



The Consumer Connection

Fall 2015

Public Authority Services
by Sourcewise



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Avoiding The Flu This Season

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. But you can take steps to avoid catching the flu this season.

Influenza –“the flu”– is a contagious illness that can be severe and even life-threatening, especially for older adults. Seniors are at a higher risk for acquiring the flu due to weakened immune systems occurring 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 from person to person, by coughing, sneezing, or touch. You can prevent illness by simple actions: wash your hands often, avoid people who are sick, do not share utensils or glasses, and use antibacterial wipes to eliminate germs. Flu symptoms often include high fever, headaches, tiredness, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and body aches. The best prevention for illness is a flu vaccination.



Vaccination is the best way to help protect yourself and others from the flu.

It takes approximately two weeks for a flu shot to fully take effect to prevent illness, so it is recommended that you get your vaccine as early in the season as possible. If you haven't yet had a chance to get your flu shot, it is not too late. Flu season peaks between December and February, and may continue to circulate well into the 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.

Learn more ways to reduce your risk of catching and spreading the flu at: www.ncoa.org/Flu

Public Authority Benefits

By Ross Graham

Public Authority Benefits Specialists are happy to help you and your Independent Care Providers (IP) to understand the benefits available to IPs for In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS). Our specialists will answer questions including: how and when to apply for benefits, eligibility requirements, and maintaining eligibility once enrolled.

One goal of these valuable benefits is to make it easier for consumers like you to attract and keep high quality care providers in the IHSS program.

As a care recipient, you can help your IP to maintain eligibility for these important health benefits by making sure to complete their time sheets quickly so that your IP will be paid on time each pay period. Inform your care provider that they may apply and take advantage of these great benefits, if they haven't already.

Each IP working for an IHSS consumer, and paid by the IHSS program, who works at least 35 hours each month is eligible to apply for Medical Health Insurance with Valley Health Plan.

This insurance is paid for by Santa Clara County. The IP is responsible for a \$25.00 co-payment each month.

Additionally, working IPs are eligible to apply for these benefits (at no extra cost):

- Dental and Vision plan insurance coverage.
- A VTA bus pass covering Valley Transit Authority bus and light rail lines.
- Santa Clara County Federal Credit Union membership including a free checking account and other services.
- A Job Development fund to assist with relevant training classes.

If you have any questions, please call our Public Authority Benefits Specialists at: (408) 350-3290.



Overtime for Care Providers is One Step Closer

By Shannin Prather

Overtime pay for IHSS Independent Care Providers (IPs) is one step closer to becoming a reality. On August 21, 2015 Chief Justice John Roberts of the US Supreme Court denied a request to delay the new Department of Labor rule applying to the Fair Labor and Standards Act (FLSA) wages for home care workers. However, at the time this newsletter was printed, the official ruling had not yet been officially authorized.

If overtime is authorized for the IHSS program, care providers who work over 40 authorized hours for consumers in one workweek will receive overtime

pay. Additionally, providers who must travel from the home of one consumer directly to the home of another consumer for work on the same day will be paid for the time it takes for that travel, up to 7 hours per week.

If overtime is authorized you can expect a number of additional rules and limitations on how and when it can be paid. You will receive notices informing you about the changes if and when they are implemented. Check for updates on this topic on the Public Authority Services website: www.pascc.org

Health and Safety in the Home: Creating a Positive Work Environment

By Fran Kiernan

The In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) care recipient (consumer) is the primary employer of their Independent Care Provider (IP). This role has many important responsibilities, including creating a positive work environment. Building a great relationship with your care provider can be easy, if you maintain a positive and professional attitude.

As a consumer, how you treat your IP will have an effect – either positive or negative – on how well your IP will do their job. Studies show that workers are happier and more productive when working in a stress-free environment. How can you (the employer) create the least stressful working environment for your care provider? Here are some tips:

Studies show that workers are happier and more productive when working in a stress-free environment.

Start with good communication and mutual respect. These are important building blocks for maintaining a happy, healthy working relationship. Your care provider will have more job satisfaction when they know that you listen to their needs and concerns, and value their hard work.

Conflicts can arise when a consumer doesn't sign time cards in a timely fashion. As an employer, it is the consumer's responsibility to sign the time card when requested by the provider. When a consumer delays signing a timecard the paycheck for the provider will also be delayed. This causes stress for an IP, and can cause feelings of frustration. Delays in completing time cards also negatively affect benefits that the IP receives.

As a consumer, be aware that your IP– just like all of us– has bills to pay, and possibly a family to support. A delay in signing the time card may have a negative ripple effect, resulting in late payments for rent, utilities, and other monthly bills. Late payments can cause stress and anxiety, not to mention late fees, which may create hard feelings between the employer (consumer) and the employee (Independent Care Provider).

So, remember: to maintain a long-term relationship with your provider it is important to communicate clearly, be respectful, and sign time cards when asked.

Senior Center Without Walls



Senior Center Without Walls
An ESC Senior Resources Program

Senior Center Without Walls is a non-denominational, non-profit organization that provides a free telephone program offering activities, friendly conversation, and an assortment of classes and support groups to older adults in California who find it difficult to participate in activities in their communities.

Participants call from the comfort of home through telephone conference calls. No special equipment is needed and the calls are completely free. You don't have to call in for your class every time and, if you do call in, you don't have to participate; you can just listen in if that's all you feel like doing.

Telephone conference programs are available every day of the week, even weekends. All you have to do is register. Check them out at www.seniorcenterwithoutwalls.org or call (877) 797-7299.

Scam Savvy Consumer

By Shannin Prather

Trust is a powerful and valuable commodity. We all want to believe that people are trustworthy, honest, and have our best interests at heart. While most people are good and will not cheat or take advantage of others; there are a few who will take unfair advantage of others, if given the opportunity. Scammers are individuals who cheat, steal, and take advantage of people whom they consider an easy target. These smooth-talking swindlers cheat and steal from innocent, unsuspecting consumers.

Know how to protect yourself from scammers by recognizing a possible scam when you see it. Below is a list of some of the most common scams and how to avoid becoming a scam victim.

1. Telemarketing. Perhaps the most common scheme; 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 numbers or credit card information unless you are sure that the party calling is representing a legitimate business. If necessary, seek further information such as their company's main number, verify that with the phone company, and call them back. Consider putting your name and phone number on the National Do Not Call List. This is a free service and will stop telemarketers from contacting you.
2. Email scams. Email messages may appear to be from a legitimate company or institution, asking targets to "update" or "verify" their personal information. For instance, an email that appears to be from the IRS about a tax refund. Tip: The IRS will mail you official documents, and normally will not e-mail you to ask for personal information.
3. Sweepstakes & lottery scams. Scammers inform their mark that they have won a



lottery or sweepstakes but need to make some sort of payment to access the prize money. The target mails a check, which is cashed. The target is sent a check, making it seem legitimate. However, the fake check is eventually rejected by the bank. Tip: If you win a prize, you do not have to pay for it and, just like you cannot win the lottery if you didn't buy a ticket, you cannot win a sweepstakes if you did not enter one.

4. Health Insurance Fraud. Scammers pose as insurance representatives in order to acquire sensitive personal information (such as medical record numbers.) Bogus services are then provided at makeshift mobile clinics for a small fee. Then, scammers use the victim's personal information to bill the insurance company and pocket the money. Tip: Be aware that sensitive information should be safeguarded. Use caution when providing your medical record numbers and make sure you provide this information only to legitimate health care professionals.

If you suspect that you have been the victim of a scam, don't be afraid or embarrassed to talk about it. Telling your story could help someone else avoid becoming a target. Keep your local police department number, the local Adult Protective Services (800) 414-2002, or even contact Seven on Your Side: <http://abc7news.com/7onyourside/>.

To register for the Do Not Call list visit: www.donotcall.gov

Staying Healthy: Exploring Your Creativity This Winter

By Shannin Prather



As temperatures drop and the skies darken earlier each day, people tend to spend more time indoors, which may cause some to start feeling a little “stir crazy.” Spending larger amounts of time indoors due to poor weather, colder temperatures, and shorter days can sometimes lead to feelings of boredom, depression, and irritability.

Engaging in a creative hobby such as drawing, sewing, knitting, baking, wood carving, playing music, or making your own laundry soap is a great way to actually enjoy your time indoors. Creating something with your own hands, imagination, or even coming

up with an idea for someone else to use is a great way to engage your mind, and provide focus and enjoyment during the chilly times of fall and winter.

These creative activities, known as “crafting”, have been shown to help relieve anxiety, depression and chronic pain. Crafting can help people relax, builds confidence, improves motor skills, and even slow memory loss.

Crafting can be simple and inexpensive, and can easily involve using recycled items that have little to no cost. In fact, many household items that you

might normally throw away can be repurposed to fit a new and imaginative purpose. For example, an old t-shirt can be refashioned into a reusable shopping bag: cut off the sleeves, sew the bottom hems together, widen the neck hole, and use the sleeve holes as handles. Voilà!

Here are a few more inexpensive and easy ideas:

- Gather glue, string, and a paper plate. Cut a hole in the middle of the plate. Collect fallen leaves, pine cones, or other natural items on a walk, then glue them to the plate. This will create a beautiful wreath to hang on the door or wall. When laid on a table, you have created a lovely natural centerpiece.
- Fill an empty glass jar full of colorful pebbles or glass beads (available at a thrift store). Create a winter tree by inserting a few small branches.

You can leave the branches bare, or hang ornaments or other small decorations.

- Cut and glue twigs around a straight-sided dollar store candle holder or vase to create a beautiful, rustic-looking item that can be showcased at home or given as a gift.

- Whether you love painting with watercolors

from the dollar store, building something out of twigs and leaves, or creating a poem or song for a loved one, let your creativity flow! It’s a great way to stay healthy and engaged during the fall and winter seasons.

To find more inspiration, check out craft books at your local library, or browse the internet. You can find many wonderful ideas at [pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com), [popsugar.com](https://www.popsugar.com), [instructables.com](https://www.instructables.com), or by typing “DIY” (Do It Yourself) into your internet search bar.

Creating something with your own hands, imagination, or even coming up with an idea for someone else to use is a great way to engage your mind, and provide focus and enjoyment during the chilly times of fall and winter.



Public Authority Services

by Sourcewise



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, Eco/Clipper 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 521

Representing providers. Call for information about the Union and payroll deductions.
(408) 678-3300

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

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