



The Consumer Connection

Fall 2019

Public Authority Services
by Sourcewise



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Avoid This Season's Flu

By Shannin Prather

That crisp chill in the air and crunch of fallen leaves under our feet means that autumn has arrived and winter is on its way. It also means that the flu season is upon us. However, you can take steps to avoid catching the flu this season.

Flu - the short name for influenza is a contagious illness that can be severe and even life-threatening, especially for older adults. Some seniors are at a higher risk for catching the flu due to a weakened immune system that occurs with age, making it harder to fight diseases. People with chronic health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, or immune deficiencies can experience severe or worsened flu symptoms.

The flu is easily passed on from person to person by coughing, sneezing, or touching something the virus is on. You can prevent catching the illness by following these simple actions: wash your hands often, avoid people who are sick, do not share utensils or glasses with others, and use antibacterial wipes on items before use to eliminate germs.

Flu symptoms often include: fever, headache, tiredness, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and body aches. The best prevention for the illness is to get a flu vaccination.

According to the National Council on Aging and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, vaccination is the best way to help protect yourself and others from the flu.

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It takes approximately two weeks for a flu shot to fully take effect to prevent illness. It is recommended that you get your vaccine as early in the season as possible. If you have not yet had a chance to get your flu shot, it is never too late. Flu season peaks between December and February, and may continue to carry over into spring. As long as the flu virus is in circulation, getting a flu shot may be valuable.

Check with your doctor or insurance carrier to find out your options for getting a flu shot. Vaccinations are often covered by insurance and may be free-of-charge.

Preparing for Natural Disasters

By Shannin Prather

Living in California, most of us may have experienced an earthquake or have been affected by a wild fire. Creating a disaster plan is a smart strategy to help you and your loved ones stay safe during and after a natural disaster strikes. The American Red Cross has tips and checklists to help you and your loved ones be prepared.

Here are some tips:

Create a Support Network of 2 to 3 People

These can be family, friends, neighbors, care provider(s), or others whom you trust and who are willing and able to check on you during emergencies. These people should know your needs and be able to provide assistance.

Communication and Evacuation Plans

Where will you meet your loved ones if you are evacuated? How will you get to an evacuation shelter if needed? These are questions that should be discussed before a disaster strikes.

Agree on an out-of-area contact person who is unlikely to be affected by the disaster. Ask this person to share messages between you and your support network members. Advanced planning will ensure that everyone in your support network stay connected, informed, and calm.

Put Together a Kit of Emergency Supplies

Gather emergency supplies and store them in a container that is easy to access and transport. Items to include:

- A few days' worth of drinking water, nonperishable food, and a can opener
- A flashlight with extra batteries – check on the batteries yearly to make sure they work
- A first aid kit, hand sanitizer, and a roll of toilet paper
- A pack of matches or a lighter in a waterproof container (or zip lock bag)
- A whistle or other noise-makers to alert emergency workers of your location
- A change of clothing and something for warmth (jacket, blanket, gloves, etc.)
- A photo copy of I.D. & other important documentation
- A back-up of essential items, such as medications, toothbrush, glasses, hearing aid batteries, denture cup, etc.
- A reminder check-list of all necessary essentials, such as air tank, walker/cane, wheelchair, dentures, glasses, hearing aids, etc.
- An activity of some sort. Something that can keep you entertained, such as a book or deck of playing cards



For more information about how you can be prepared for an emergency, visit The Red Cross' website: www.redcross.org/prepare or call (877) 727-6771.

Protect Yourself from Scams

By Shannin Prather

While most people are good spirited, there are those who will take unfair advantage if given the opportunity. Scammers are individuals who take advantage of people whom they consider an easy target. These smooth-talking swindlers cheat and steal from innocent and unsuspecting consumers of all ages and economic status.

Know how to protect yourself from scammers by recognizing a possible scam when you see it. Learn how to avoid common scams listed below:



1. **Government imposter scams.** It starts with a call from someone claiming to be from the IRS, Social Security, or Medicare. Maybe the telephone number even matches the toll-free number for these agencies. The caller tells you that your account is locked or they say you need to provide some information to get a refund or service, like your Social Security benefits reinstated. The imposters may say that you are facing a possible arrest for unpaid taxes or stolen identity charges. **Tip:** Hang up the phone immediately. Federal government agencies and federal employees are not permitted to ask you to wire money or add money to a prepaid debit card to pay for anything.
2. **Telemarketing scams.** Perhaps one of the most common schemes is telemarketing where scammers use fake telemarketing calls to prey on older or homebound adults. Seniors are at a higher risk because they are more familiar and comfortable with shopping over the phone. **Tip:** Do not give out your Social Security number or credit card information; unless you are sure that the party calling is representing a legitimate business. Consider putting your name and phone number on the National Do Not Call List. This is a free service and will stop most telemarketers from contacting you.
3. **Email scams.** Email messages may appear to be from a legitimate company or institution, asking individuals to “update” or “verify” your personal information. For instance, an email that appears to be from the IRS about a tax refund may appear in your inbox. **Tip:** The IRS will mail you official documents, and normally will not email you to ask for personal information.
4. **Sweepstakes and lottery scams.** Scammers inform individuals that they have won a lottery or sweepstakes but need to make some sort of payment to access the prize money. **Tip:** If you win a prize, you do not pay for it. Similar to not winning the lottery because you did not buy a ticket, you cannot win a sweepstakes if you did not enter one.

If you suspect that you have been the victim of a scam, do not be afraid or embarrassed to talk about it. Telling your story could help someone else avoid being scammed. Report scams to your local police department. You can also call your local Adult Protective Services office at (800) 414-2002. To register for the Do Not Call list, visit: www.donotcall.gov

Medicare and Medi-Cal for IHSS Recipients

By Marcelo Espiritu

Understanding how to get your health insurance to work for you can make a difference to how you feel each day. When you have both Medicare and Medi-Cal, understanding your options may be confusing.

Sourcewise Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program (HICAP) counselors are trained to help Medicare beneficiaries by providing information to help them make the best decision for themselves or their loved ones. HICAP counselors have completed demanding, ongoing training and are registered with the California Department of Aging.

For all Medicare beneficiaries, the Medicare Annual Enrollment Period (AEP) occurs from October 15–December 7, 2019. Use this time to check if your 2019 Medicare drug plan or Medicare Advantage HMO will meet your needs in 2020.

In 2018, In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) recipients with both Medicare and Medi-Cal had the option to change drug or HMO plans any month of the year. This option is no longer available.

You are now able to change your plan once per quarter between January and September and also during the AEP. Changes take effect the first day of the next month and changes made during the AEP take effect beginning in January.

You can still change your Medi-Cal plan by adding, switching, or dropping a Cal MediConnect plan anytime of the year.

The ability to change plans more frequently than usual may make you more attractive to health companies and insurance agents who want your business.

Protect yourself from unwanted healthcare changes by always asking, “If I sign this health plan application, will I be able to see my current doctors, and will I be able to keep the current services I receive?” If the answer is no then find the reasoning behind why you cannot keep the same doctors and services. Sourcewise HICAP can assist you with questions on this topic.

Learn about Medicare and how Medicare and Medi-Cal work together by speaking with a Sourcewise HICAP counselor: (408) 350-3200, option 2.

In-Home Supportive Services' New Office Location

The In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) office is no longer located on Senter Road. IHSS has relocated to West Julian Street near downtown San Jose.

This move will not affect the mailing address where IHSS forms are to be sent. The P.O. Box will remain the same.

IHSS New Office Location

IHSS Social Services
353 West Julian Street
San Jose, CA 95110

IHSS Mailing Address

IHSS Social Services
P.O. Box 11018
San Jose, CA 95103

Make the Switch to Electronic Timesheets

By Shannin Prather

Due to a new federal law, In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) will stop using paper timesheets in the near future. All IHSS providers will need to submit their hours electronically via internet or over the phone, beginning early in 2020.

It is highly recommended that consumers and providers enroll in electronic timesheets as soon as possible, to get used to the new way of completing and approving timesheets before paper timesheets are completely discontinued.

For information and training videos on how to enroll and start using electronic timesheets, visit www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/ESPhelp or call the State's IHSS Service Desk at (866) 376-7066.

Join the IHSS Advisory Board

The In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Advisory Board is a state mandated group of volunteers appointed by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors to provide ongoing advice and recommendations about IHSS.

Currently there are openings on the Advisory Board. If you are interested in learning more about the Advisory Board, you can attend one of the scheduled monthly meetings. Please contact Public Authority Services at: (408) 350-3286.

This is a great place to bring concerns about IHSS and how the service is being delivered. Meetings are generally held on the third Tuesday of every month from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and are open to the public.

Strengthen the Consumer and Care Provider Relationship

By Shannin Prather

When issues arise between an In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) recipient and their Independent Care Provider (IP), terminating employment may not be the best option.

Can this difficult situation be resolved? Attempt to work through any minor problems with your provider before you decide to end their employment. Discuss the situation openly and honestly to find agreeable solutions.

Talk to your provider about your concerns. Tell your provider as soon as you have a concern. Try not to let any concerns build up. Prepare a list of the concerns you wish to correct with your IP.

Define clear expectations. Decide which changes must happen in order for your provider to remain employed. Talk openly about your expectations for improvements in your providers' job performance. Advise them of a date by which you expect improvements to be made.

Communication is key. Communication is a two-way street, so allow your care provider to ask questions and openly address any of their concerns. Perhaps they need additional training on how you expect tasks to be performed. If you prefer, ask a friend or family member to join the discussion to support you.

If you have hired an IP from a Public Authority Services Registry referral list, Registry Specialists are available to assist in finding solutions to the concerns you and your IP may be experiencing.

What if your provider is not willing to improve their performance? If your provider does not improve their performance after providing additional instructions and a deadline has been given, it may be time to end your IPs' employment. If ending their employment is the final decision, give your provider a two week notice. This will offer time for your provider to find a new position and allow you time to hire a new provider.

For more tips on managing your role as an IHSS consumer, read the Consumer Handbook Modules on the Public Authority Services training webpage: www.pascc.org.



Public Authority Services



Public Authority Services by Sourcewise www.pascc.org
Phone: (408) 350-3206 Fax: (408) 296-8340 E-mail: info@pascc.org

Important Phone Numbers

Public Authority Services by Sourcewise

Information concerning provider benefits, bus pass, training or other services of the Public Authority.
(408) 350-3206

Public Authority Services Registry

Call the Registry, if you need help finding an IHSS care provider.
(408) 350-3251

IHSS Social Services

Information regarding authorized hours and services or to speak with a social worker.
(408) 792-1600

IHSS Payroll

Call for any payroll or timesheet matters.
(408) 792-1600

UNION SEIU Local 2015

Representing providers. Call for information about the Union and payroll deductions.
(855) 810-2015

Adult Protective Services

24-hour Hotline. Call for help, if you or someone you know suspect abuse of a senior or dependent adult.
(408) 975-4900
(800) 414-2002

Sourcewise Information & Awareness

Information on available services in Santa Clara County.
(408) 350-3200, option 1

Members of the Public Authority Advisory Board

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