

California Breast Care Provider Guide

When a client needs help identifying breast-care options in California, the broker's role is to support the access process—not to diagnose, interpret findings, or recommend treatment. A broker can help the client understand coverage, identify appropriate in-network providers, and confirm referral or authorization requirements, while clinical guidance should come from the client's physicians. With that in mind, the following shortlist gives the most weight to multidisciplinary breast programs connected to NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers, because those programs are recognized for strong cancer-care capabilities, research depth, and access to coordinated specialty teams.

Broker role: Help the client understand their coverage, locate appropriate in-network providers, and navigate referrals and authorizations. Diagnosis and treatment recommendations should come from the client's physicians.

The **best California providers for breast screening, diagnosis, breast surgery, and breast cancer treatment**, I would put the greatest weight on multidisciplinary breast programs connected to **NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers**. NCI designation reflects rigorous standards in cancer research and treatment capabilities.

My California shortlist would include:

1. **City of Hope Comprehensive Cancer Center — Duarte/Los Angeles area.**
One of California's major NCI-designated comprehensive cancer centers and a strong choice for complex breast cancer, second opinions, advanced treatments, and clinical trials.
2. **UCLA Health Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center — Los Angeles.**
NCI-designated, with breast specialists across medical oncology, breast surgery, imaging, genetics and other disciplines and multiple Southern California locations.
3. **UCSF Breast Care Center — San Francisco.** UCSF Breast Care Center is part of UCSF's NCI-designated Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center. Its multidisciplinary team includes breast surgeons, oncologists, radiologists, pathologists, and supportive-care specialists.

4. **Stanford Breast Cancer Program — Palo Alto.** Stanford Breast Cancer Program Palo Alto is associated with the NCI-designated Stanford Cancer Institute and is particularly worth considering for difficult diagnoses, second opinions and access to academic medicine and clinical research.
5. **UC San Diego Health / Moores Comprehensive Cancer Center — San Diego.** An especially strong Southern California option. Moores is an NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, and its breast cancer program has both Commission on Cancer and National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers accreditation.
6. **UCI Health Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center — Orange County.** This would be one of my first choices for an Orange County patient. UCI is the **only NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center based in Orange County**, and its breast program offers multidisciplinary care, clinical trials, nurse navigation, genetic testing/counseling and NAPBC accreditation.
7. **USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center — Los Angeles.** USC Norris Cancer Hospital is another NCI-designated comprehensive cancer center and a strong academic option in the Los Angeles market.

For **routine screening and diagnostic breast imaging**, rather than complex cancer treatment, I'd also consider high-volume regional breast centers such as MemorialCare Sarah & Taylor Netherlander Breast Center - Saddleback Medical in Laguna Hills, MemorialCare Breast Center - Irvine (Sand Canyon), and MemorialCare Breast Center - Long Beach.

For a California broker/client resource, I would divide the providers into three tiers: **Centers of Excellence for complex breast cancer, regional comprehensive breast centers**, and **screening/diagnostic centers**. The "best" provider also depends heavily on the patient's insurance network, because a superb NCI center is less useful if the patient's plan requires authorization or has it out of network.

For a broker/client-facing California resource, I'd organize breast care by the **level of care needed**, rather than simply calling certain hospitals "best." That makes the guide more useful when a client asks, "Where should I go?"

California Breast Care Provider Guide

Tier 1 — Centers of Excellence for Complex Breast Cancer

Best suited for: newly diagnosed or complex cancer, aggressive/subtype-specific disease, recurrence, metastatic disease, unusual pathology, second opinions, genetic/high-risk cases, reconstruction questions, and clinical-trial consideration.

California has several NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers; NCI designation is a strong objective criterion for this tier because it recognizes depth in cancer research, clinical care and multidisciplinary capabilities.

Provider	Region	Why consider it
City of Hope Comprehensive Cancer Center	Duarte / LA	Major cancer-focused institution; breast imaging, multidisciplinary treatment, advanced therapies and clinical trials
UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center	Los Angeles	Academic multidisciplinary breast program, advanced imaging, oncology, surgery, genetics and research
UCI Health Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center	Orange County	NCI Comprehensive Cancer Center; particularly important referral option for OC
UC San Diego Moores Comprehensive Cancer Center	San Diego	NCI Comprehensive Cancer Center with academic multidisciplinary cancer care
Stanford Cancer Institute	Bay Area	Complex breast oncology, second opinions, advanced treatment and clinical trials
UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center	San Francisco	Major academic breast cancer program with multidisciplinary expertise
USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center	Los Angeles	NCI Comprehensive Cancer Center and academic specialty care
UC Davis Comprehensive Cancer Center	Sacramento	NCI Comprehensive Cancer Center serving Sacramento/Northern California

All eight are currently listed by NCI as California Comprehensive Cancer Centers.

Broker referral thought: A Tier 1 center becomes particularly valuable when a client says, *“I’ve been diagnosed with breast cancer and want to know whether I should get another opinion before treatment.”* City of Hope, for example, also operates a rapid diagnostic breast clinic designed to expedite evaluation after suspicious imaging, including same-day biopsy when clinically appropriate.

Tier 2 — Regional Comprehensive Breast Centers

Best suited for: most newly diagnosed breast cancers, breast surgery, radiation/medical oncology, abnormal mammograms requiring workup, biopsies, genetic counseling and ongoing treatment close to home.

These can provide excellent multidisciplinary care without requiring every patient to travel to a major academic/NCI center.

Orange County

Hoag Comprehensive Breast Care Program — Newport Beach/Irvine. Hoag offers screening, diagnosis, breast surgery, and cancer treatment. Its breast center holds the Certified Quality Breast Center of Excellence designation from the National Quality Measures for Breast Centers program and has multiple screening/diagnostic locations.

MemorialCare Breast Centers — Orange County/Long Beach. MemorialCare provides breast radiology, surgical oncology, medical oncology, radiation oncology, genetic counseling, and nurse navigation. Its centers are designated Comprehensive Breast Imaging Centers by the American College of Radiology.

Los Angeles: Cedars-Sinai breast programs and major integrated health-system breast programs can be appropriate for regional choices, depending heavily on the client's medical group and insurance network.

San Diego: Scripps offers breast care through multiple centers, including Dunn Breast Care Center, Emily Fenton Hunte Breast Care Center and O'Toole Breast Care Center.

Northern California: Large integrated systems such as Kaiser Permanente and Sutter Health can be important for regional options, particularly when the patient's insurance directs care within the system.

Broker referral thought: Tier 2 may be the sweet spot for many clients—highly specialized breast care with easier geographic access and potentially better network integration. A patient can also obtain a Tier 1 second opinion while receiving much of the treatment locally.

Tier 3 — Screening & Diagnostic Breast Centers

Best suited for: annual mammograms, 3-D mammography, dense-breast evaluation, ultrasound, MRI, follow-up of abnormal screening and image-guided biopsy.

Examples include:

MemorialCare Breast Center - Irvine (Sand Canyon) — Irvine

MemorialCare Breast Center - Long Beach — Long Beach

Breastlink Women's Imaging Tarzana — Los Angeles area

Breastlink Women's Imaging Temecula Valley — Riverside/Southwest region

Breast Imaging Service at Stanford Medicine Imaging Center — Palo Alto

UCI Health is another strong screening option, with comprehensive breast imaging locations in Costa Mesa, Irvine, Orange and Yorba Linda offering mammography, MRI and image-guided biopsy. UCLA provides breast imaging across multiple Southern California locations and offers screening and diagnostic mammography, ultrasound, MRI, and other breast procedures.

For screening, brokers can also tell clients to look for an **FDA-certified mammography facility**. The FDA maintains the Mammography Quality Standards Act facility database; its California listings were updated in August 2026.

A simple broker decision rule

Routine mammogram → Tier 3

Abnormal mammogram, lump or biopsy needed → Tier 2 or advanced Tier 3 diagnostic breast center

Confirmed breast cancer → Tier 2 comprehensive breast program

Complex cancer, aggressive disease, recurrence, metastatic cancer, unusual diagnosis, or desire for a second opinion/clinical trial → Tier 1

*One important caveat for clients: “**best medical center**” and “**best choice for this patient**” aren't necessarily the same thing. Before making an appointment, confirm the patient's **PPO/HMO/Medicare Advantage network, medical group, referral, and prior-authorization requirements**. For Medicare Advantage especially, access to a particular academic cancer center can depend significantly on the plan and **California Breast Care**:*

Where Should Your Client Go?

A Broker & Client Guide to Screening, Diagnosis and Specialized Breast Cancer Care

An abnormal mammogram does **not necessarily mean cancer**. The next step may be additional imaging, ultrasound, MRI or biopsy. Brokers can help clients navigate their health plan and locate an appropriate breast-care provider—without interpreting the medical findings.

TIER 1 — Centers of Excellence for Complex Breast Cancer

Consider: confirmed cancer, complicated diagnoses, aggressive or metastatic disease, recurrence, second opinions, genetic/high-risk cases and clinical trials.

California's NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers include these major programs:

California region	Examples
Orange County	UCI Health Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center
Los Angeles	City of Hope Comprehensive Cancer Center • UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center • USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center
San Diego	UC San Diego Moores Comprehensive Cancer Center
Bay Area	Stanford Cancer Institute • UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center
Sacramento/ Northern CA	UC Davis Comprehensive Cancer Center

UCI, for example, provides multidisciplinary breast cancer care, nurse navigation, genetic counseling and clinical-trial access and is the only NCI-designated comprehensive cancer center based in Orange County. UC San Diego's breast cancer program also holds Commission on Cancer and National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers accreditation.

Broker tip: A client may receive a second opinion at a Tier 1 center while continuing some or all treatment closer to home.

TIER 2 — Regional Comprehensive Breast Centers

Consider for: abnormal imaging requiring additional evaluation, biopsy, newly diagnosed breast cancer, breast surgery and coordinated oncology care close to home.

Southern California examples

- **Hoag Breast Program — Orange County**
- **MemorialCare Breast Centers — Orange & Los Angeles counties**
- **Scripps breast-care programs — San Diego**
- Major **Kaiser Permanente** breast programs for members whose coverage is integrated through Kaiser.

MemorialCare's breast centers, for example, offer comprehensive breast imaging in Orange and southern Los Angeles counties and are designated Comprehensive Breast Imaging Centers by the American College of Radiology.

Broker tip: Look for a center that can coordinate **imaging → biopsy → breast surgeon → oncology**, reducing the need for the client to navigate multiple unrelated providers.

TIER 3 — Screening & Diagnostic Breast Centers

Consider for: routine mammograms, 3-D mammography, diagnostic mammograms, breast ultrasound, MRI and follow-up imaging after an abnormal screening.

Good options may include hospital-based breast centers, academic medical centers, and accredited community imaging centers. UCI, for example, offers mammography, ultrasound, MRI, and risk-based screening across several Orange County locations. MemorialCare also provides dedicated mammography and breast-imaging locations throughout Orange and Los Angeles counties.

Broker tip: For a routine mammogram, convenience and network status may be most important. Once an abnormality is found, consider whether a comprehensive breast center would simplify the diagnostic process.

When a Client Calls After an Abnormal Mammogram: 5 Questions

1. What follow-up did the doctor or radiologist recommend?

Ask the client to have the actual mammogram report available. Do not interpret the findings for them.

2. Has the diagnostic mammogram, ultrasound, MRI or biopsy already been ordered?

Determine the next medical step and whether an appointment has been scheduled.

3. Which breast centers are in the client's network?

Check the **carrier, plan, medical group and facility**, particularly for HMO and Medicare Advantage members.

4. Is a referral or prior authorization required?

Help the client avoid delays by confirming requirements before the appointment.

5. If cancer is diagnosed, would a multidisciplinary center or second opinion be appropriate?

For complicated cases, discuss access to an NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center or another specialized breast program.

Remember

Routine screening → Tier 3

Abnormal mammogram / biopsy evaluation → Tier 2 or advanced Tier 3

**Confirmed or complex breast cancer / second opinion → Tier 1
contracted medical group.**