



The Consumer Connection

Fall 2024



Public Authority Services
by Sourcewise



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IHSS Advisory Board Advocates for Consumers

By Janie Whiteford, IHSS Advisory Board Chair



Santa Clara County In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) has an Advisory Board (AB) to serve as the local voice of IHSS consumers. The AB is made up of 9 members—five IHSS consumers and four community members—and is mandated by the State to give recommendations to the County Board of Supervisors (BOS), IHSS program, Public Authority, the State, and any other entities that affect the functioning of IHSS.

Every year, in the Public Authority Services by Sourcewise Annual Report, the AB shares recommendations with the BOS on ways to improve the county's IHSS program.

This year the AB gave four recommendations:

- Partnership building, outreach, and media education to support changes to the State's Brown Act to allow for remote meetings for County Commissions and Boards.
- Meetings between the AB and BOS, or their staff, twice per year to update the BOS on issues affecting the 34,000+ IHSS consumers that the AB represents.
- Funding three more units of IHSS social workers. Social workers have extremely large caseloads, which continue to increase as the program grows. This has resulted in being out of compliance with State metrics.
- Including the AB in the collective bargaining process for wages, benefits, training, etc. The AB would like to participate to ensure that all mandates of the Public Authority are addressed.

The AB meets monthly on the 3rd Tuesday, from noon to 2 p.m. You can join in person or via Zoom. For more information, visit the pascc.org or call (408) 350-3286.

Prepare for Medicare Changes in 2025

By Marcelo Espiritu

The Medicare Annual Enrollment Period (AEP) is open now through December 7, 2024.

Each year, Medicare drug and health plans may change premiums, benefits, and out-of-pocket costs. In September, Medicare recipients received an “Annual Notice of Change” for the upcoming 2025 year.

The AEP allows existing Medicare recipients to see their previous Medicare selections and:

- Enroll, change, or drop a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan (PDP).
- Enroll or change a Medicare Advantage (MA) Part C HMO or PPO plan for its extra benefits and managed network.
- Move from the managed Medicare system of MA Part C to the Original Medicare, a PDP, and Medigap for greater physician, provider, or facility flexibility.

Sourcewise Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program (HICAP) counselors can help review changes, options, and plan your Medicare coverage to meet your needs for 2025. HICAP will host “Medicare’s 2024 Annual Enrollment Period and Updates for 2025” presentations via Zoom and at community organizations throughout Santa Clara county to share information about the latest plan options and changes.

HICAP also offers one-on-one help through telephone or video conference appointments. Limited in-person appointments are also available at Sourcewise and at select community centers and libraries.

To prepare for an appointment, create a Medicare.gov account. You can then view your Medicare history and recently filled prescriptions, which helps HICAP Counselors to quickly help you find the lowest cost drug plan and review eligibility for the Extra Help Low-Income Subsidy program.

Sourcewise HICAP counseling is free, unbiased, and available to Medicare-eligible Santa Clara County residents. To attend a HICAP presentation, visit the Sourcewise website at mysourcewise.com/calendar. To schedule a counseling session with a HICAP counselor, visit the HICAP Medicare Counseling Appointments webpage or speak with a Community Resource Specialist at (408) 350-3200, option 1.

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New Tools to Learn How to Use the ESP

By Shannin Prather

The In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Electronic Services Portal (ESP) simplifies reviewing care provider's electronic timesheets, hiring providers, and more. However, the information available on how to register for and use the ESP may not be clear to all IHSS consumers.

To address the need for educating IHSS consumers on how to use the ESP, Public Authority Services by Sourcewise has created five simple step-by-step guides for consumers on how to use the ESP. The ESP guide modules are available in PDF format, as well as short videos.

The modules are available in English, with plans to add translation and subtitle options

for Mandarin, Spanish, and Vietnamese soon. The topics covered in the modules are:

1. Registering for an ESP Account
2. ESP Overview
3. Updating Your ESP Account
4. Connecting Providers to Your Case
5. Reviewing Provider Timesheets Through the ESP

Separate ESP modules are being created for care providers and will be available in early 2025.

To reach the ESP modules, please visit the [Consumer Training page on the Public Authority Services website](https://www.pascc.org/consumer-training/), at [pascc.org/consumer-training/](https://www.pascc.org/consumer-training/).

Create a Backup Plan for Your Care

By Shannin Prather

As an In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) consumer, it is critical that you have a backup plan in place in case your regular In-Home provider is not available. Life circumstances such as provider illness or injury can create the unexpected need for someone else to assist you. It is your responsibility as the IHSS consumer to create a plan and have safety nets in place for this.

It is highly recommended that consumers explore the idea of hiring an additional provider for times when unexpected needs arise. Having two or more providers connected to your case will ensure a smooth transition from one provider to another.

When a consumer's IHSS Independent Provider (IP) is unexpectedly unable to work because of illness or personal emergency, and there is no other provider, family member, or resources that can step in to assist, the On-Call Registry (OCR) may be able to help qualified IHSS consumers in Santa Clara County.



The OCR program can temporarily assign a pre-screened IP to assist with bathing, personal hygiene, and other health and safety-related authorized services. The OCR cannot assist with domestic services—such as cleaning or laundry—or transportation, unless the need is related to personal care and safety.

[Learn more and request OCR program assistance by calling \(408\) 590-0834, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday-Friday. If you leave a voicemail, please include your full name and telephone number so your call can be returned.](https://www.pascc.org/consumer-training/)

Understanding IHSS Share of Cost

By Shannin Prather

Some consumers of In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) have a Share of Cost (SOC) for their services. This means the consumer is responsible for paying their provider(s) out-of-pocket for some of the hours they work.

Those with an SOC have a higher income than most individuals receiving Social Security Income (SSI)/Medi-Cal. Depending on the amount of income being received, you may be required to pay a certain amount each month before Medi-Cal will pay for services like IHSS.

The SOC allows people with higher monthly incomes to receive IHSS, if a part of their medical costs are paid by them directly. An SOC is like a private health plan's monthly deductible. The SOC is usually paid to whichever Medi-Cal approved services are used first during the month. For example, you may need to pay out-of-pocket for your first medical appointment or prescription before Medi-Cal begins to pay for the rest.

Once your IHSS provider(s) has submitted their timesheet, the IHSS program will send a notice letting you know how much of your SOC has been met for the month and how much you will need to pay your IHSS provider(s) as part of your SOC. Once Medi-Cal has determined that the SOC has been met for the month, IHSS will issue your provider a paycheck for the remaining amount owed to them along with a notice of how much you are expected to pay them out-of-pocket.

If you have an SOC and believe it is too high, there are several Medi-Cal programs that can assist you in lowering or removing your SOC. To find out if you qualify for any of these programs, contact your Medi-Cal Eligibility Worker at 1 (877) 962-3633 or email BACClericalPhoneSupport@ssa.sccgov.org.

Accessible Voting Options for the 2024 Election

By Shannin Prather

For individuals with limited resources or mobility, going to the polls to vote on election day can be challenging. This is a major obstacle that may cause seniors or individuals with disabilities to struggle to exercise their right to vote for our nation's leaders and policies.

However, in California, all registered voters receive a vote-by-mail ballot. Voting by mail does not require postage and enables you to send in your ballot early. Voters can track the status of mailed ballots on the California Secretary of State's website at voterstatus.sos.ca.gov.

If you prefer not to mail your ballot, it can be dropped off at any polling place or ballot drop-box before polls close on election day. Anyone

can return your ballot on your behalf, as long as they are not being paid on a per-ballot basis.

Regardless of how you return your ballot, the authorization section on the outside of the ballot envelope must be filled out for it to be counted.

Important reminder: if you are unable to sign your name on the envelope, make an "X" or distinguishing mark by the red "X" on the envelope, or have someone print your name on the return envelope and sign as a witness.

The 2024 general election will take place on Tuesday, November 5th. Learn more about ballots, registration deadlines, polling locations, and more at vote411.org/california.

National Family Caregiver Month

By Vi Lam

As of July 2024, In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) data shows that family care providers make up the majority of the IHSS caregiver population. In Santa Clara County, 76% of IHSS consumers have a family member providing their IHSS services. Family can be a relative, parent, spouse, or even someone who is not related to us but is a person's chosen family.

IHSS care providers may work long hours, performing physically demanding tasks daily and placing the needs of others above themselves. November is National Family Caregiver Month, a great reminder to express thanks and gratitude to loved ones for being a source of support, and for helping consumers stay safe and independent at home.

Giving appreciation and thanks doesn't have to be a grand gesture. It can be a simple but impactful gesture such as:

- Arranging respite for yourself through local agencies or social services, which allows your caregiver to take some time off for self-care.
- Giving acknowledgment and thanks by telling your caregiver how much you appreciate their hard work.
- Writing a letter, text or email, or even surprise them by mailing a greeting card.
- Finding events that show appreciation for them. If they are a part of the Public Authority Services Registry, encourage them to attend the Caregiver Appreciation Event for active Registry providers held in November.

Being recognized for hard work and dedication can greatly improve a person's wellbeing and you don't have to wait until November to praise hard work. Gratitude is appreciated any time you can offer it.

Connect with Resources to Support Your Needs

By Shannin Prather

In 2019, only 84% of those eligible to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participated in the program, leaving eligible participants without access to benefits for food. Nationally, an estimated 2 million individuals who are eligible for the Medicare Part D Low-Income Subsidy (LIS) are not enrolled in the program.

Millions of low-income individuals with disabilities and older adults qualify for—but are not yet enrolled in—programs that could connect them with supportive resources and even help pay for prescriptions, medical care, food, or utilities for their homes.

Sourcewise, Santa Clara County's Area Agency on Aging, can provide eligibility information and connection to programs and services that enhance a safe and healthy lifestyle. Sourcewise Community Resource Specialists provide

information and referrals for support services that may benefit you. An online Resource Connection is also available at mysourcewise.com. To speak with a Community Resource Specialist, call (408) 350-3200, option 1.

NCOA's BenefitsCheckUp® is a free online service that helps seniors with limited incomes learn which benefits they may be eligible to receive to assist with costs for: medicine, rent, and utilities. Visit the website for BenefitsCheckUp®: benefitscheckup.org.

2-1-1 is a free and confidential service helping people nationwide to find local resources, information, and support; whether assistance is financial, domestic, health, or disaster related. Contact a specialist to determine which health and human services are available in your area by calling 2-1-1 or visit 211.org.



Public Authority Services

by Sourcwise



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

Important Contacts

Public Authority Services by Sourcwise

Information concerning provider benefits, bus pass, training or other services of the Public Authority.

(408) 350-3206

info@pascc.org

IHSS Social Services

Information regarding authorized hours and services, payroll and timesheet matters, or to speak with a social worker.

(408) 792-1600

IHSS.SCC@ssa.sccgov.org

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

Public Authority Services Registry

Call the Registry, if you need help finding an IHSS care provider.

(408) 350-3251

UNION SEIU Local 2015

Representing providers. Call for information about the Union and payroll deductions.

(855) 810-2015

Sourcwise Information & Awareness

Information on available services in Santa Clara County.

(408) 350-3200, option 1

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