

Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health  
Office of Administrative Operations – Quality, Outcomes, and Training Division

## **Summary Report: Annual Test Calls Study**

Report Date: March 1, 2022  
Study Period: March 1, 2021, to October 31, 2021



LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
**DEPARTMENT OF  
MENTAL HEALTH**  
hope. recovery. wellbeing.

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## **ACCESS Help Line Overview**

In Los Angeles (LA) County, the ACCESS Help Line operates the statewide toll-free telephone number (1-800-854-7771) for both emergency and non-emergency calls, 24 hours a day and seven days a week (24/7). ACCESS Help Line services include but are not limited to: the deployment of crisis evaluation teams, information and referrals for specialty mental health services (SMHS), after hours tracking of acute inpatient psychiatric beds availability, after-hours Department of Mental Health's (DMH) point of contact for Patient's Rights and special/critical incident reporting, and telephone interpreter services for language assistance in a preferred language. The ACCESS Help Line's 24/7 hotline often serves as a caller's first point of contact with DMH.

The ACCESS Help Line strives to meet LA County's residents' cultural and linguistic needs by providing language assistance services in threshold and non-threshold languages. Callers request information related to SMHS and other social needs. The ACCESS Help Line provides referrals to providers and services conveniently located and appropriate to their cultural and behavioral health needs. The ACCESS Help Line responds to various requests from culturally diverse callers with unique requirements for assistance.

In Calendar Year (CY) 2021, DMH continued to support three separate call lines for the LA community: 1) the ACCESS Help Line 24/7 line, 2) an emotional support line for any community member in need of resources and support in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and 3) a support line specifically for veterans or military family members. The scope of this report will focus on the calls routed to the ACCESS Help Line.

## **Annual Test Calls Study**

The DMH Test Calls Study is a collaborative effort between the ACCESS Help Line and the Quality Improvement (QI) unit, to identify areas of improvement related to cultural and linguistic responsiveness, customer service, referrals to SMHS, and appropriate documentation of call information and to implement QI strategies for improvement in the areas identified. ACCESS Help Line management and staff collaborate with the QI unit on this project and the annual summary report.

### **Purpose**

The Test Calls Study aims to identify potential areas for quality improvement and strengths in the responsiveness of the ACCESS Help Line's 24/7 line to Medi-Cal beneficiaries. Moreover, the purpose of the Test Calls Study is to monitor:

- Responsiveness of the 24/7 ACCESS Help Line Toll-Free Line;
- Documentation of the call and Test Callers in the ACCESS Help Line Call Log;
- ACCESS Help Line's responsiveness for a call in a non-English language ;
- Information provided to Test Callers on how to use the beneficiary problem resolution and fair hearings processes; and
- Verify compliance with regulatory and/or contractual requirements (CCR, Title 9, chapter 11, sections 1810.405(d) and 1810.410(e)(1)).

### **Methodology**

DMH utilizes a "Secret Shopper" approach for the Test Calls project. Test callers provide information on their experiences and interpreter services if applicable, using a Test Calls Survey form (CY 2021; Appendix A: '24/7 ACCESS Line Test Calls Survey Form for Calendar Year 2021'). In CY 2021, the survey form was streamlined to include essential information and the Test Call process was simplified overall. The QI unit created fictitious demographics (i.e., name, date of birth, Medi-Cal number, location) for Test Callers and assigned specific scenarios to reduce the burden on callers as well as errors. The QI unit also continued to provide set guidelines/instructions, a call and data submission schedule, the list of threshold languages by Service Area (SA), and a training each month. In CY 2021, the QI team worked with the Mental Health Promoters program to organize and facilitate five Test Calls, one SA per month. The aim was to have at least two Test Calls in English and the remaining calls in non-English languages (SA's threshold languages) for each month. Test calls occur during after-hours (before 8:00 AM or after 5:00 PM on weekdays or anytime during weekends or holidays) and business hours (8:00 AM - 5:00 PM on weekdays excluding holidays). In CY 2021, QI coordinated the annual Test Calls study between March 1, 2021, and October 31, 2021, which covered one SA during each of those months.

## Summary of Test Calls Study Findings for Calendar Year 2021

### Completed Test Calls

The following report summarizes the CY 2021 Test Calls Study's findings. A summary of the completed test calls by SA and the reason for the call is presented in Table 1. Of the 40 Test Calls completed in CY 2021:

- Forty percent (N=16) of the Test Callers cited “Mental Health Referral” as their reason for the call and another 40% cited “Crisis” (N=16), followed by “Beneficiary Problem/Complaint” at 20% (N=8).
- Fifty percent (N=20) of the Test Calls occurred during business hours and the remaining 50% (N=20) occurred during after-hours.
- Test Callers completed 40% (N=16) of their calls in English and 35% (N=14) in Spanish.
  - 25% of the calls in a non-English language other than Spanish were completed in Armenian (N=1), Cambodian/Khmer (N=1), Cantonese (N=1), Farsi (N=1), Korean (N=2), Russian (N=1), Tagalog (N=1), and Vietnamese (N=2).

**Table 1:** Number of Completed Test Calls by Service Area, Month, and Reason for the Call or Type of Help Requested

SA	Month <sup>1</sup>	Reason/Type of Help Requested			SA Totals
		Mental Health Referral	Crisis	Beneficiary Problem/Complaint	
SA 1	March	2	2	1	5
SA 2	April	2	2	1	5
SA 3	May & June	2	2	1	5
SA 4	June	2	2	1	5
SA 5	July	2	2	1	5
SA 6	August	2	2	1	5
SA 7	September	2	2	1	5
SA 8	October	2	2	1	5
<b>Grand Total</b>		16	16	8	<b>40</b>

Note: This table only includes Test Calls considered “completed” for the CY 2021 study. <sup>1</sup>Some SAs completed their Test Calls at the start of the following month. Data Source: 24/7 Test Call Project List, CY 2021.

## Test Calls Data by Survey Item

DMH relies on the data gathered from the Test Calls Study Survey Form (Table 2) to identify the ACCESS Help Line's strengths and areas for improvement, namely:

- Type of interpreter services;
- Reason for the call or type of help requested;
- Provided with a referral or other information;
- Provided guidance on accessing the beneficiary grievance form and contacting Patient's Rights Office; and
- ACCESS Agent logged the call.

For quality assurance purposes, ACCESS Help Line records all of their calls. To ensure accuracy and completeness of the study's data, ACCESS Help Line staff reviewed the recordings associated with each of the completed Test Calls when available. When discrepancies between the recordings and the survey data presented, the ACCESS Help Line prompted QI to update the report and survey data. QI reflected the revised data in the quarterly 24/7 ACCESS line reports submitted to the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS).

ACCESS Agents documented the majority of calls (N=25, 78%; beneficiary problem scenarios excluded per state criteria). For crisis and mental health referral calls, ACCESS Agents provided referrals (N=31, 97%) in most cases. For crisis calls, referrals were provided for 94% of calls (N=15) and, for mental health referral calls, referrals were provided for 100% of calls (N=16) For beneficiary problem/complaint calls, they provided information on contacting the Patient's Rights Office for all calls (N=8, 100%) and finding the grievance form for most calls (N=5, 63%).

**Table 2:** Test Calls Study Survey Data by Item and Percent (N=40)<sup>1</sup>

Survey Item	Percent (%)
<b>ACCESS Agent provided a referral (crisis and mental health referral calls)</b>	97%
<b>ACCESS Agent provided a referral for crisis calls</b>	94%
<b>ACCESS Agent provided a referral for mental health referral call</b>	100%
<b>ACCESS Agent provided guidance on the beneficiary grievance form</b>	63%
<b>ACCESS Agent provided guidance on contacting the Patient's Right Office</b>	100%
<b>The ACCESS Agent logged Test Call</b>	78%

Note: Percentages for Yes/No questions reflect the percent that responded "Yes". ACCESS Help Line staff verified survey responses by reviewing audio recordings of the Test Calls (when available). Upon audio review, corrections were made to address discrepancies and corrected data was included in the quarterly Test Calls report to DHCS.

Data Source: 24/7 Test Call Project List, CY 2021.

## Trending of ACCESS Help Line Test Calls Data

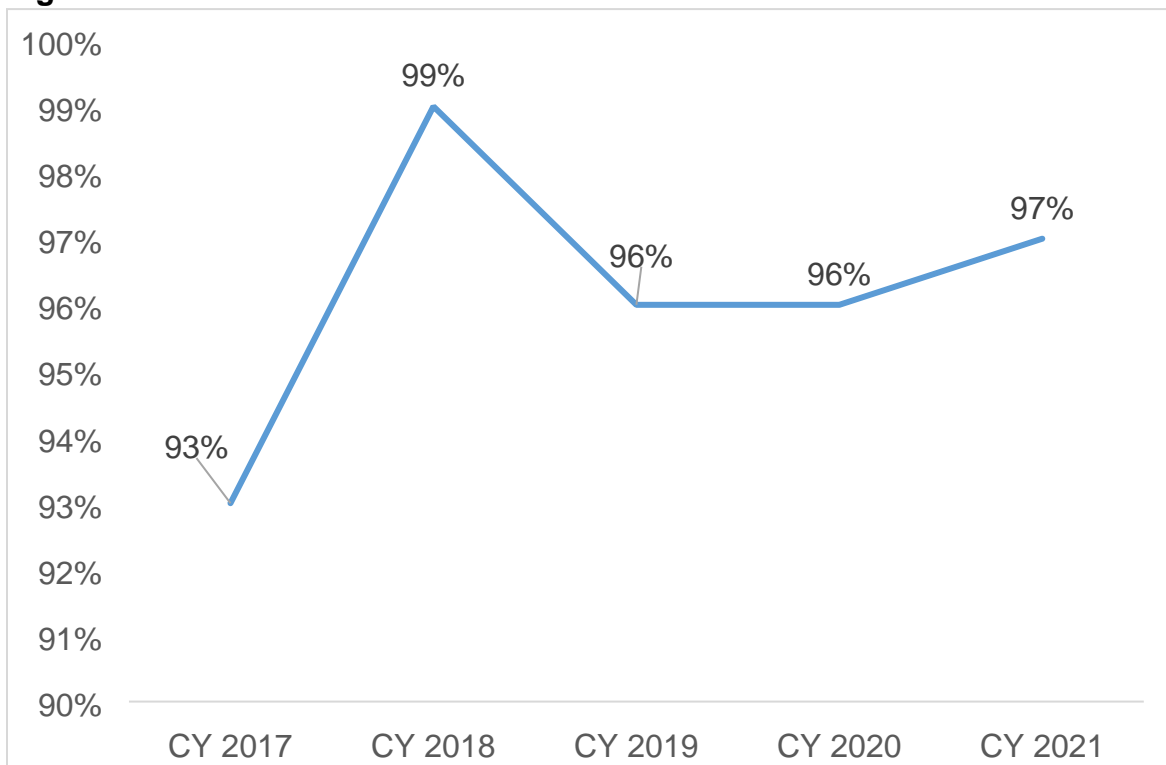
The QI unit evaluated the ACCESS Help Line's performance on the Test Calls survey items that received a "Yes" or "No" response over five years (Table 3). Five-year trends could only be examined for two items: the ACCESS Agent providing a referral and documenting a call. These are the two items that have remained consistent from 2017 to 2021. The percentage of ACCESS Help Line staff providing referrals increased by four Percentage Points (PP) from 93% in CY 2017 to 97% in CY 2021 (Figure 1) and the percentage of calls documented/logged by ACCESS Help Line staff increased by 21 PP from 57% in CY 2017 to 78% in CY 2021 (Figure 2).

**Table 3:** Five-Year Trend of ACCESS Help Line Test Calls Data by Item

Survey Item	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>ACCESS Agent provided a referral</b>	93%	99%	96%	96%	97%
<b>The ACCESS Agent logged Test Call</b>	57%	68%	64%	80%	78%

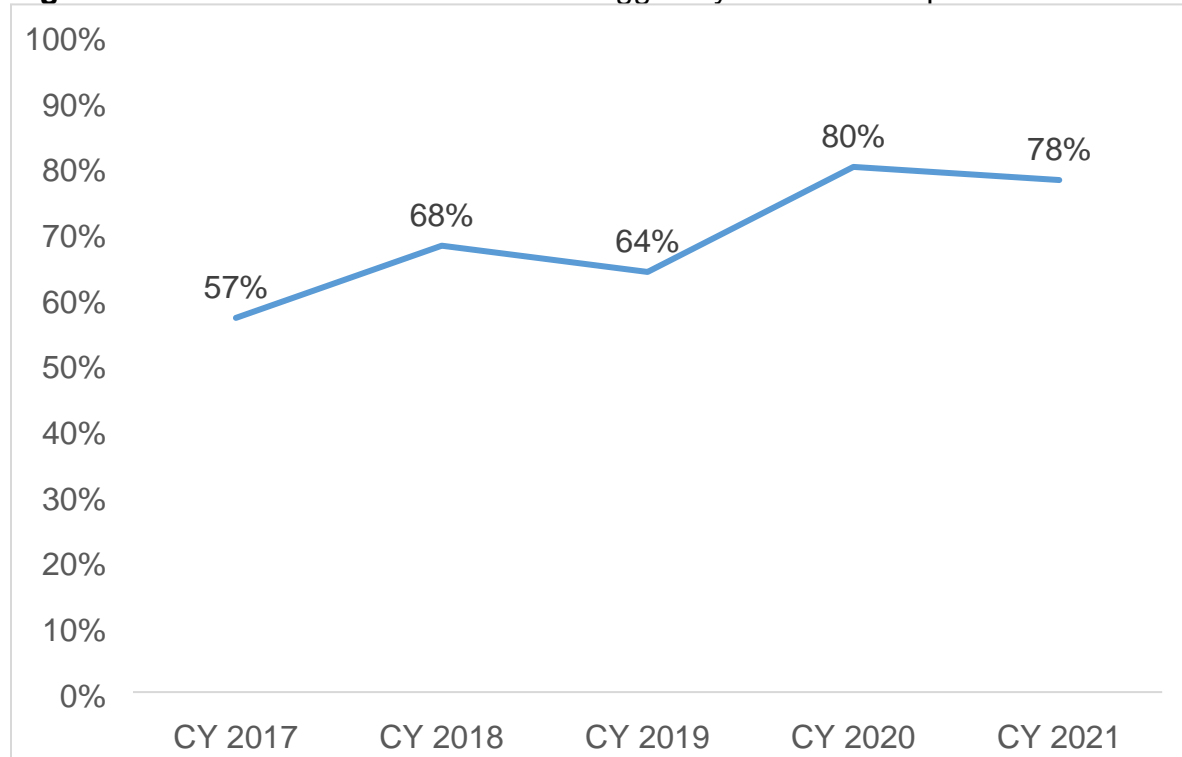
Data Source: EFM system, CY 2017 to CY 2020, 24/7 Test Call Project List, CY 2021.

**Figure 1:** Five-Year Trend for the "Provided a Referral" Item



Data Source: EFM system, CY 2017 to CY 2020, 24/7 Test Call Project List, CY 2021.

**Figure 2: Five-Year Trend in Test Calls Logged by ACCESS Help Line Staff**



Data Source: EFM system, CY 2017 to CY 2020, 24/7 Test Call Project List, CY 2021.

### Summary

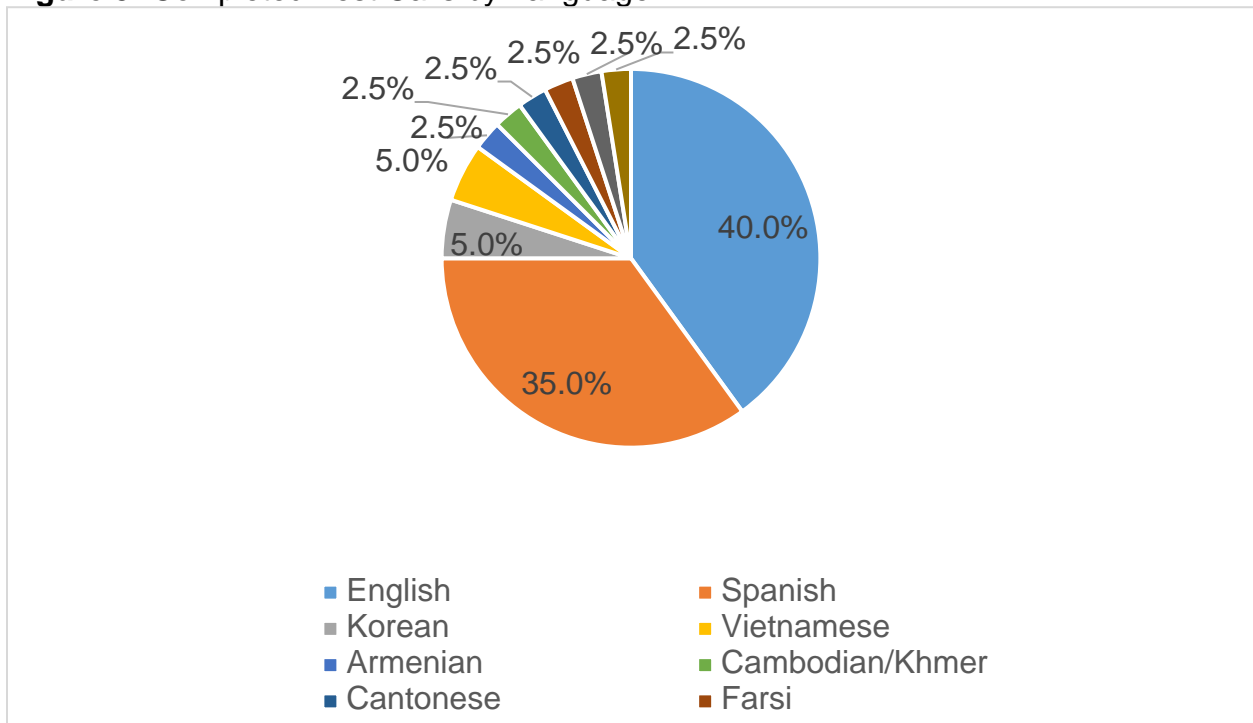
The two survey items that have been consistent over the past five years, the ACCESS agent providing a referral and documenting the call, generally demonstrated an increase in performance from the baseline to the most recent period with some variation. The percent of calls for which the ACCESS agent provided a referral increased slightly and the percent of calls for which the ACCESS agent documented the call decreased slightly from CY 2020 to CY 2021. The survey item regarding providing information on accessing the beneficiary grievance form decreased from 80% in CY 2020 to 63% in CY 2021 and the survey item regarding information on contacting the Patient’s Rights Office remained at 100% for both CY 2020 and CY 2021.



### Availability of ACCESS Help Line Services in non-English Languages

A total of 24 (60%) test calls were completed in a non-English Language. ACCESS Help Line staff provided language assistance for 33.3% of the non-English calls in the Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese languages (N=8). The remaining 66.7% utilized a Language Interpreter Service Vendor for Spanish (N=8) and other non-English languages (N=8). Figure 3 shows the breakdown of test calls by language.

**Figure 3:** Completed Test Calls by Language



Data Source: 24/7 Test Call Project List, CY 2021.

## Implications and Recommendations/Proposed Actions

The QI unit shared the study's findings, including trends data, with the ACCESS Help Line's Test Calls team.

The CY 2021 findings indicated two areas for improvement. One was in the area of providing information on accessing the beneficiary grievance form and the other in the area of documenting the call. As a result of these findings, the ACCESS Help Line identified the following process improvement strategies:

- ACCESS Help Line management will implement staff training, specific to the Beneficiary grievance and appeals related calls to ensure appropriate action is taken by ACCESS Agents when they receive these calls. The importance of providing information related to accessing the grievance form to callers who are expressing dissatisfaction will be emphasized in this training. Supervisory oversight, and continuous monitoring to ensure quality services will continue.
- ACCESS Help Line will continue to implement the QIC guidelines that require coaching packages to be given to agents by supervisors when areas for improvement are identified on test calls and QA reviews. ACCESS Help Line Program Manager will continue to send the test calls bulletin to all ACCESS Help Line staff to highlight the State mandates and regulations related to Test Calls. The bulletin will elevate the Test Calls Study's importance and compliance with the State mandate and attention to the study's findings for the month and the year. While individual staff receive coaching packages from their respective supervisor when documentation is an area for improvement on a specific Test Call, the Test Calls Study Bulletin gives the big picture to staff and the importance of continuous quality improvement in this area.
- Any instances of dissatisfaction with the Language Interpreter Service Vendor will be brought to the Internal Services Department (ISD) contact for immediate attention for follow-up with the vendor. The procedures to complete a complaint form will be updated and reviewed with ACCESS Agents for timely resolution of the complaints and quality monitoring by the vendor. ACCESS management will maintain a log of the problem resolution received from ISD on the complaints notified by the ACCESS Help Line.

To improve the efficiency of the study and the accuracy in the responses:

- ACCESS Help Line and the QI unit will continue to work collaboratively to update the study's methodology and supporting materials for CY 2022 based on a review of errors noted by Test Callers on the Test Call Survey form 2021.
- QI and ACCESS will work collaboratively to revise the CY 2022 Test Call Survey form, including improving how items are organized and adding additional items to gather more feedback on quality. Refer to Appendix B for *Guidelines/Instructions to Reinforce for Test Callers in CY 2022*.

## Study Limitations

- ACCESS Help Line introduced audio recording reviews in April 2019. These reviews were facilitated by ACCESS Help Line staff due to their proximity and familiarity with the audio logs. Outside access to audio logs is not permitted. Due to this limitation, audio reviews could not be performed by a party outside of ACCESS Help Line. This internal process should be taken into consideration in the review of the Test Calls results.
- Errors on specific survey items decreased this year as the form was simplified. Errors were predominately related to the caller veering from the assigned scenario, not getting the ACCESS Agent's name during the call, and getting disconnected during the call. Table 4 presents the number and percent of each revised data point by type.

**Table 4.** Number and Percent of Revised Responses by Survey Item

<b>Call Feature or Survey Item</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Type (e.g., Referral, Crisis, Beneficiary Problem)</b>	1	3%
<b>Name of ACCESS Agent</b>	4	10%
<b>ACCESS Agent provided guidance on the beneficiary grievance form</b>	2	5%
<b>ACCESS Agent provided guidance on contacting the Patient's Right Office</b>	1	3%
<b>ACCESS Agent provided a referral</b>	3	8%

## Plans for Monitoring ACCESS Help Line Responsiveness in CY 2022

- QI will instruct each SA to complete five Test Calls during their assigned study period according to the following:
  - Time of Day
    - Number shifts by month (Table 5)
  - Language
    - At least two in English and the remaining in SA threshold languages (Table 6)
  - Type of Call
    - One crisis scenario call during business hours and one crisis scenario during after hours
    - One beneficiary problem resolution/complaint call
    - Two mental health referral calls

**Table 5:** Service Area Test Calls' Schedule for CY 2022

SA	Assigned Study Period	# Business Hours Calls	# After Hours Calls
SA 1	March 2022	3	2
SA 2	April 2022	2	3
SA 3	May 2022	3	2
SA 4	June 2022	2	3
SA 5	July 2022	3	2
SA 6	August 2022	2	3
SA 7	September 2022	3	2
SA 8	October 2022	2	3

**Table 6:** Threshold Languages by Service Area

SA	Threshold Language(s)
SA 1	Spanish
SA 2	Armenian, Farsi, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese
SA 3	Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish, and Vietnamese
SA 4	Armenian, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Tagalog
SA 5	Farsi and Spanish
SA 6	Spanish
SA 7	Korean and Spanish
SA 8	Cambodian, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese

**Appendix A: 24/7 ACCESS Line Test Calls Survey Form for Calendar Year 2022 - English Version and Non-English Version**



OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS – QUALITY, OUTCOMES, AND TRAINING DIVISION

**TEST CALLS SURVEY FORM – Calendar Year 2022 – ENGLISH VERSION**

24/7 ACCESS CENTER HOTLINE: (800) 854-7771 – PRESS #1

Please Complete One Survey Form per Test Call and Keep Call Under **10 Minutes**

<b>Test Call Assignment (To be filled in by Quality Improvement):</b>	
Date for Call: ___ 2022	Name to Use for Call: _____ Date of Birth to Use for Call: _____
Test Caller Name: _____	Medi-Cal #: _____ Social Security #: <small>Click or tap here to enter text.</small>
Test Caller Org: _____	Language Used <input type="checkbox"/> English
Location for Call: _____	Service Area: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/>
Time of Call: Business Hours (Mon - Fri 8:00AM - 5:00PM): <input type="checkbox"/> After Hours (Mon - Fri 5:01PM- 7:59 AM, Weekends & Holidays): <input type="checkbox"/>	Type of Call: <input type="checkbox"/> Complaint/Beneficiary Problem <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Referral <input type="checkbox"/> Crisis Scenario

Call Start time:	Hr:	Min:	<input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM	Call End time:	Hr:	Min:	<input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM
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First name of the ACCESS Agent: \_\_\_\_\_

1. If you called for a Mental Health Referral or Crisis Scenario, did you receive a referral or other information?  YES  NO  NOT APPLICABLE
  - a. If YES, list here: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Clinic Name and Phone Number)
2. If you called for a Complaint/Beneficiary Problem, did the ACCESS Agent inform you how to:
  - a. Access the beneficiary grievance form?  YES  NO  NOT APPLICABLE
  - b. Contact the Patient's Rights Office?  YES  NO  NOT APPLICABLE
3. Overall, I would rate my experience with this call as:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Extremely Bad			Bad		Neutral			Very Good		Extremely Good

For QI Use ONLY: Was the call logged by the ACCESS Center Agent? Yes  No

4. Please indicate any additional information that would help improve the services provided through the ACCESS Center:

***Thank you for your participation. Please double check that your form is filled in completely before submitting it to Quality Improvement (QI).***



OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS – QUALITY, OUTCOMES, AND TRAINING DIVISION  
**TEST CALLS SURVEY FORM – Calendar Year 2022 – NON-ENGLISH VERSION**

24/7 ACCESS CENTER HOTLINE: (800) 854-7771 – PRESS #1

Please Complete One Survey Form per Test Call and Keep Call Under **10 Minutes**

Test Call Assignment (To be filled in by Quality Improvement):			
Date for Call:	___	___	2022
Name to Use for Call:		Click or tap here to enter text.	
Test Caller Org:		Click or tap here to enter text.	
Medi-Cal #: Click or tap here to enter text.		Language Used <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
Date of Birth: _____		Service Area: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/>	
Location for Call: _____		Type of Call: <input type="checkbox"/> Complaint/Beneficiary Problem <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Referral <input type="checkbox"/> Crisis Scenario	
Time of Call: Business Hours (Mon - Fri 8:00AM – 5:00PM): <input type="checkbox"/> After Hours (Mon - Fri 5:01PM- 7:59 AM, Weekends & Holidays): <input type="checkbox"/>			

Call Start time:	Hr:	Min:	<input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM	Call End time:	Hr:	Min:	<input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM
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First name of the ACCESS Agent: \_\_\_\_\_

- Who provided your Interpreter Services (please check one)?
  - ACCESS Agent
  - Interpreter Line
- If you called for a Mental Health Referral or Crisis Scenario, did you receive a referral or other information?  YES  NO  NOT APPLICABLE
  - If YES, list here: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Clinic Name and Phone Number)
- If you called for a Complaint/Beneficiary Problem, did the ACCESS Agent inform you how to:
  - Access the beneficiary grievance form?  YES  NO  NOT APPLICABLE
  - Contact the Patient’s Rights Office?  YES  NO  NOT APPLICABLE

For QI Use ONLY: Was the call logged by the ACCESS Center Agent? Yes  No

4. Overall, I would rate my experience with this call as:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Extremely Bad			Bad		Neutral			Very Good		Extremely Good

5. Please indicate any additional information that would help improve the services provided through the ACCESS Center:

6. Please indicate any additional information that would help improve the services provided through the Interpreter Line:

***Thank you for your participation. Please double check that your form is filled in completely before submitting it to Quality Improvement (QI).***



## **Appendix B: Guidelines/Instructions to Reinforce for Test Callers in CY 2022**

The Quality Improvement (QI) Unit updated the CY 2022 Test Calls' Study materials and training with the following revisions:

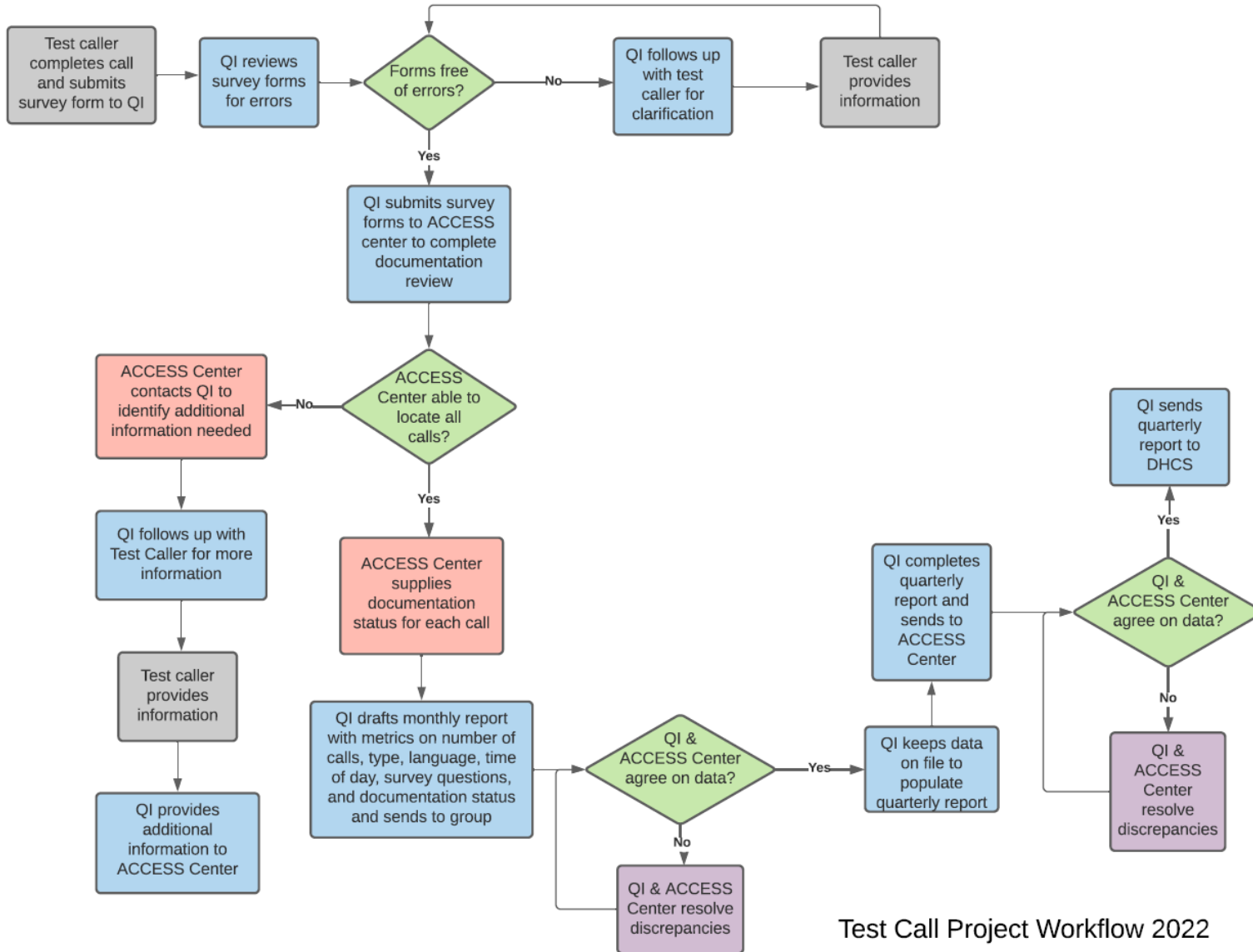
### **Survey Form**

- Two items were added to the English survey form:
  - A numeric (0-10) rating scale assessing the caller's experience of the call
  - An open-ended comment field for feedback on the ACCESS agent
- Three items were added to the Non-English survey form:
  - A numeric (0-10) rating scale assessing the caller's experience of the call
  - An open-ended comment field for feedback on the ACCESS agent
  - An open-ended comment field for feedback on the Interpreter Line

### **Procedures and Training**

- QI will continue to provide fictitious data and assign scenarios to callers. QI will work collaboratively with callers to select specific dates and times for calls.
- The Mental Health Promoters program will continue to assist the QI unit with calls and additional language capacity may be handled by central or SA-specific staff members.
- Callers will be reminded to follow their assigned scenario and to give the fictitious data for the call. They are also encouraged to make a practice call with their team to prepare ahead of time.
- Callers will be trained to try the call at a later time if they are disconnected or if significant interference limits communication during the call.
- The QI unit will send out monthly data reports to the ACCESS Help Line and Quality Assurance to track completed test calls

# Test Call Study Workflow CY 2022



Test Call Project Workflow 2022