

What you should know about opioid pain medications



Nearly 40% of Americans have chronic pain. Some have back pain or chronic headaches, and others may be recovering from surgery, an accident, or an injury. Opioid medications are often prescribed to manage pain, but there are risks involved with taking them.

It can be hard to understand all the options available to manage pain. We're here to help you explore your choices safely and effectively.

This overview offers information about opioid pain medications, how to use them, risks and warning signs, and non-prescription options for treating pain. We'll also cover what to do if you or a loved one develops an opioid dependence.

What are opioids?

Opioids are narcotic pain medications that are frequently called pain killers. The most commonly prescribed opioid medications include hydrocodone, oxycodone, and morphine.

Prescription opioids are used to help treat moderate to severe pain. They are often prescribed after surgery, an injury, or for certain health conditions. These medications can provide much-needed pain relief. However, there are serious risks to taking opioid medications, especially with long-term use. Please work with your healthcare provider to make sure you are getting the safest, most effective care.

For short periods of time, it's generally safe to take opioid medications as directed by your doctor. Extending the time you're on these medications, or taking them differently than your doctor prescribed, can increase your risk of dependence, addiction, and overdose.

How to take opioid medications safely

- **Opioids are designed for short-term use and should be taken only as needed.** When your pain is under control, try taking less or changing to other non-opioid pain treatments.
- Do not take opioids more frequently than prescribed. Do not take extra doses unless a healthcare professional tells you to do so.
- Avoid dangerous drug interactions by telling your provider or pharmacist about other medications you are taking. **Do not mix opioids with alcohol or sedating drugs** such as benzodiazepines (including lorazepam, alprazolam, and diazepam), sleeping pills (such as zolpidem), muscle relaxants (cyclobenzaprine, baclofen, and tizanidine), and gabapentinoids (gabapentin and pregabalin). **Doing so increases your risk of overdose.**
- Never share your opioid medications with anyone else.
- Keep your pain medications in their original containers and in areas where children, teens, and pets cannot access them.

Risks associated with taking opioids

Taking opioids for an extended amount of time increases your risk of developing problems that can have serious effects on your everyday life, and can even lead to death.

ADDICTION – Unable to stop or control drug use, unable to resist or control cravings

DEPENDENCE – Experiencing symptom withdrawals after stopping medication

TOLERANCE – Increasing the amount of medication you need to take for the same effect

OVERDOSE – Overloading your body with medication; can lead to brain damage or death

Opioid overdose

Even when you’re following your doctor’s directions, there’s a risk that these powerful medications could overwhelm your body and stop your normal breathing. This is called an overdose, and it can cause brain damage or death. It’s important to understand the signs and symptoms of an overdose so you can recognize when you or a loved one needs help.

Signs and symptoms of an opioid overdose

- Limp body
- Pale, blue, or cold skin (including lips and fingernails)
- Slow, shallow breathing
- Choking, gurgling, or snoring sounds
- Dizziness or confusion
- Falling asleep or loss of consciousness
- Pinpoint pupils (small, constricted black holes in the center of your eyes)

Is there a way to reverse an opioid overdose?

Yes. **Naloxone is a life-saving medication that can reverse an opioid overdose.** Overdoses can occur in a variety of different ways and could be from prescription opioids, heroin, or fentanyl. Naloxone is available as a nasal spray that is safe and easy to use.

Naloxone works by blocking the effects of opioids. When an opioid overdose causes a person’s breathing to slow or stop, it can usually restore normal breathing within 2 to 3 minutes. High doses or strong opioids like fentanyl may require a second dose of naloxone.

Ask your doctor if a naloxone product is right for you.

For more information about any required copayments for hospitalization, please refer to your Evidence of Coverage or call the Member Services Department.

Medication	Central Health Medicare Plan
Naloxone hcl Liquid Naloxone hcl Solution Cartridge, Solution, Solution Prefilled Syringe	Tier 3 Tier 2

Non-opioid treatment options for chronic pain

There are many options for pain relief when you want to cut back or stop taking opioid drugs. These treatments can be used alone or in combination to help reduce chronic pain. Talk with your doctor about which medications can be taken together safely.

Non-opioid medications

Below is a list of frequently used non-opioid medications:

Medication	Central Health Medicare Plan
Celecoxib Caps	Tier 3
Diclofenac potassium TABS	Tier 2
Diclofenac sodium TB24	Tier 3
Diclofenac sodium TBEC	Tier 2
Diclofenac w/ misoprostol TABS	Tier 4
Diflunisal TABS	Tier 3
Etodolac CAPS	Tier 3
Flurbiprofen	Tier 3
IBU TABS	Tier 1
Ibuprofen SUSP	Tier 3
Ibuprofen TABS	Tier 1
Meloxicam TABS	Tier 1
Nabumetone TABS	Tier 2
Naproxen TABS	Tier 1
Naproxen TBEC	Tier 2
Naproxen sodium TABS	Tier 3
Oxaprozin TABS	Tier 4
Piroxicam CAPS	Tier 3
Sulindac TABS	Tier 2

Non-pharmacological treatments

You can also consider over-the-counter treatments and activity changes to help you manage pain, such as:

- **Heat or cold compress.** Heat relaxes muscles and can lower how sensitive you are to pain. Cold is useful after an injury to relieve pain, decrease inflammation and muscle spasms, and help speed up recovery.
- **Mind–body techniques.** Mind–body relaxation techniques are commonly used in pain clinics. These include meditation, breathing exercises, hypnosis, mindfulness, and progressive muscle relaxation.
- **Exercise.** Physical activity can be helpful for some with common pain conditions such as low back pain, arthritis, and fibromyalgia.
- **Weight loss.** Excess weight can worsen pain. Losing weight can help relieve some pain types.
- **Yoga and Tai Chi.** Yoga and Tai Chi are mind–body exercises that incorporate breath control, meditation, and movements that stretch and strengthen muscles. These exercises can help with chronic pain such as arthritis, headaches, low back pain, or fibromyalgia.
- **Chiropractic services.** Chiropractors work to correct the body’s skeletal and muscular alignment to relieve pain, improve function, and help the body heal.
- **Physical therapy (PT) and occupational therapy (OT).** Physical therapy helps restore or maintain the ability to move and walk. Occupational therapy helps improve how well you can perform daily tasks such as dressing, eating, and bathing.
- **Acupuncture.** This is a type of traditional Chinese medicine commonly used to treat pain. It uses very thin needles inserted through your skin at specific points on your body.
- **Ultrasound.** This treatment directs sound waves into body tissue to improve blood circulation, decrease inflammation, and promote healing.
- **Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS).** TENS treatment uses a very mild electrical current to block pain signals to the brain.
- **Psychotherapy.** Mental health professionals can offer many techniques for pain relief and management. For example, they can help you reframe negative thinking patterns about your pain to change your perspective and outlook.
- **Many of these services and tools are covered by your health plan benefits.** To learn about your specific plan coverage for non-prescription therapies, please call **Central** Health Medicare Plan at (866) 314-2427 (TTY users should call 711), October 1 – March 31: 7 days a week, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., local time, April 1 - September 30: Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., local time.

Opioid use disorders

When opioid use becomes problematic, it is known as opioid use disorder (OUD). This is a chronic, lifelong disorder that has serious effects such as disability, relapses, and death. Frequently, a person struggling with OUD will show certain problematic behavior patterns, such as:

- Trouble managing what's required for work, school, or home
- Continuing to use opioids after having recurring relationship or social problems
- Continuing to use opioids for an ongoing physical or psychological problem that's likely caused by or made worse by opioids
- An ongoing desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control opioid use
- Taking opioids for longer than intended
- Needing increased amounts of opioids for the same effect, or experiencing less relief with continued use of the same amount
- Spending a great deal of time obtaining or using opioids, or recovering from its effects
- A strong desire, craving, or urge to use opioids
- Using opioids in physically hazardous situations
- Giving up, changing, or reducing activities because of opioid use
- Experiencing withdrawal symptoms, or taking opioids (or a closely related substance) to relieve or avoid withdrawal symptoms

If you are experiencing one or more of these signs and have questions or concerns, please contact your healthcare provider immediately.

Medication-assisted treatment for OUD

When medications are used in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies to treat OUD, it's known as medication-assisted treatment (MAT). For some people, using MAT helps them recover successfully and return to their normal everyday lives.

The FDA has approved three medications for the treatment of opioid dependence: buprenorphine, methadone, and naltrexone. These medications are prescribed in carefully controlled doses to reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms, both of which must be managed to overcome opioid dependence.

These treatments are safe and effective in combination with counseling, behavioral therapy, and recovery support. Your doctor will help you choose the right combination of MAT medication and therapy based on your needs and circumstances.

[Central Health Plan's] drug formulary has many FDA-recommended MAT treatments, including:

Medication	[Central Health Medicare Plan]
Buprenorphine sublingual tablet	Tier 3
Buprenorphine patch	Tier 2
Buprenorphine-naloxone sublingual tablet	Tier 4
Buprenorphine-naloxone sublingual film/tab	Tier 2
Methadone solution/tablet/ C O N C	Tier 3
Naltrexone tablet	Tier 3

Please see Central Health Medicare Plan's Medicare Advantage comprehensive formulary here: centralhealthplan.com/PartD/Formulary

Helpful resources

If you have questions about prescription drug coverage, please call (800) 665-3086 (TTY:711), October 1 – March 31: 7 days a week, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., local time, April 1 - September 30: Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., local time.

For questions about non-prescription therapies and coverage, please contact Central Health Medicare Plan Member Services at 1-866-314-2427 (TTY:711).

You can also call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357); TTY: 1-800-487-4889. SAMHSA National Helpline is a free and confidential information service available to individuals and family members 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. This service provides information on local treatment facilities, support groups, and community organizations. Callers can also order free publications and other information.

References

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Surgeon General, Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health. Washington, DC: HHS, November 2016. addiction.surgeongeneral.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-generals-report.pdf. SAMHSA. Medication and Counseling Treatment. samhsa.gov/medication-assisted-treatment/treatment Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Opioid Basics. March 2021. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Preventing Opioid Overdose. September 2021.

Non-Discrimination Notice – Section 1557

Central Health Plan



Discrimination is against the law. Central Health Plan follows State and Federal civil rights laws. Central Health Plan does not unlawfully discriminate, exclude people, or treat them differently because of sex, race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, ethnic group identification, age, mental disability, physical disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Central Health Plan provides:

- Free aids and services in a timely manner to people with disabilities to help them communicate better, such as:
 - Qualified sign language interpreters
 - Written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, other formats)
- Free language services in a timely manner to people whose primary language is not English, such as:
 - Qualified interpreters
 - Written information in other languages

If you need these services, contact Central Health Plan between 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. by calling 1-866-314-2427. If you cannot hear or speak well, please call 711. Upon request, this document can be made available to you in braille, large print, audiocassette, or electronic form. To obtain a copy in one of these alternative formats, please call or write to:

Central Health Plan
Civil Rights Coordinator
200 Oceangate, Suite 100
Long Beach, CA 90802

By phone: 1-866-606-3889. If you cannot hear or speak well, please call 711.

HOW TO FILE A GRIEVANCE

If you believe that Central Health Plan has failed to provide these services or unlawfully discriminated in another way on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, ethnic group identification, age, mental disability, physical disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation, you can file a grievance with Central Health Plan's Civil Rights Coordinator. You can file a grievance by phone, in writing, in person, or electronically:

- **By phone:** Contact Central Health Plan's Civil Rights Coordinator between 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. by calling 1-866-606-3889. Or, if you cannot hear or speak well, please call 711.
- **In writing:** Fill out a complaint form or write a letter and send it to:
Central Health Plan
Civil Rights Coordinator
200 Oceangate, Suite 100
Long Beach, CA 90802

- In person: Visit your doctor's office or Central Health Plan and say you want to file a grievance.
- Electronically: Send an email to [**CivilRights@MolinaHealthcare.com**](mailto:CivilRights@MolinaHealthcare.com). You can also visit Central Health Plan's website at [**MolinaHealthcare.Alertline.com**](http://MolinaHealthcare.Alertline.com).

OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS – CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES

You can also file a civil rights complaint with the California Department of Health Care Services, Office of Civil Rights by phone, in writing, or electronically:

- **By phone:** Call 916-440-7370. If you cannot speak or hear well, please call 711 (Telecommunications Relay Service).
- **In writing:** Fill out a complaint form or send a letter to:
Deputy Director, Office of Civil Rights
Department of Health Care Services
Office of Civil Rights
P.O. Box 997413
Sacramento, CA 95899-7413

Complaint forms are available at [**DHCS.ca.gov/Pages/Language_Access.aspx**](http://DHCS.ca.gov/Pages/Language_Access.aspx).

- **Electronically:** Send an email to [**CivilRights@dhcs.ca.gov**](mailto:CivilRights@dhcs.ca.gov).

OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS – U.S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

If you believe you have been discriminated against on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex, you can file a civil rights complaint (grievance) with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, by phone, in writing, or electronically:

- **By phone:** Call 1-800-368-1019. If you cannot speak or hear well, please call TTY/TDD: 1-800-537-7697.
- **In writing:** Fill out a complaint form or send a letter to:
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 509F, HHH Building
Washington, D.C. 20201

Complaint forms are available at [**HHS.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html**](http://HHS.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html).

- **Electronically:** Visit the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal at [**OCRportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf**](http://OCRportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf).

Notice of Availability of Language Assistance Services and Auxiliary Aids and Services

English

ATTENTION: If you need help in your language call 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711). Aids and services for people with disabilities, like documents in braille and large print, are also available. Call 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711). These services are free of charge.

العربية (Arabic)

يرجى الانتباه: إذا احتجت إلى المساعدة بلغتك، فاتصل بـ 1-866-314-2427، (وبالنسبة لمستخدمي الهاتف النصي TTY: يمكنهم الاتصال على 711). تتوفر أيضًا المساعدات والخدمات للأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة، مثل المستندات المكتوبة بطريقة بريل والخط الكبير، اتصل بـ 1-866-314-2427 (وبالنسبة لمستخدمي الهاتف النصي TTY: يمكنهم الاتصال على 711). هذه الخدمات مجانية.

Հայերեն (Armenian)

ՈՒՇԱԴՐՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ. Եթե ձեզ հարկավոր է աջակցություն ձեր լեզվով, ապա զանգահարեք 1-866-314-2427 (TTY՝ 711) հեռախոսահամարով: Հաշմանդամություն ունեցող անձանց համար գործում են նաև օժանդակ միջոցներ ու ծառայություններ, օրինակ՝ Բրայլի գրատիպով ու խոշորատառ տպատառով տրամադրվող նյութեր: Տվյալ դեպքում զանգահարեք 1-866-314-2427 (TTY՝ 711) հեռախոսահամարով: Ծառայությունները գործում են անվճար:

ខ្មែរ (Cambodian)

ចំណាំ: បើអ្នកត្រូវការជំនួយជាភាសាបស្ចឹម សូមទូរសព្ទទៅលេខ 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711)។ ជំនួយ និងសេវាកម្មសម្រាប់ជនពិការ ដូចជាឯកសារសរសេរជាអក្សរផុសសម្រាប់ជនពិការភ្នែក ឬឯកសារសរសេរជាអក្សរពុម្ពធំ ក៏អាចរកបានផងដែរ។ ទូរសព្ទមកលេខ 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711)។ សេវាកម្មទាំងនេះមិនគិតថ្លៃឡើយ។

简体中文 (Chinese)

请注意：如果您需要以您的语言提供帮助，请致电 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711)。另外还提供针对残疾人士的辅助工具和服务，例如盲文文件和大字体文件。请致电 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711)。这些服务均免费提供。

فارسی (Farsi)

توجه: اگر می‌خواهید به زبان خود راهنمایی دریافت کنید، با 1-866-314-2427 (TTY: 711) تماس بگیرید. کمکها و خدمات مخصوص افراد دارای معلولیت، مانند نسخه‌هایی به خط بریل و چاپ درشت، نیز موجود است. با 1-866-314-2427 (TTY: 711) تماس بگیرید. این خدمات رایگان ارائه می‌شوند.

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हिंदी (Hindi)

ध्यान दें: अगर आपको अपनी भाषा में सहायता की आवश्यकता है तो 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711) पर कॉल करें। अशक्तता वाले लोगों के लिए सहायता और सेवाएं, जैसे ब्रेल और बड़े प्रिंट में भी दस्तावेज़ उपलब्ध हैं। 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711) पर कॉल करें। ये सेवाएं निशुल्क हैं।

Hmoob (Hmong)

CEEB TOOM: Yog koj xav tau kev pab txhais koj hom lus hu rau 1-866-314-2427 (TTY: 711). Tsis tas li ntawd, kuj tseem muaj cov kev pab txhawb thiab kev pab cuam rau cov neeg xiam oob qhab, xws li cov ntawv su thiab luam tawm ua tus ntawv loj. Hu rau 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711). Cov kev pab cuam no yog pab dawb xwb.

日本語 (Japanese)

注記：日本語での対応が必要な場合は 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711) までお電話ください。点字の資料や文字の拡大表示など、障がいをお持ちの方のためのサービスもご用意しております。1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711)までお電話ください。これらのサービスは無料です。

한국어 (Korean)

알림: 귀하의 언어로 도움을 받고 싶으시면 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711)번으로 전화하십시오. 점자나 큰 활자로 된 문서와 같이 장애가 있는 분들을 위한 지원 및 서비스도 이용하실 수 있습니다. 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711)번으로 전화하십시오. 이러한 서비스는 무료로 제공됩니다.

ພາສາລາວ (Laotian)

ປະກາດ: ຖ້າທ່ານຕ້ອງການຄວາມຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອເປັນພາສາຂອງທ່ານໃຫ້ໂທຫາເບີ 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711). ນອກນີ້ຍັງມີຄວາມຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອ ແລະ ການບໍລິການສໍາລັບຄົນພິການ ເຊັ່ນ: ເອກະສານທີ່ເປັນອັກສອນພູມແລະມີໂຕພິມໃຫຍ່ ໃຫ້ໂທຫາເບີ 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711). ການບໍລິການເຫຼົ່ານີ້ແມ່ນຟຣີ.

Mien

LONGC HNYOUV JANGX LONGX OC: Beiv taux meih qiemx longc mienh tengx faan benx meih nyei waac nor douc waac daaih lorx taux 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711). Liouh lorx jauv-louc tengx aengx caux nzie gong bun taux ninh mbuo wuaaic fangx mienh, beiv taux longc benx nzangc-pokc bun hlou mbiutc aengx caux aamz mborqv benx domh sou se mbenc nzoih bun longc. Douc waac daaih lorx 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711). Naaiv deix nzie weih gong-bou jauv-louc se benx wang-henh tengx mv zuqc cuotv nyaanh oc.

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ (Punjabi)

ਧਿਆਨ ਦਿਓ: ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਦਦ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711) 'ਤੇ ਕਾਲ ਕਰੋ। ਅਪਾਹਜ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਲਈ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਅਤੇ ਸੇਵਾਵਾਂ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕਿ ਬ੍ਰੇਲ ਅਤੇ ਮੋਟੀ ਛਪਾਈ ਵਿੱਚ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼, ਵੀ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹਨ। 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711)'ਤੇ ਕਾਲ ਕਰੋ। ਇਹ ਸੇਵਾਵਾਂ ਮੁਫਤ ਹਨ।

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Русский (Russian)

ВНИМАНИЕ! Если вам нужна помощь на вашем родном языке, звоните по номеру 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711). Также предоставляются средства и услуги для людей с ограниченными возможностями, например документы крупным шрифтом или шрифтом Брайля. Звоните по номеру 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711). Такие услуги = бесплатны.

Español (Spanish)

ATENCIÓN: si necesita ayuda en su idioma, llame al 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711). También ofrecemos asistencia y servicios para personas con discapacidades, como documentos en braille y con letras grandes. Llame al 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711). Estos servicios son gratuitos.

Tagalog (Filipino)

ATENSIYON: Kung kailangan mo ng tulong sa iyong wika, tumawag sa 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711). Mayroon ding mga tulong at serbisyo para sa mga taong may kapansanan, tulad ng mga dokumento sa braille at malaking print. Tumawag sa 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711). Libre ang mga serbisyonang ito.

ภาษาไทย (Thai)

โปรดทราบ: หากคุณต้องการความช่วยเหลือเป็นภาษาของคุณ กรุณาโทรศัพท์ไปที่หมายเลข 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711) นอกจากนี้ ยังพร้อมให้ความช่วยเหลือและบริการต่าง ๆ สำหรับบุคคลที่มีความพิการ เช่น เอกสารต่าง ๆ ที่เป็นอักษรเบรลล์และเอกสารที่พิมพ์ด้วยตัวอักษรขนาดใหญ่ กรุณาโทรศัพท์ไปที่หมายเลข 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711) ไม่มีค่าใช้จ่ายสำหรับบริการเหล่านี้

Українська (Ukrainian)

УВАГА! Якщо вам потрібна допомога вашою рідною мовою, телефонуйте на номер 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711). Люди з обмеженими можливостями також можуть скористатися допоміжними засобами й послугами, наприклад отримати документи, надруковані шрифтом Брайля та великим шрифтом. Телефонуйте на номер 1-866-314-2427(TTY: 711). Ці послуги безкоштовні.

Tiếng Việt (Vietnamese)

CHÚ Ý: Nếu quý vị cần trợ giúp bằng ngôn ngữ của mình, vui lòng gọi số 1-866-314-2427 (TTY: 711). Chúng tôi cũng hỗ trợ và cung cấp các dịch vụ dành cho người khuyết tật, như tài liệu bằng chữ nổi Braille và chữ khổ lớn (chữ hoa). Vui lòng gọi số 1-866-314-2427 (TTY: 711). Các dịch vụ này đều miễn phí.