



# The Consumer Connection

Winter 2021

Public Authority Services  
by Sourcewise



## Inside this Issue

Practice Self-Care

W-2s for Providers Will be Mailed by January 31, 2021

Community Resource Highlight: L.I.F.E File

Start the Conversation About Your Healthcare Wishes

IHSS Advisory Board Advocates for IHSS Consumers

Keep Your Home Warm in the Winter Months

Save Money on Medications

Preventing Falls in Winter Weather

## Practice Self-Care

By Jacky Topete

Experiencing stress is a natural part of life. However, the way we respond to and handle stressful situations can make them easier to cope with. Self-care is one of the best defenses we have against life's stressors.

Practicing self-care is a way to nurture ourselves by designating time to engage in activities that we enjoy. It promotes relaxation and "me time," which benefits overall physical and mental wellness.

Self-care relies on increased self-awareness and recognizing how you are feeling and what you need. Many people may find it difficult to practice self-care when it is most needed due to feelings of fatigue or guilt for spending time on something pleasurable when other things are needing attention. These are the moments when practicing self-care is most important.

Find healthy activities or hobbies you enjoy doing, such as reading, drawing, talking to loved ones, exercising, crafting, taking a bubble bath, or listening to music. Treat yourself to a healthy snack or spend time outdoors in nature.



Whichever it may be, self-care is unique to everyone, so find what works for you.

Self-care does not only have to take place when you are feeling stressed. In fact, it should become a part of your regular routine. You may choose to commit to some self-care on a daily basis, or you can designate a special time or day in the week to focus on reenergizing yourself. Try different options to find what fits your lifestyle.

It may seem challenging to begin a self-care routine, so start slow and be consistent. The key is to make the time, even if it is just for a few minutes per day. Developing a self-care routine is a lifelong process. Individuals of all ages can benefit from implementing self-care activities into their daily lives.

# W-2s for Providers Will be Mailed by January 31, 2021

By Sonia Munoz, IHSS Account Clerk II Lead

A new year has begun, and with that comes tax season. In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) wants IHSS care providers to be informed about what to expect for 2021 regarding 2020 W-2 and W-4 forms.

A W-2 form, also known as the Wage and Tax Statement, is the document that reports a worker's annual wages and the amount of taxes withheld from their paychecks. For the 2020 calendar year, W-2's will be mailed no later than January 31, 2021 to all care providers whose income was paid in 2020.

A W-2 (original, duplicate, and/or amended) will always be mailed to the provider's mailing address identified in the IHSS system at the time the W-2 is generated. If you have a new mailing address, mail or fax a change of address in writing, along with a copy of your California Identification Card to:

In-Home Supportive Services  
353 W Julian Street 5th Floor  
San Jose, CA 95110  
Fax: (408) 792-1601

There is the possibility that a care provider will not be issued a 2020 W-2 because IHSS received a Live-in Self-Certification form (SOC 2298) from the care provider.

If care providers have questions about the SOC 2298 and the 2020 W-2, they can find additional information at the CDSS Website: [cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/IHSS/Live-in-provider-self-certification](https://cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/IHSS/Live-in-provider-self-certification).

A W-4 form is the tax form that workers fill out to let employers know how much tax to withhold from their paycheck based on filing status, dependents, anticipated tax credits, deductions, etc.

As you may already know, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) issued a newly revised tax form W-4 in 2020. Per the IRS, filing this form for existing providers is optional. Existing care providers with a W-4 form on file do not have to file the new form. IHSS highly recommends contacting a tax expert for assistance on how to properly complete the form as IHSS is not able to provide tax advice.

[IHSS is committed to providing the best customer service possible to care providers, particularly in these challenging times. If you have questions or concerns, contact IHSS at \(408\) 792-1600.](#)

## Community Resource Highlight: L.I.F.E File

Emergencies can happen when we least expect them. When 9-1-1 is called, first responders rely heavily upon the patient and/or the patient's family members to provide information used to help the patient's treatment and care. However, there are times when the patient or family members are unable to provide this information.

The Lifesaving Information for Emergencies (L.I.F.E) File is a tool used to assist Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) during a medical emergency, which includes a vinyl magnetic

pouch that is placed in an easily seen location on the front or side of the refrigerator. The L.I.F.E File form within the pouch can help an EMT to quickly learn about the patient's past medical history, current medications, and allergies. This critical information can assist EMTs in providing the best care possible.

[Learn more about Education & Preparedness at \[sccfd.org\]\(https://sccfd.org\). To get a free L.I.F.E File, contact the Santa Clara County Fire Department Community Education Services at \(408\) 378-4010.](#)

# Start the Conversation About Your Healthcare Wishes

By Shannin Prather

Modern medicine can do amazing things but may also require some very difficult decisions. Loved ones cannot act on your wishes unless they know what they are. National Healthcare Decisions Day is on Friday, April 16, 2021 and is a day designed to inspire, educate, and empower the public about the importance of advance care planning so the wishes of the patient will be known before a health event that may render them unable to speak or advocate for themselves.



Advance care planning is a process of planning and having conversations with those who care for you. It can be intimidating to talk about these things but expressing what you want regarding your medical care can be a great gift to your loved ones and take the burden of tough decisions off their shoulders.

After you have discussed your wishes, it is important to complete the necessary documents, like an advanced directive, to avoid any confusion about what you want.

An advanced directive, often referred to as a “living will” or “health care power of attorney,” is a legal document providing guidance to medical professionals regarding the type of treatment you will allow in the event of a medical emergency that may leave you unable to communicate for yourself.

Advanced directives also allow you to designate someone—a surrogate—to make medical decisions for you if you cannot speak for yourself. Having an advanced directive is strongly advised for all adults, regardless of age. The author of this article recommends the Five Wishes ([fivewishes.org](https://www.fivewishes.org)) advanced directive due to it being very low in cost and having personal touches.

In California, another common type of advanced directive is a Physicians Order for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) form, which you can request from your doctor. This medical document states your preferences to emergency medical workers, like paramedics, in the event of a medical emergency.

The POLST form lists your preferences about cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), using intravenous therapy (IVs), a ventilator, and artificial nutrition given via a tube. Filling out a POLST form is voluntary. However, if the form has been completed, medical providers are legally required to abide by your requests. The POLST should be considered by individuals with a serious illness or advanced frailty near the end-of-life.

Advanced directives and POLST forms are not the same. The advanced directive is a legal document and the POLST is a medical document. These documents work together to make your wishes known when you cannot communicate for yourself.

Advanced directives and POLST forms can be modified at any time and will never override your own expressed directives during a medical emergency in which you are able to make your own decisions.

Speak to your doctor to learn more about advanced directives and POLST forms.

# IHSS Advisory Board Advocates for IHSS Consumers

By Janie Whiteford and Beverly Lozoff, IHSS Advisory Board

California State law requires every county to have an In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Advisory or Governing Board. In Santa Clara County, the Advisory Board is currently an eleven-member board appointed by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors (BOS). The Advisory Board meets monthly on the third Tuesday, from 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Under normal circumstances, these meetings take place in person at the Department of Aging and Adult Services in San Jose. However, due to COVID-19 precautions, meetings are currently held online via Zoom.

The Advisory Board's mandate under California law is to make recommendations concerning the IHSS Program to the BOS, the County's IHSS Department, the Public Authority, and any state or federal entities that deal with IHSS. The Advisory Board in Santa Clara County views our job as being the voice of the IHSS Consumer and advocating for Consumer Rights in the IHSS system.

To be that voice, we:

- Receive a detailed report monthly from both the County IHSS Department and the Public Authority on successes and challenges

- Allow the public to express concerns at each monthly meeting
- Provide an Annual Report to the BOS with recommendations for improvements to the IHSS program
- Develop individual relationships with the Board of Supervisors and their staff
- Educate ourselves regularly on changing IHSS regulations and issues

Primarily, the most important way we can advocate for the IHSS Consumer is to hear directly from you. We want to know what is working for you and what is not; where you see problems in the system; and any suggestions you have that might make things easier.

Your Advisory Board welcomes you to our meetings. Send us an email with your thoughts. Consider becoming an Advisory Board Member. We would love to hear from you!

For more information, call Leticia Sabadin, Senior Administrative Assistant for Public Authority Services, at (408) 350-3286 or email [painfo@pascc.org](mailto:painfo@pascc.org).

## Keep Your Home Warm in the Winter Months

By Shannin Prather

Control energy bills by keeping warm air inside and cold air outside during winter months. With a few simple steps, you can keep your home warm without turning up the thermostat.

Drafts from doors and windows are the most common way a home can lose heat and can raise energy costs from 5% to 30% per month. Thick curtains that fall below the bottom of the windowsill can be an effective way to keep in heat. Use a draft guard or a rolled-up towel at the bottom of doors to reduce drafts.

Consider opening the curtains to let sunlight in during the day to benefit from the natural warmth of the sun. Close your curtains at dusk

to help keep that warmth within the home. If your home uses a radiator, much of its heat is being absorbed by the wall it is mounted on. Installing insulating foil behind it can help reflect warmth into your home. If your home uses a forced-air system, such as a furnace, make sure to keep all vents clear of furniture that can absorb and block heat.

When possible, position furniture near internal walls to avoid cold air from windows and outside walls. Close heater vents and doors to rooms that you do not use often.

Using any of these ideas can help keep the heat where it is needed the most — inside with you!

# Save Money on Medications

By Shannin Prather

The average person with Medicare coverage spends at least \$600 on prescriptions each year, according to a 2016 study by the Kaiser Family Foundation. The cost can be much higher for individuals who have multiple chronic conditions. Affording medications can seem challenging, but there are programs that can help alleviate the cost.

A benefit that Medicare recipients should consider is the Medicare Part D Extra Help program. Social Security and Medicare can help recipients who have low-income and low access to resources save money on Part D drug prescription plan premiums and copayments at the pharmacy.

Medicare recipients who do not qualify for Part D Extra Help may be able to sign up for the State Prescription Assistance Program (SPAP).

In California, the SPAP program is known as the California Rx Card and it is free for everyone in the state. The Rx card can be used to receive discounts on prescriptions that are not covered by health insurance or can be used instead of insurance when it offers greater savings than the copay.

Several national charity programs exist to assist people with Medicare coverage to afford their medications. Many of these specifically focus on assisting people with chronic conditions and rare diseases.

To find out what assistance may be available to you, the National Council on Aging's free [BenefitsCheckUp](#) tool can help screen for major discount programs you may be eligible for. To find out which assistance programs you may qualify for, visit [benefitscheckup.org](https://benefitscheckup.org).

# Preventing Falls in Winter Weather

By Shannin Prather

The crisp, chill weather of winter can bring a welcome change from the summer and fall heat. However, the cold and wet climate can also bring extra hazards that may lead to falls among older adults and individuals with disabilities. You cannot control the weather, but you can take five simple steps to prepare yourself to keep safe.

- 1. Wear shoes that fit correctly and have good traction.** Boots, shoes, and slippers should be closed-toe and closed-heel and have a non-slip sole.
- 2. Dress warmly in clothes that fit.** Muscles stay more relaxed when you are warm, which can help with balance. Items that are oversized can catch on nearby objects and increase the risk of falling.
- 3. Stay on cleared walkways and paths.** Do not take shortcuts. Remember that wet grass or leaves can be as slippery as icy steps. Keep indoor pathways clear of cords, blankets, and other trip hazards.



- 4. Do not rush.** Take shorter steps with your toes pointed slightly outward to keep a stable base of support. If you use a mobility device, make sure it is in good condition and set at the correct height for you.
- 5. Remain active.** Maintain regular physical activity to keep your muscles strong and flexible.

If you are concerned about falling, there are resources and programs that can help. For assistance connecting to fall prevention resources in Santa Clara County, speak with a [Sourcewise Community Resource Specialist](#) at (408) 350-3200, option 1.



# Public Authority Services

by Sourcewise



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

Lori Andersen  
David Forderer  
Senon Hernandez

Beverly Lozoff  
(President/Chair)  
Mathew Lubinsky  
Robert Stroughter

Terri Possley  
(Ex-Officio Member)  
Dennis Schneider  
Janie Whiteford