

County of Santa Clara

Social Services Agency

353 West Julian Street
San Jose, California 95110-2335



DATE: April 12, 2022

TO: Board of Supervisors
Jeffrey V. Smith, M.D., J.D., County Executive

PM

SUBJECT: In-Home Supportive Services Program Updates

At the December 17, 2021, Children, Seniors, and Families Committee (CSFC) meeting, the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Program presented its annual report. The CSFC requested an off-agenda report providing updates on trainings, improvement on efficiency rates, and reduced wait times. IHSS was also directed to look at San Francisco's pilot program in which IHSS workers support unhoused individuals as they transition into supportive housing by assisting with cleaning, cooking, and shopping to determine if a similar program can be incorporated into the County of Santa Clara's IHSS program.

Reduced Phone Wait Times

The IHSS lobby closed between March 16, 2020, and September 13, 2021 due to COVID-19, decreasing lobby foot traffic and only allowing callers to reach IHSS via telephone. The lobby closure provided lobby receptionists the opportunity to be reassigned as call agents. Having an additional four call agents proved to be highly beneficial.

On average, IHSS had 11 call agents answering phones when the lobby was closed. Staff answered phone calls full-time on the main line, keeping wait times to as low as two minutes. Prior to March 2020, IHSS utilized an average of seven to eight call agents with an average 10-to-45-minute wait time.

Increased Efficiencies Utilizing Phone Reassessments

California Department of Social Services (CDSS) issued several All-County Letters about IHSS' COVID-19 response, authorizing flexibility to social workers to conduct annual reassessments by telephone until the end of the public health emergency. CDSS also authorized conducting portions of intake assessments over the phone or by videoconference. Conducting assessments over the telephone reduced time spent on commuting to and from home visits. These added flexibilities contributed to the increased efficiencies in completing annual reassessments and intake assessments. The reassessment compliance rate with CDSS increased by approximately 1% monthly through December 2020. In January 2021, IHSS's compliance started to decline when 16 social workers were reassigned to Disaster Services Worker duties.

Reduced Backlog for Intake Applications

The IHSS Application Readiness Unit continues to support the reduction of backlogged intake applications. As of February 2022, the backlog from June 2021 was eliminated.

24-Hour Response Time for Applications

In response to feedback from the community requesting improved response time, management communicated an expectation that effective April 2021, IHSS Program Services Aides in the Application Readiness Unit were required to make phone contact with applicants within 24 hours of receipt of applications. This simple change reduced complaint phone calls and processing time for applicants to be seen by a social worker for an intake assessment.

Automated Intake Distribution

IHSS has partnered with Technology Services and Solutions (TSS) on the Automated Intake Distribution Project to improve the quality and efficiency of intake assignments. This tool automatically assigns intake cases to social workers, eliminating the reliance on a supervisor manually assigning 300 to 400 intake cases per month, and can take several days to complete with the potential for human error.

The automated intake tool was first tested in October 2021. The project team and supervisors are closely monitoring the accuracy and efficiency of each monthly distribution of intake cases. The project is in the final stages of testing will be fully implemented over the next few months.

QMatic in the IHSS Lobby

Together with Central Services and TSS, IHSS implemented an automated system (QMatic) in the IHSS lobby for visitors to enter preliminary information into a kiosk, receive a printed receipt, and be issued a number to be called to the IHSS lobby receptionist window. Lobby visitors have the option to enter their phone number and receive a text message when their number is ready to be called. This gives visitors the option to be seated in the lobby, wait outside, or wait in their car. Lobby visitors' numbers are announced in the lobby as well as outside the entrance to the building. The announcement indicates which lobby receptionist window to report to for service. IHSS is pleased that the two lobby kiosks have been utilized in the lobby since October 12, 2021. Though the number of visitors to the lobby has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, it is a better experience for the clients who no longer stand in a line to wait for service.

Parking Needs Survey

IHSS conducted a short, simple, and anonymous survey from September 2021 through December 2021. Participants received copies of the survey with instructions to drop their completed surveys in either of the two drop boxes inside or outside the IHSS lobby. The survey was conducted in English, Vietnamese, Spanish, and Chinese and included a blank space for written additional comments.

Results came in overwhelmingly positive with 90% of the 160 respondents reporting finding parking excellent or good and 80% of the respondents finding accessible parking excellent or good. The survey responses included comments related to an improvement needed in four areas (accessible parking, speeding, signage, and a request for more shade in the parking lot). We have shared the survey results with Central Services; they have responded that they are happy to collaborate on any future improvements.

Virtual IDM Baskets

In early March 2020, a makeshift supply room and delivery pickup area were created in the closed IHSS lobby on the first floor. Social workers received forms and assignments from their supervisors in this area. Supervisors, in turn, collected completed form packets the social workers had completed during assessments.

Because this arrangement was cumbersome, a new system was needed to allow virtual form exchange. Years ago, IHSS submitted a formal request to TSS to create a system that would allow forms to be signed electronically, but that project has not yet been started. In the meantime, IHSS management worked with TSS to create a temporary virtual environment in which social workers could upload their completed and signed paper forms for clerical staff to retrieve and save into the Integrated Document Management (IDM) digital storage system.

Management has been working on this for over a year and went live with this technology in March 2022. Management had already conducted a pilot with social workers, supervisors, and clerical staff. A business process has been created and management has received feedback about the Quick Reference Guide and the business process that will be utilized in the implementation. The virtual baskets will reduce the need for social workers to deliver large packets of forms from each home visit to the clerical staff who manually scan the forms into IDM for storage.

Staff Trainings

IHSS has partnered with Staff Development to offer required trainings at least every two years. The IHSS Quality Assurance Manager and the recently formed IHSS Training Workgroup has worked closely with Staff Development to bring trainings via webinar, virtually, and in-person.

Some trainings have been offered virtually during All Staff Meetings. Required trainings will be posted on the County Intranet so that employees may access them online. Staff development and/or IHSS supervisors will ensure that staff attend the required trainings within the two-year time frame.

Virtual mandated reported trainings for elders and children are being offered in March, April, May, and June of 2022.

More Efficient Outreach to Community

IHSS historically has reached out to recipients in emergency situations to ensure that recipients are safe, practicing precautions, and are receiving the care they need due to COVID-19, wildfires, heat advisories, air quality, floods, and PG&E power shutoffs. Last year, IHSS partnered with TSS to conduct outreach with emails and robocalls. This efficiency has saved staff from spending multiple hours and labor calling clients and then entering their efforts into Case Management Information and Payrolling System (CMIPS) II, the statewide IHSS database. Emails, robocalls, and text messages are translated by IHSS staff and sent out in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese.

IHSS and TSS have done several outreach efforts this calendar year which includes, but is not limited to, the following during 2021:

- On January 1 and 3, emailed and robocalled all providers regarding COVID-19 vaccine eligibility.
- On January 22, emailed and robocalled recipients age 65 and over regarding COVID-19 vaccine eligibility;
- On June 16, emailed recipients age 65 and over regarding heatwave advisory.
- On August 11, emailed all 57,993 recipients and providers regarding available services in the event of any future PG&E power shutoffs.
- On October 22, 84,984 emails and text messages were sent to recipients and providers that COVID-19 Pfizer booster shots were available and recommended in Santa Clara County for all IHSS providers who received their second Pfizer dose at least six months prior and that free, accessible County vaccination sites are available in San Jose, San Martin, Morgan Hill, and Mountain View.

IHSS also worked with the County of Santa Clara Public Health Department to ensure that all 140 bedbound recipients received the COVID-19 vaccine in their homes. Staff from the Public Health Department went directly to the homes of these identified recipients who wished to receive the vaccine but were unable or found it difficult to leave their homes.

More Efficient Outreach to Unhoused Community

On January 7, 2022, the Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) staff members, Mary Ann Warren (DAAS Director), Terri Possley (IHSS Program Manager), and Susan Chang (Management Analyst) met with Krista Gaeta, Director of In-Home Supportive Services, San Francisco (SF) Department of Disability and Aging Services. This meeting was an opportunity for IHSS to learn about the strong collaborations and partnerships SF IHSS has with community-based organizations serving the unhoused. SF IHSS shared the innovative ways they work with partners to transition unhoused individuals into supportive housing and refer qualified individuals to IHSS.

Each county's IHSS program can choose different modes of service delivery: Contract or Independent Provider (IP). The "Contract mode" is the State-sanctioned service delivery system for IHSS whereby the County contracts with a home care vendor to provide IHSS authorized services.

Under this mode, authorized IHSS services are provided by employees of the home care vendor rather than the individual client. The Independent Provider (IP) mode allows for IHSS recipients to select a provider on their own and to act as the employer in all areas but payroll, which is handled by the state. The County of Santa Clara operates with the IP mode and SF is using the Contract mode.

SF IHSS partners with the Department of Public Health and Adult Protective Services. At the start of the program, SF IHSS identified a supportive housing site that had 20 eligible clients in residence. Ms. Gaeta explained the current contract model provides homecare to multiple clients who reside in one of two dedicated permanent supportive housing buildings. A third building will be added this year. A pre-assessment is completed when the client moves into the building. There are approximately 20 clients in each building. Six additional social workers are being hired to support the third building.

At the core of the model is a long-standing partnership with HomeBridge, which provides agency-supported home care, serving mostly formerly homeless individuals. HomeBridge supports their clients who have complex health, behavior, and social needs in overcoming barriers to accessing quality in-home care. Through this partnership, SF IHSS provides on-site care at various permanent supportive housing locations. The benefits of the contract model include flexible full-time scheduling for the care provider and dedicated on-site staff, including social workers, however, the cost is much higher, about \$50 per hour.

Utilizing Partnerships to Serve Homeless and At-Risk IHSS Clients

Since 2016, IHSS has been actively working to address the unique needs of the unhoused community in the County of Santa Clara by collaborating with the Office of Supportive Housing (OSH) on their Continuum of Care (CoC) efforts, specifically, the Care Coordination and Transitions Program (CCTP). By establishing a partnership between IHSS and OSH, applicants to IHSS have received a coordinated and streamlined approach to receive the support and services required to maintain their ability to live independently in their own home.

IHSS also participates in the Bay Area Regional Task Force where such issues as unhoused residents qualifying for IHSS are often discussed and resources and ideas are shared.

IHSS already works with numerous entities in the community and has actively engaged existing partners such as Valley Homeless Healthcare Program (VHHP).

The County of Santa Clara IHSS recognizes the important work SF IHSS does with their unhoused community to increase their IHSS intake referrals. The County of Santa Clara IHSS continues to meet with OSH, VHHP, and Public Authority to ensure resources and explore other potential models to meet the needs of our mutual clients.

cc: Chief Board Aides
Miguel Marquez, Chief Operating Officer
James Williams, County Counsel
Tiffany Lennear, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
Ky Le, Deputy County Executive