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**Comparison of Prison Healthcare Coverage
with
Publicly-Supported Healthcare Coverage
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The Receivership is frequently asked whether inmates in California’s prisons will be receiving substantially better access to health care than ordinary Californians. To some extent, the question calls for an apples-to-oranges comparison since (1) the appropriate standard of health care for prisoners is determined by reference to federal constitutional principles (i.e., the Cruel and Unusual Punishment clause of the Eighth Amendment), while there is no federal constitutional right to health care for the general public, and (2) it is hard to imagine that anyone would willfully commit themselves for a term of years into California’s prisons for the purpose of securing health care (in other words, separating out health care in prison from its other characteristics is a misleading comparison).

Nevertheless, in response to this question, the tables below compare the type of health care services that are available in California’s prisons with services available from two major public health care programs. Overall, the charts show that the type of health care services available in prison are similar to, and not significantly different than, public health care services. **Inmates in California’s prisons are not receiving substantially better health care than is available to ordinary Californians pursuant to public health care programs.**

Requirements for Eligibility

Current Prison Healthcare Title 15, Art. 8 §§ 3350-3353	Medi-Cal	County Medical Services Program
Incarceration in California adult prison facility.	Program for low income persons with limited resources to pay for the cost of health care. Must fit into one of several categories: e.g., aged, blind, disabled, families with children as long as deprivation exists, children and pregnant women, and individuals with specific health care needs.	Adults between the ages of 21 and 65 who are not blind or disabled, pregnant, in a skilled nursing facility, and are not members of families who meet federal CalWORKS deprivation requirements are Medically Indigent Adults and receive their medical care through the County Medically Indigent Services Program.

Services Provided

Prison Health Care	Medi-Cal	County Medical Services Program
Health care services that are deemed medically necessary (i.e., are determined by the attending physician to be reasonable and necessary to protect life, avoid significant illness or disability, or alleviate severe pain.	Hospital inpatient and outpatient care	Acute inpatient hospital care, hospital outpatient and outpatient clinic services
Long-term health care for inmates with serious chronic medical and/or mental health conditions.	Skilled nursing care, Dr. visits, regular exams for under 21 year olds.	Excluded
Lab tests	Lab tests	Lab tests
Radiology	Radiology	Radiology
Not provided	Family planning	Not covered
Prescription drugs	Prescription drugs	Prescription drugs
Dental care	Dental care	Dental care
Durable medical equipment	Medical supplies	Durable medical equipment
Not provided	Occupational therapy	Outpatient occupational therapy
Eyeglasses	Eyeglasses/ optometrist	Optometry services
Podiatry	Podiatry	Podiatry
Not provided	Drug and alcohol treatment services	Outpatient heroin detoxification services
Physical therapy	Physical therapy	Outpatient physical therapy
Mental health services	Rehab for mental health and substance abuse	Psychiatric services provided by licensed psychiatrist
Not provided	Chiropractic	Excluded
Not provided routinely unless incident to medical condition		Outpatient speech pathology
Hearing aids		Hearing aids
Blood and blood derivatives		Blood and blood derivatives

Services Specifically Excluded

Conditions that improve on their own such as: common cold, Mononucleosis, mild sprains.		
Conditions that are not readily amenable to treatment such as multiple organ transplants, grossly metastatic cancer		
Cosmetic procedures		
Acupuncture, orthoptics, pleoptics		Acupuncture, chiropractic
Contact lenses not medically necessary		Contact lenses not medically necessary
Methadone maintenance, except for some pregnant women		Methadone maintenance
		Pregnancy related services
		Replacement eye glasses, repairs