



Consumer Handbook

MANAGING YOUR IN-HOME CARE PROVIDER



Dear Consumers;

The IHSS Public Authority Advisory Board welcomes all new IHSS consumers, all current IHSS consumers, and all consumer family members and friends to the IHSS Program. We understand how complicated the IHSS system can be and are hopeful that this Consumer Handbook, along with the Consumer Training Materials offered by the IHSS Public Authority, will answer many of your questions and concerns.

The Public Authority Advisory Board feels strongly that a knowledgeable consumer can advocate for themselves, or with the help of family and friends, to effectively utilize the IHSS system to stay safely and comfortably in their own homes. This Consumer Handbook has the goal of helping you understand the IHSS system, and how you can assist in making it work for you.

The Public Authority Advisory Board makes recommendations to the Public Authority Governing Body, (the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors), on all issues relating to IHSS and personal care / home care assistance. We are in essence the voice of the consumer and take our role as consumer advocates very seriously. We welcome your comments, suggestions and input regarding the IHSS system in Santa Clara County.

Enjoy the Consumer Handbook and we look forward to meeting your training needs in various ways throughout the year.

Sincerely

Janie Whiteford
Advisory Board Member

Managing your Independent Provider

There are a few important points to be made on the subject of managing your independent provider (IP). Whether you realize it or not, your relationship is like any manager/employee relationship in the business world. The better you understand how these relationships work, the better the quality of the relationship and the better performance you will receive from your “employee”.

Communication

We cannot over stress the importance of good communication between you and your IP. Good, solid communication is the difference between a prosperous, long-term relationship and one that is filled with difficulty and frustration.

While communication is a two-way street you can only control how well you communicate. Understanding what you want to say and how you say it is very important.

Occasionally, communication problems come up from a language barrier or accents. Be sure that your IP understands what you are saying and if necessary, ask them to repeat back instructions so you are comfortable that they understood you correctly. Be sure to speak slowly and clearly when giving instructions.

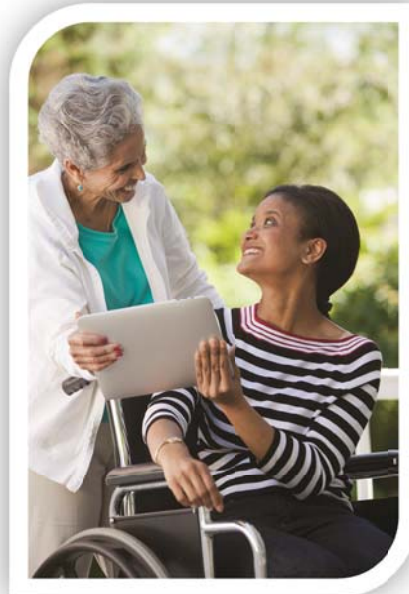
Sometimes what appears to be a communication issue is actually the failure of one or both of you to compromise.

What you want and what your IP wants to do may not be the same thing, in which case you find yourself in a battle of wills. This is where compromise comes in. If, however, you find that you are not able to successfully negotiate on an important issue, perhaps it is better to agree that you cannot work well together and terminate the relationship.

In most cases compromise will work. You might also try the following communication techniques:

- Don't make demands of you IP. Explain why and how you want something done. Everyone likes to be treated with kindness and consideration.
- Repeat your instructions if something is not done to your satisfaction.

- Be patient. Everyone learns at a different speed. It takes some people a little longer than others to “catch on”.
- Keep the lines of communication open. If your IP knows they can speak openly with you they are more likely to initiate a conversation if there is a problem. The better the two of you communicate, the better you will understand their capabilities.



Handling Money

If you plan to have your IP handle your money, it is important that steps be taken to insure you are both protected.

If you ask your IP to take money from your purse or wallet, always observe the process and verify the amount of money taken. Record the amount in a notebook, and review and initial the receipt, verifying the amount of change returned.

If you ask your IP to write checks, document when, why, and the amount of the check. Keep a written record that you both sign and provide your IP with a signed document that explains why checks are written to them, in case someone questions the transaction at a later date.

Friends - To be or Not To Be

While there can be many pros, there are also some definite cons to becoming friends with your IP.

You may find yourself accepting a lower standard of care in order to not risk offending your “friend”. Your IP may begin to take advantage of your friendship and do less than is expected.

Sometimes an IP may take advantage by using your telephone for personal and long distance calls when they should be working. They may borrow money without paying you back.

Becoming friends with your IP makes it much more difficult to terminate the IP if you decide your needs are not being met.

While it is natural to want to consider your IP a friend, you need to remember that the most important part of your relationship is that they care for your needs. Be friendly, but it is best to keep your relationship as professional as possible.

When Things Are Not Working - The Termination Process

As an employer, you have the right to terminate an IP at any time for any reason. While firing someone is never easy, there are some legitimate reasons for terminating an IP. Some of those reasons might be:

- Involvement in a criminal activity
- Stealing your money or personal belongings
- Using your personal belongings without permissions, for example, the telephone
- Regularly failing to report to work on time
- Inability to meet your needs

The best way to avoid finding yourself in the position of having to terminate your IP is to address any and all issues before they become a problem. Again, communication is key to a successful IP/consumer relationship. Arrange a time to speak with your IP. Be sure to explain the importance of the issue and its effects on you and your care. Explain the expected outcome or your discussion. Remember that communication is a two-way street. Allow your IP to ask questions of you and be receptive to their suggestions on how to resolve an issue.

If you do not see any improvement and are considering terminating the IP, begin to look for a replacement. Once you have found a new IP, notify your current IP that the arrangement is not working out and you have found a replacement.

If you ever find yourself in a situation where you need to fire someone immediately, (reasons may be stealing, verbal or physical abuse, etc.) and you have retained the names and numbers of some past IPs or other potential candidates from the interviewing process, you may be able to replace them quickly. If no one is available, you may qualify for assistance from the Urgent Care Registry. Contact the Urgent Care Registry if you need immediate help by calling (408) 590-0834.

The Public Authority Registry can help in finding a new IP. Remember to notify your social worker if you change IPs.

To learn more about the Public Authority Registry and Urgent Care Registry by visiting www.pascc.org/services/registry.html

Consumer/Employer Responsibilities

As an employer, you now have certain responsibilities to your IP.

Health and Safety

- Provide gloves and appropriate cleaning materials, such as sponges and cleaning chemicals, as well as any other items important to the safety of your IP or necessary to perform expected tasks.
- If you have a communicable disease do not ask your IP to perform any tasks in a manner that could endanger their health.
- As an employer you must follow health and safety regulations, as well as laws relating to wages, hours, and working conditions Including:
 - Providing a harassment free work environment
 - Providing a work environment free of unreasonable health and safety hazards
 - Allowing care providers to take unpaid breaks and/or lunches if they will be working for 4 or more hours in a day.
- You are responsible for the actions of your IP, as well as their guests or children if they accompany your IP. You are also responsible to your neighbors and must terminate your IP should you become aware of them stealing, dealing drugs, etc.

Human Relations

- Treat your IP with kindness and respect, the same way you expect to be treated.
- Recognize your IP's abilities and weaknesses.

“Communication is just vital. If you are not communicating clearly with your independent provider then you are set up for failure.”

-Richard
IHSS Consumer

- Realize that it may be impossible for any IP to meet all your expectations.
- Never assume your IP knows what you want or need. Be prepared to train your IP to meet your particular needs.
- Never ask your IP to perform unreasonable, unsafe, or unauthorized tasks.
- Never ask your IP to work “overtime” for free.
- Recognize your IP’s right to ask for the occasional schedule adjustment or request time off for their own needs, whether that is so they can go to their own medical appointments or to take a vacation to spend time with friends and family. Have a back-up plan in place so you won’t go without care during these times.
- If the job is nearing completion because you no longer need assistance, give your IP at least two weeks’ notice. If you were happy with their services and would recommend them to others, offer to be a reference.



Paying Your IP

If you are a recipient of IHSS, you must make sure that your IP is enrolled with the Social Services Agency’s IHSS Program before they can get paid. If they are not already enrolled as an IHSS care provider they need to go to the Public Authority website to begin that process. You will also need to obtain a Consumer Designation of Provider Form (SOC 426A) from your Social Worker or by printing a blank from the internet. The completed form needs to be sent to your Social Worker so they can list your IP on your case and generate timesheets for your IP. Typically it can take up to six weeks to complete the process.

The Public Authority Enrollment website for Santa Clara County can be found here: www.pascc.org

In order to assist your IP in getting paid as quickly and as regularly as possible be sure to remember the following steps:

- Obtain the 426A form as soon as you hire a new IP. Complete the form together. Be sure to sign and date as required. Be sure to properly complete each form. If the form is completed incorrectly your IP will not be paid.
- On the last day of each pay period review your IP's timesheet with your IP for accuracy and sign it.
- Be sure your IP does not work more than 60% of your allotted monthly hours during either pay period (there are two pay periods each month). If this happens, your IP will not be paid. If they work more than the 60% during the first pay period, you may not have enough hours left for the second half of the month.
- Be sure that your IP does not work more than your Maximum Weekly Hours amount as this may result in an overtime violation for your IP.
- If the check comes to you, pay your IP as soon as you receive it.
- If the check does not arrive, assist your IP by following up immediately. If it is your IP's first check, contact your Social Worker. Ask your Social Worker to refer you to the payroll clerk in charge of your case for any subsequent checks that are missing.



We Are Here To Help

The IHSS Public Authority and the IHSS Program committed to helping you, the consumer, get the most support and help possible in using the IHSS consumer, get the most support and help possible in using the IHSS system.

The Public Authority Registry can provide you with help in finding providers, help in emergency situations with the Urgent Care Registry, help creating a back-up plan, and in answering your questions.



The Public Authority Training Department provides training opportunities for you on a regular basis through the monthly, toll-free, Call and Connect Sessions conference calls, which can help you better understand issues relating to:

- The IHSS system
- The assessment, reassessment and the appeal process
- Managing and training your independent provider
- Other areas of concern dealing with independent living.
- Health and safety tips and advice



The social Services Agency's IHSS Program can also answer many of your questions, help with medical issues through the public nursing staff, and works closely with the Public Authority to improve the IHSS system in Santa Clara County.

The Public Authority Advisory Board welcomes your comments, concerns, and suggestions. By working together we can continue to improve the IHSS system in Santa Clara County. The Advisory Board studies, reviews, evaluates, and makes recommendations to the Public Authority Governing Body, Public Authority Services Director, and IHSS County Administration about any and all matters affecting individuals receiving In-Home Supportive Services in the County.

The Public Authority Advisory Board meetings are open to the public. If you are interested in attending, meetings are on the third Tuesday of every month from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm at Sourcewise, 2115 The Alameda, San Jose, CA 95126.

Exceptions to this schedule are rare but do occur so contact Public Authority Services for date and location confirmation at (408) 350-3286.