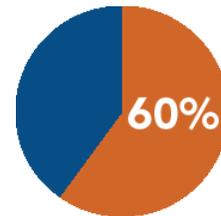


In-Home Supportive Services Basics: Eligibility and the Application Process

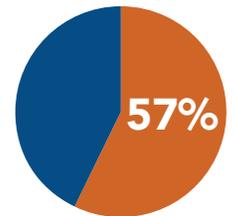
IHSS is the California Medi-Cal program’s largest in-home care program. It allows individuals with functional limitations to receive care in their home, if they cannot safely remain in their homes without such assistance. In 2017, more than 500,000 Californians qualify for a wide range of these in-home services.

Who does IHSS help?

The IHSS program serves children, adults, and seniors with functional limitations. IHSS consumers are a diverse group—more than 60% are women, more than 50% speak a language other than English as their primary language, and more than 57% are seniors aged 65 and older. Almost all consumers are Medi-Cal recipients.



Women



Age 65+ and older

What is the purpose of IHSS?

The goal of IHSS is to provide consumers with the ability to live safely in their homes. It does this by empowering most consumers to self-direct their own care. Although the state pays the wages, the consumer hires, supervises, and, if necessary, fires her provider.

IHSS CONSUMER PROFILES

IHSS serves children, adults, and seniors with a wide range of functional limitations and disabilities. Here are a few examples:

- ▶ A 13-year old boy with muscular dystrophy who needs assistance with personal care services including ambulation, dressing, and bathing.
- ▶ An 85-year old woman with dementia who wanders out of her house and doesn’t remember how to get back home.
- ▶ A 52-year man with bipolar disorder and depression who requires coaching and verbal assistance to take medication and go to the doctor.

How does the program work?

Interested individuals apply and are evaluated by the county IHSS department. If eligible, the individual will receive a written notice detailing all approved tasks and the time allowed for each task. The individual chooses her provider who must be background checked and registered with the county to receive payment. The consumer sets the provider's actual schedule within the limits of the approved hours.

What types of services does IHSS provide?

IHSS can pay for several different types of services including personal care services, like bathing, grooming, and dressing; domestic and related services, like cooking and light housekeeping; paramedical services; protective supervision; accompaniment to medical appointments; heavy cleaning; and yard hazard abatement.

The total hours per month cannot exceed 283. For more information on IHSS services, [see Justice in Aging's IHSS Services fact sheet](#).

Who pays for the services?

If a consumer has free Medi-Cal, all IHSS hours are paid for by the state as a covered Medi-Cal service. If a consumer has share of cost Medi-Cal, the consumer will be expected to pay her share of cost to her IHSS provider every month and the state will cover any wages exceeding the monthly share of cost.

Advocate Tips

- ▶ IHSS is not restricted to consumers who need physical assistance with tasks. Individuals with mental health disabilities and cognitive impairments may also benefit from in-home care which provides assistance with a wide variety of activities of daily living (ADLs) and instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs).
- ▶ When assisting an individual applying for IHSS, discuss their needs for assistance with tasks that are difficult because of their mental health conditions. Then ensure that the relevant information is communicated to the IHSS social worker.

Who is eligible to receive IHSS?

IHSS has five major eligibility criteria. Consumers must:

1. Be enrolled in free or share of cost Medi-Cal;
2. Have a qualifying immigration status; [see NILC chart](#)
3. Be a California resident;
4. Live in their own home and not in an institution;
5. Be aged, blind or disabled.

Additionally, all consumers must have a need for in-home services in order to qualify.

What if a client needs IHSS, but is not a Medi-Cal recipient?

An individual can apply for IHSS first, but will also be required to apply for Medi-Cal. The two applications can be processed concurrently. Authorization for IHSS cannot begin until Medi-Cal is approved.

Does living in someone else's home or in a rental unit mean that an individual does not "live in their own home?"

No. An individual can live in a variety of settings including in a rental unit, in someone else's home, with roommates or in a hotel room, and still qualify as living in their own home. This requirement is meant to distinguish individuals who live in institutional settings like a skilled nursing facility or an assisted living facility from those who live in the community.

Individuals residing in temporary housing, shelters, or who are homeless may have difficulty getting IHSS. Justice in Aging is working on this issue and is interested in assisting advocates whose clients are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness and need IHSS.

How does one apply for IHSS?

Any interested individual can start an IHSS application by phone, by mail, or in-person at the county welfare department in their county of residence. Additionally, the applicant must have her health care provider complete the Health Care Certification Form (SOC 873) and must allow the county to conduct an in-home assessment. The county will send a notice of action informing the applicant of its determination.

The county has 30 days from the day the individual starts the application to complete the process. Delays in returning the Health Care Certification Form or in scheduling the in-home assessment can delay this process. If your county is routinely not completing IHSS applications within the 30-day window, please contact Justice in Aging.

Advocate Tips

- ▶ Applicants may improve their chances of getting IHSS and sufficient hours if they understand the process and prepare for their in-home assessment.
- ▶ One way to prepare is to review the tasks IHSS will pay for and to have the applicant identify which ones she needs help with. Once she has identified those tasks she can keep a log for a few days or a week to help her understand how many minutes per day each task takes. Disability Rights California has a helpful Functional Limitation Self-Assessment Packet at disabilityrightsca.org/pubs/548201.pdf. This information can be provided to the social worker during the in-home assessment.