



## UCLA CENTER FOR HEALTH POLICY RESEARCH

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### **California's HMO Population More Diverse Than Previously Thought** ***Statewide and Regional Profiles from the*** ***2001 California Health Interview Survey Released***

**(FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 27, 2003, Los Angeles)** The profile of California's 17.7 million children and adults who are enrolled in HMO plans is more diverse than previously thought, according to a report released today by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research.

The study, funded by the California Office of the Patient Advocate (OPA), is the first detailed population-based profile of the state's HMO population to date.

"This puts a face on the HMO enrollee," said Maria Contreras-Sweet, Secretary of California's Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency, which oversees the Office of the Patient Advocate. "The findings allow us to better educate consumers about how to navigate the complexities of the HMO system," Secretary Contreras-Sweet added.

According to the study, the citizenship status, language fluency, level of education, and ethnicity of HMO enrollees across the state vary widely, posing significant challenges for HMOs in providing quality services to *all* of their members (who reside in 5.5 million households). Because of the broad diversity of their membership, HMOs face major challenges in communicating with members regarding health plan benefits, policies, and procedures. This is particularly true in two regions – Los Angeles County and Santa Clara County.

The report – *Profile of California's HMO Enrollees: Findings from the 2001 California Health Interview Survey* – presents HMO enrollee profiles for the entire state and for each of 15 geographical regions. A wide range of socioeconomic characteristics was examined, among them citizenship status, language spoken at home, English proficiency, educational attainment, income and employment, age, and race and ethnicity.

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“This study is of critical importance to the large number of Californians enrolled in HMOs when demanding member services and materials responsive to their diverse needs,” stated Dr. Gerald F. Kominski, the report’s principal author, Associate Director of the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, and Professor in the UCLA School of Public Health. “HMOs can also benefit from these findings as they strive to provide appropriate services and materials to all of their members, a major challenge as suggested by these data,” Dr. Kominski went on to say.

Key findings from the report include these facts about HMO enrollees statewide:

- 27% are immigrants, including 15% who are naturalized citizens and 12% who are noncitizens;
- 34% communicate at home in a language other than English or solely in another language;
- 35% of adults ages 18-64 and 45% of adults ages 65 and over have a high-school education or less.
- 41% are nonwhite, including 19% Latino, 12% Asian American and Pacific Islander, and 7% African American.

(The full report is available online at [www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu](http://www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu))

About The Office of the Patient Advocate. The California Office of the Patient Advocate (OPA) funded the report. The Office of the Patient Advocate ([www.opa.ca.gov](http://www.opa.ca.gov)) is an independent office under California’s Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency. Established in July 2000 as part of the nation’s most comprehensive HMO reform, the office is responsible for informing and educating consumers about their rights and responsibilities as HMO enrollees. For more information, call toll free at 1-866-HMO-8900.

About the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. The UCLA Center for Health Policy Research ([www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu](http://www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu)), established in 1994, is one of the nation’s leading health policy research centers and the premier source of key health policy information for California. It is based in the UCLA School of Public Health and is also affiliated with the UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research.

Data Source – California Health Interview Survey (CHIS). The data analyzed were collected as part of the 2001 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS 2001), a collaboration of the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the California Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Public Health Institute (PHI). Visit [www.chis.ucla.edu](http://www.chis.ucla.edu).

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