



The Consumer Connection

Fall 2025

Public Authority Services
by Sourcewise



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Is Your Tap Water Safe?

By Khuan Duong and Vi Lam

Have you ever wondered where your tap water originates from and why it's essential to help keep it free of chemicals and germs? You can get your tap water from:

- Groundwater from basins or aquifers
- Water that had been recycled
- Lake, river, or reservoir surface water
- Rainwater

People may contract diarrhea-causing Giardia or norovirus, depending on the germ. Radon, which can cause lung cancer, is one of the pollutants that can enter our tap water. Water quality can be impacted by the decisions and activities we make every day.

Safeguard the water supply in your area by:

- Discard unused medicines properly. Many pharmacies, fire and police stations have permanent drug disposal boxes.
- Use fertilizer responsibly to avoid excessive nutrients from washing into the treated water supply.
- Avoid washing your car at home if the area can't drain to the lawn or a gravel area. Instead, take it to a car wash, where they are equipped to carry the dirty water to a wastewater treatment plant.
- Take unused motor oil or antifreeze to service or recycling centers for safe disposal.

For more information on drinking water and safe practices, visit [cdc.gov/drinking-water/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/drinking-water/index.html). If you are interested in learning how water purification processes work, schedule a live or virtual tour at the Silicon Valley Advanced Water Purification Center by visiting <https://purewater4u.org/sign-up-for-a-free-tour/>.

Receiving an Accurate Assessment or Reassessment from IHSS

By Angelina Soria and Veronica Marquez-Hothem

When an IHSS social worker visits your home for reassessment, it's important to represent your strengths and limitations. You can do so by clearly communicating your needs and by avoiding overstating your ability to manage your care.

Consider the following points:

- The IHSS social worker may not be aware of your specific needs. It's important to be clear, specific, and realistic when communicating with them.
- Consider the assistance you need to complete each task by assessing your ability to perform vital functions before the home visit. Describe your abilities in the following terms: no assistance, some assistance, substantial assistance, or total assistance needed. Prepare a list of your needs and any specific requirements you might have before the social worker comes.
- Every question the social worker asks you may be related to determining the total assessed need. Ensure you fully understand the questions being asked, as they can impact the number of hours that may be authorized. If needed, don't hesitate to ask the social worker to go over any questions again.

- To avoid duplication of services, share information about other services you are already receiving from another source, such as transportation or meals provided by a relative or another agency. Try keeping a record for at least a week of all the service needs your caregiver performs for you and any other services you receive.
- Contact IHSS for more information on what is needed to qualify for IHSS while being employed.

Whether it's your initial or reassessment, remember to describe your abilities and limitations as accurately as possible when meeting with the social worker. Share your toughest day, down to the smallest detail, so your social worker understands your needs. It's easy to overlook the little things, but each detail is necessary to paint a holistic picture of you and your priorities.

If you experience any changes in your health or care needs, disagree with the total hours and authorized tasks, or have any other questions, please contact your social worker immediately. You don't have to wait for your annual assessment to request additional hours. If you don't know your social worker's phone number, you can call IHSS at (408) 792-1600 for assistance connecting with your social worker.

Provider Enrollment Information

With the continued growth of eligible IHSS consumers in Santa Clara County, there has been a notable increase in enrollment of new and returning Independent Providers (IP).

Our small Enrollment team continues to do amazing work in accommodating the growth of IPs, with the current wait time reaching up to 10 weeks for an enrollment appointment.

If you hire a new or returning IP, ensure they begin their enrollment process promptly by visiting pascc.org/enrollment-process/ to initiate the process immediately. Providers may begin working before completing enrollment, but timesheets will not be issued until they are approved as an IP.

Prepare for Medicare & Medi-Cal Changes in 2026

By Steven Rubalcaba

The Medicare Annual Enrollment Period (AEP) runs October 15–December 7, 2025, for coverage starting January 1, 2026. This is when Medicare beneficiaries can review their health and drug plans and make changes to better fit their needs.

Sourcewise Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program (HICAP) provides free, unbiased counseling via phone, video, or in-person sessions at community locations. Counselors can help you compare plans, review your medication list, and choose the best option for your health and budget.

Each fall, Medicare Advantage and Part D plans may change premiums, benefits, or costs. You will get an **Annual Notice of Change** in September. During AEP, you can:

- Enroll in, switch, or drop a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan.
- Join or change a Medicare Advantage (Part C) HMO or PPO plan.
- Return to Original Medicare and add a Part D plan or Medigap for greater provider choice.

What's new in 2026:

- **Lower Drug Prices:** Medicare negotiated prices for 10 high-cost drugs. Reduced prices take effect January 1, 2026.
- **Part D Cap:** The annual Part D out-of-pocket limit rises to \$2,100 in 2026 (from \$2,000 in 2025). After you reach this cap, you pay nothing more for covered Part D drugs that year.
- **Medi-Cal Enrollment Freeze:** In 2026, Medi-Cal will freeze new enrollment for undocumented, Medicare-eligible older adults and people with disabilities without satisfactory immigration status. Current enrollees keep coverage.

The screenshot shows the Medicare.gov website page for "What's Medicare Drug Coverage (Part D)?". The page has a clean, white background with a navigation bar at the top. On the right side, there is a portrait of a smiling woman with long brown hair. Below the title, there is a short introductory paragraph and a link to "How do I avoid the late enrollment penalty?". The main content area is divided into three columns, each with a heading and a "Learn" button: "Get the basics" (Learn the Basics), "How drug plans work" (Learn About Coverage), and "Using your drug coverage" (Use Your Drug Coverage). At the bottom of the page, there is a small link: "Already have Medicare drug coverage? Find out if you can change plans."

- **Medi-Cal Asset Test Returns:** Medi-Cal will reinstate an asset test. Eligibility limits are \$130,000 for a single person and \$195,000 for a couple, excluding a home, vehicle, and certain items.
- **Annual Recertification:** Medi-Cal recipients must recertify each year; coverage could end at recertification if you no longer meet requirements.

How to prepare:

Create a [Medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov) account to review prescriptions and coverage. **Ask about Extra Help (Low-Income Subsidy)** to lower Part D costs. Many Medi-Cal beneficiaries may qualify automatically. Bring a list of current medications to appointments.

Get support:

HICAP offers AEP presentations titled “Medicare’s 2025 Annual Enrollment Period and Updates for 2026” via Zoom and at community sites across Santa Clara County. To attend an in-person or virtual presentation, visit mysourcewise.com/calendar. To schedule a one-on-one counseling session, visit mysourcewise.com/programs-services/medicare-options/appointments or call (408) 350-3288.

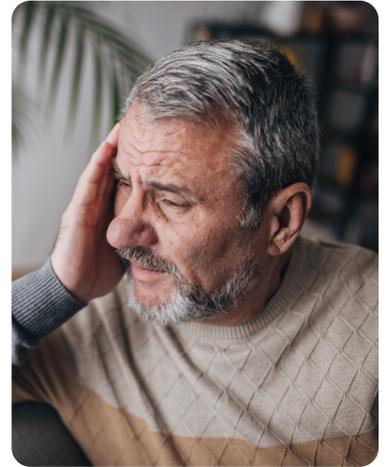
Brain Injury Awareness Month

By Angelina Soria and Vi Lam

An estimated 5.3 million individuals in the United States are currently living with a long-term disability resulting from a brain injury, which stands as a primary cause of both death and disability. Brain injuries can manifest in various forms and can affect anyone, including those close to us.

During Brain Awareness Month, we honor individuals who confront the challenges posed by brain injuries. This month serves to enhance understanding, improve care, and create more opportunities for recovery.

Public Authority Registry Manager Angelina offers a glimpse into her family's experience with an Anoxic brain injury. This happens when the brain is deprived of oxygen, which can occur during an event like cardiac arrest or heat stroke. The severity of the injury depends on how long a person goes without oxygen, and the potential for recovery can differ from one person to another.



For Angelina, a regular day suddenly transformed into one she and her family would never forget. Her son, Angel, who had always been vibrant and energetic, had been working outside in extreme heat for an extended period, resulting in his body temperature soaring to 109 degrees and causing a heat stroke. This altered his life and that of his family. Doctors let Angelina know the alarming prognosis of permanent brain damage, leading her to fear that they might never witness the return of the “old” Angel.

The journey toward recovery following any brain injury can be long-lasting and unpredictable. Angel's path to recovery is characterized by resilience, bravery, and optimism. The injury has affected numerous aspects of his life, including memory, mobility, and, at times, his ability to communicate effectively. He has faced challenges with fundamental cognitive skills, such as recalling information, maintaining focus, and coordinating his movements. His once-vibrant personality now appears obscured by confusion and frustration. Although Angel's experience with anoxic brain injury continues, his progress serves as a profound source of inspiration for Angelina and all who know him.

Brain injury presents a range of symptoms such as loss of consciousness, headache, confusion, speech difficulty, and blurred vision. If you experience any of these symptoms, seek medical attention immediately.

It's essential to raise awareness about these injuries because many of them can be prevented, and seeking help early can significantly aid in recovery. Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/heads-up/about/severe-brain-injury-basics.html> for more information on brain injury and where to get help.

The Brain Injury Association of America also has many resources for people who want to help, have a brain injury, or are caregivers to someone with a brain injury. Visit them at <https://biausa.org/>.

National Senior Center Month

By Angelina Soria

Every year, the United States uses the month of September to promote a positive image of senior centers. During National Senior Center Month, we celebrate the importance of senior centers' role. They help older adults stay active, healthy, and connected. We also want to acknowledge and thank the center staff, volunteers and community partners who make the centers what they are. It's essential to remember that senior centers require support and resources to continue providing essential services to seniors.



Each year, the theme for National Senior Center Month changes, however, the focus stays the same: celebrating older adults, encouraging their independence, and building communities that are friendly to all ages. By spreading the word and showing appreciation for senior centers, we can help ensure that these vital community institutions continue to thrive.

Here are a few ways you or your loved one can join in during National Senior Center Month and show your support for senior centers:

- Volunteer at senior centers. Senior centers often need volunteers to assist with different programs and services. Volunteering is a great way to give back to the older adults in your community and positively impact their lives.
- Volunteer with programs that help older adults at Sourcewise, Santa Clara County's Area Agency on Aging. Contact volunteer@mysourcewise.com for more information on volunteering opportunities.
- Participate in programs for seniors. Whether you're a senior or just someone from the community, attending an event at your local senior center can be a fun way to explore their programs and discover the resources they offer.

We Want to Hear from You!

As an IHSS consumer, what information would be helpful, or would you like to learn more about? Let us know by calling Public Authority Services Training at (408) 350-3220 or email us at info@pascc.org. You can also fill out a form at <https://forms.office.com/r/SaWx4Jth5t>.

The National Council on Aging suggests that seniors who participate in senior center activities tend to have better psychological well-being compared to those who do not. Research indicates that by improving their physical, social, and emotional well-being, seniors can even delay the onset of some chronic diseases. Visit <https://www.ncoa.org/article/get-the-facts-on-senior-centers/> for more information on the benefits of a senior center.

If you need help finding a list of the local senior centers, call (408) 350-3200, option 1 to speak with a Community Resource Specialist.



Public Authority Services

by Sourcewise

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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, 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

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