's condition. Give them a copy of the records if needed.
2. Run a CURES report on the patient to check for controlled substances that you may not have prescribed. Go to oag.ca.gov/cures
3. Recommend that patients place a fraud alert with one of the three (3) credit bureaus.
 - a. **Equifax – Call 1.888.766.0008**
 - b. **Experian – Call 1.888.397.3742**
 - c. **TransUnion – Call 1.800.680.7289**
4. Advise your patients to file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). They can do this online by completing the form at identitytheft.gov. The patient will be given an FTC Identity Theft Affidavit which they should print out and save. Patients can also call **1.877.438.4338**.
5. Advise your patients to file a report with their local police department.
6. To learn more about how to protect your patients and yourself from identity theft, and what actions victims of identity theft should take, please visit identitytheft.gov

The fraud alert service is free and will help protect your patients from future abuse. When calling, the patient should ask for a copy of their credit report and check it closely.

Progress Notes is a publication of L.A. Care Health Plan for our Medi-Cal and Cal MediConnect provider networks.

If you have any questions or comments about topics in this issue, please write to us at editor@lacare.org or call us at **1.866.LA.CARE6 (1.866.522.2736)**.



IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS

L.A. Care Compliance Helpline: 1.800.400.4889

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Provider Solution Center: 1.866.LA.CARE6, 1.866.522.2736

(Eligibility & Claims questions only)

Medical Management: phone **1.877.431.2273**

fax **213.438.5777** for authorization requests

LTSS Department: 1.855.427.1223 for Long-Term Services and Supports

HCC Outreach Specialist, Betty Garcia: 213.694.1250 x4935

fax **213.438.4874** for Annual Wellness Exam (AWE) forms

Health Education: 1.855.856.6943 for forms and programs

Nurse Advice Line: L.A. Care – **1.800.249.3619**

Kaiser – **1.888.576.6225**, Care1st – **1.800.609.4166**

Anthem Blue Cross – **1.800.224.0336**

Beacon Health Options: 1.877.344.2858

(TTY **1.800.735.2929**) for behavioral health services

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

L.A. Care Covered™: 1.855.270.2327 (Providers: Option "2")



L.A. Care
HEALTH PLAN®

L.A. Care Health Plan

1055 West 7th Street, 10th Floor

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Progress Notes

A NEWSLETTER FOR OUR PHYSICIAN PARTNERS

Progress Notes

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Get the latest from thePULSE

Sign up today for thePULSE, L.A. Care's newsletter created by L.A. Care's Provider Network Management and Marketing departments and emailed exclusively to network providers. Get important updates on incentives, initiatives, HIT and relevant L.A. Care news. Progress Notes is also available electronically. Visit lacare.org under the "For Providers" section to select the "Newsletter Sign Up" link today!



Collaboration to Improve Member and Community Health

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