



CALIFORNIA HEALTH ADVOCATES
Medicare Policy, Training and Advocacy

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**People Unable to Enroll in Medicare Due to COVID-19 Related Issues,
Now Have Extra Time**

Sacramento, CA — Thanks to California Health Advocates' collaborative efforts with advocates state and nationwide, people who were unable to enroll in Medicare during the normal enrollment periods due to the COVID-19 pandemic, now have extra time. This extra time, referred to by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) as "equitable relief", is for enrolling in Medicare Part B, premium-free Part A or refusing automatic Part B enrollment.

People may be eligible for this equitable relief if they were unable to enroll in Medicare Part A or Part B because of delays and problems accessing the Social Security Administration (SSA) to file an application or enrollment, as a result of the unexpected, pandemic-induced closure of field offices. **This extra time/equitable relief is retroactive to March 17, 2020 and extends 3 months through June 17, 2020.**

In addition, CMS announced that the Special Enrollment Period (SEP) they have for beneficiaries affected by a FEMA-declared weather-related emergency or other major disaster, is now applicable for COVID-19. This means that people who missed an opportunity to change their Medicare Advantage and/or Part D plans due to the COVID pandemic, now have a SEP to make a change.

This SEP is available nationwide to beneficiaries of all states, tribes, territories, and the District of Columbia effective March 1, 2020 and runs through June 30, 2020.

People who have questions or need assistance with either the SEP for Part D and MA plans or equitable relief/extra time to enroll in Medicare Part A or B, can contact their local [Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program \(HICAP\)](#) at 1-800-434-0222.

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California Health Advocates is an independent non-profit organization that provides accurate and timely Medicare and related health care coverage information, education, and policy advocacy. CHA provides community organizations and government agencies with up-to-date information, and in particular to the 24 local HICAPs that provide individual benefits counseling and community education directly to Medicare beneficiaries and their families. For more information, visit its website at cahealthadvocates.org.