



The Consumer Connection

Spring 2024



Public Authority Services
by Sourcewise



Inside this Issue

Hay Fever May Arise with Aging

Supporting Consumers for 25 Years

Recognizing Symptoms of Perimenopause

Educate Yourself About High Blood Pressure

Help Your Friends and Family Apply to Receive IHSS

Save on Energy Bills with the ESA Program

Steps for Getting Up Safely After a Fall

Hay Fever May Arise with Aging

By Shannin Prather

Spring has arrived, bringing with it warmer weather, blooming flowers, and growing leaves. For many people, this season also brings the challenge of springtime allergies. Also known as “hay fever,” spring’s seasonal allergies are usually caused by pollen and grasses.

Hay fever is an allergic response from the immune system that may cause sneezing, runny nose, and watery, itchy eyes. While allergies are often thought to present earlier in life, adult-onset allergies are not unusual.

As we age, our immune system may weaken, which can lessen our ability to fight off allergens. In older adults, allergies may worsen existing health conditions, such as breathing issues, asthma, heart disease, or eczema.

Adult-onset allergies can be more difficult to diagnose, especially during brief doctor appointments when the focus may be on other health issues and may be disguised by other conditions that a person is being treated for.

If you think you may be experiencing seasonal allergies, consider wearing sunglasses and a face mask when outdoors. Talk to your doctor so they can test for potential allergies and create a treatment plan with you, if necessary.

Before taking over-the-counter medications, check that they are right for you because some medications, such as antihistamines like Benadryl, may cause side effects or interactions with other prescriptions that could put your health at risk.



Supporting Consumers for 25 Years

By Edith Gong, Director of Public Authority Services



In March 1999, legislation was passed to establish Public Authorities (PA) and Advisory Boards consisting of current and past In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) consumers to provide ongoing input to improve IHSS outcomes for consumers across California.

While a provider registry for IHSS consumers, maintained by the Council on Aging Silicon Valley (Sourcewise's former name), had existed since the mid-1990's, Public Authority Services and the Advisory Board, governed by the Santa Clara County (SCC) Board of Supervisors, were officially launched in 1999.

In 1999, IHSS served 5,600 consumers. Since then, the number of consumers has grown 580% to over 32,300 consumers, and the PA team has grown from a team of 8 to 22 dedicated employees. SCC was the second county in California to offer health benefits to IHSS Independent Providers (IPs) and, to date, has one of the richest benefits packages, which includes health, dental, vision, and transportation benefits. PA is proud to administer benefits for over 13,000 IPs.

From the beginning, PA has prioritized innovation. In its first three years, PA:

- Facilitated the first consumer conference in 2001, with over 175 consumers, IPs, and human services professionals. Topics included community-based care amid the growing older adult population, consumer eligibility, the future of IHSS from a local, state, and national perspective, and more.
- Performed a detailed research study to assess the needs of IHSS consumers.
- Hosted a statewide workshop to exchange best practices, explore policies, and encourage development of additional PA programs throughout the state with over 150 attendees representing 54 of the state's 58 counties.
- Helped develop a statewide Registry Managers Group to collaborate on best practices.
- Assisted in developing software to manage Registry matches.
- Improved training available to IHSS staff and developed relevant materials in non-English languages in written documents and videos.

Now, 25 years after its launch, SCC PA continues to be a model organization with efficient process and procedures for benefits administration; 15 provider training classes that support providers in improving their caregiving skills; annual IP appreciation event; recruitment and outreach activities and events in senior living communities, adult education schools, and supportive housing complexes; an effective IP enrollment process that enrolls on average 600 IPs monthly; piloting in-person digital literacy training for consumers and providers; and a very active and involved Advisory Board.

We expect that Public Authority Services of SCC will continue to be a model and innovator in the IHSS space for the next 25 years and beyond. As always, we welcome consumer input to improve the IHSS program and encourage consumers to join the Advisory Board so your voice is heard and represented.



Recognizing Symptoms of Perimenopause

By Shannin Prather

Before women reach menopause—marked by having stopped menstruating for 12 months—a period of physical and hormonal changes takes place. This is known as “perimenopause”.

Generally, perimenopause begins in a woman’s 40s to early 50s, but can begin as early as their mid-30s. According to [Healthline](#), transgender men—those assigned female at birth—may also experience some menopausal symptoms.

Perimenopause can affect mood and cause a variety of physical symptoms. Menstrual cycles may occur more or less often, for longer or shorter durations, and menopause-like symptoms, such as hot flashes, night sweats, and sleep issues, may also occur.

In women menstruating regularly, estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone levels can shift greatly before the cycle. In perimenopause, these shifts can be unpredictable and may lead to [symptoms](#) of anxiety, mood changes, tiredness, changes in libido, joint and muscle pain, difficulties with concentration or memory, and more.

Perimenopause is highly individualized and can be challenging to diagnose, especially due to the lack of understanding and research. These changes can be even more difficult to recognize in individuals with disabilities.



Overlap with other conditions, such as thyroid disorders, hormonal imbalances, chronic fatigue, mental health disorders, autism, diabetes, or other chronic health conditions may mask perimenopause, which can lead to misdiagnosis or delays in treatment.

Menopause is often treated as a forbidden subject, but it is a normal part of aging. If you think you might be experiencing symptoms of perimenopause, talking with your doctor can help you learn what to expect, how to manage symptoms, and protect your health as you age.

Educate Yourself About High Blood Pressure

By Vi Lam

Hypertension, or high blood pressure (BP), causes a heavy force of blood to constantly push toward artery walls. Left untreated, there is an increased risk for heart diseases or stroke. Over time, high BP can cause damage to the heart, brain, kidneys, and eyes. [The American Medical Association](#) estimates that nearly half of adults in the United States have high BP, and about 860,000 people die from heart disease annually.

High BP is sometimes referred to as a “silent killer” due to having few obvious symptoms. Age, family history, and certain health conditions may increase the risk of developing high BP. However, there are preventative steps that you can take to manage high BP before there are any long-term complications.

Have your doctor check your BP. If high BP is diagnosed, it is highly recommended that you get a blood pressure monitor and self-monitor at home regularly. Ask your doctor to explain how to understand the BP readings.

Lifestyle changes can be made, such as increasing physical activity, avoiding smoking, sticking to a healthy diet, limiting sodium and alcohol intake, maintaining a healthy weight, and reducing stress.

It is never too late to start monitoring and learning how to maintain a healthy BP. Visit [cdc.gov/bloodpressure/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/index.htm) to learn more about high BP and how to manage it. Learn more about blood pressure under the Health Topics tab at [heart.org](https://www.heart.org).

Help Your Friends and Family Apply to Receive IHSS

By IHSS Program Service Aide Staff

Do you know someone who could benefit from In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)? If so, share the following information and tips to help the application process go as smoothly as possible.

To Be Eligible:

- Applicants must have active, full-scope Medi-Cal. Before requesting IHSS services, applicants should apply for Medi-Cal at benefitscal.com or by calling (408) 758-3800.
- Applicants must be living in their own home to receive services. If someone is in the hospital or a care facility, it is best to apply no more than two weeks before the planned discharge date.



To Get Started:

- Understand that IHSS is not an emergency program, and the application process takes time.
- To apply for IHSS, call (408) 792-1600 or e-mail SSA_IHSS_ARCCI_Fax@ssa.sccgov.org. No office visit or paperwork is needed.
- When applying, provide the applicant's full name, date of birth, social security number, telephone number, physical and mailing address(es), and Medi-Cal ID number, if available.
- If applying or calling on behalf of someone else, please let IHSS know. Do not claim to be the applicant. Help is available in the applicant's language.

What Happens Next?

- An IHSS Program Services Aide (PSA) will contact the applicant for a simple information and eligibility review.
- If the PSA determines that the case can move forward, an IHSS social worker will schedule an assessment (home visit) with the applicant, typically within one month.
- All IHSS applicants must submit a Health Care Certification form (SOC 873), which the PSA will send to the applicant. The SOC 873 must be on file before services can be approved.
 - A doctor or other Licensed Health Care Provider (LHCP) must complete the form.
 - To avoid denial, the applicant's name must appear on page two, above Section C, the LHCP must sign, date, and enter their license number and contact information in Section D, questions 1-4 must be answered, and the form must be submitted to IHSS before the due date.

What to Avoid:

- Do not submit extra paperwork—such as Power of Attorney, medical records, or letters from a doctor—or other IHSS forms. Submitting extra or duplicate forms leads to delays in the case. Only the SOC 873 is needed when applying. IHSS staff will let applicants know what else to submit and when.
- Do not ask the IHSS PSA to schedule the assessment or how many hours the applicant will receive. Please speak with the assigned IHSS social worker for this information.

The Santa Clara County IHSS application team processes 700+ applications each month. Understanding the information above can help the application process go smoothly and efficiently for all.

Save on Energy Bills with the ESA Program

By Shannin Prather

The Pacific Gas and Electric Company's (PG&E) Energy Savings Assistance (ESA) Program may be able to help renters and homeowners with one-time energy saving home improvements.

Possible improvements may include upgrades or repairs to heat pump water heaters, furnaces, lighting, replacement of refrigerators at least 15 years old, and insulation and weatherproofing.

To be eligible, applicants must live in a house, mobile home, or apartment that is at least five years old. Proof of income for the program's guidelines are not required for Medi-Cal recipients.

To learn more and apply for the program, call (800) 933-9555 or visit the "Save Energy & Money - Help Paying My Bill" section on PG&E's website at pge.com.



Steps for Getting Up Safely After a Fall

By Shannin Prather

Every year, more than 25% of adults aged 65 or older experience a fall. Falling once can double a person's chance of falling again, as stated by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). In addition, falls are a concern for the health of millions of adults with disabilities. A 2022 study by the [General Accountability Office](#), suggests that self-reported falls were higher among adults with disabilities aged 45 to 59 than those among adults aged 60 or older.

Fall prevention steps should be followed, such as wearing stable, well-fitting shoes and practicing strength and balance exercises. However, even with precautions, there may be times a person experiences a fall.

To prevent further injury after a fall, it is important to know how to safely get back up by following these five steps:

1. Evaluate your body for any pain or injuries. If something hurts as you move, it is best to stay on the floor and seek help.
2. If you do not feel pain or injury, slowly roll onto your side and push yourself up onto your hands and knees. Carefully crawl toward a sturdy chair, coffee table, or

couch. If you cannot crawl due to a physical condition, try scooting your buttocks along the floor or roll your way over to any furniture you can safely sit on.

3. Put both your hands on the furniture and then plant the foot of your strongest leg on the floor, while keeping the other knee down. Take a moment to ensure you are not feeling dizzy. If you do, remain in this position, or return to both knees on the floor until the dizziness passes.
4. Slowly raise yourself up with your strong leg, bringing your weaker leg under you as you rise to a standing position. As you rise, you could slowly turn your body and sit on the furniture.
5. Sit for a couple minutes to regain your balance. While you sit, think about what may have caused the fall and what steps may be needed to prevent future falls.

If someone can help you up, there may be a risk of injury to that person and yourself. If someone is helping, be an active participant as much as you can. It is recommended that, instead of lifting you up from the floor, they assist you through the five steps listed above.



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 Contacts

Public Authority Services by Sourcewise

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

Sourcewise Information & Awareness

Information on available services in Santa Clara County.

(408) 350-3200,
option 1

Members of the Public Authority Advisory Board

Emilio Carrillo
Joyce Felix
David Forderer
Joanna Kent

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(President/Chair)
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