

**Sacramento County**  
**Department of Health and Human Services**  
**In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)**



**HOW TO HIRE A  
CARE PROVIDER**

County of Sacramento  
Board of Supervisors

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## INTRODUCTION

Most frail elders and disabled persons prefer to live in their homes or apartments among familiar surroundings and friends. Sometimes, in order to achieve this goal, additional help in the home is needed.

This guide is designed to help you feel more comfortable about locating and hiring someone to help you in your home. There is detailed information about questions to ask applicants; supervision and dismissal of care providers.

You may contact your In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) social worker for assistance in finding a care provider when:

- Your case is authorized for thirty (30) hours or more per month.
- You are unable to interview without help.
- You have no family or friends to help you interview.

For important information regarding the In-Home Supportive Services Program, see page 13.

### REMEMBER:

- You are the employer
- You must sign the care provider's time sheet to authorize payment.
- You must pay your share of cost, if you have one, to the care provider at the end of the first pay period of each month.

## **PREPARATION**

First, we recommend that you review the services authorized by the IHSS social worker. The authorized services will be listed on the *Notice of Action*. This notice is sent to you from the IHSS social worker and shows the amount of time authorized for each service needed.

Authorized services may include routine cleaning, meal preparation, laundry, shopping, bathing, dressing, feeding, lifting, medication reminder and accompaniment to medical appointments. Be sure to review **ALL** of your authorized services and have the *Notice of Action* available to review during the interview.

## **WHERE TO LOOK FOR HELP**

You may contact The IHSS Caregiver Registry for a listing of potential care providers. The Caregiver Registry is a free service designed to assist IHSS recipients in locating a care provider. The Caregiver Registry will send you a customized list of care providers based on your location, authorized hours, and other needs.

The Caregiver Registry collects background data, work experience, and references from potential care providers. However, you are responsible for interviewing potential care providers, checking their references and making hiring decisions.

**Caregiver Registry (916) 874-4411**

## **CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS**

Current law states that an IHSS recipient has the right to obtain the criminal background record (if one exists) of their potential care provider from the State Department of Justice. This criminal background check is provided free of charge upon your request.

**Requesting a criminal background check is your choice and is not mandatory.**

Informational notices about criminal background checks are available from your IHSS social worker and IHSS Family Service Workers.

## **SCREENING BY PHONE**

Before interviewing applicants, you should screen them by phone. Use your *Notice of Action* to describe the job in more detail.

If the applicant sounds reliable during the phone screening and you feel comfortable, set up an interview time. If the phone screening does not go well, do not schedule an appointment for an interview. Take their phone number and say, “*I am doing other interviews and I will get back to you.*”

•It is very important that you do not give potential job candidate ANY personal information, such as your name, address and home phone number.

**Remember to:**

- Be friendly.
- Give a brief description of your needs.
- State the number of hours you need assistance. The total number of hours you are authorized is stated on the *Notice of Action*.
- Request that the applicant bring the name and phone number of two or three references to the interview.
- Ask if he/she has reliable transportation to and from work.

**Providers are not required to have cars. See page 13, #3 for more information.**

- Thank him/her even if you feel the applicant is not qualified for the job.

## **INTERVIEWING IN PERSON**

After you have screened applicants by phone, you are ready to interview in person. You may wish to have a family member or trusted friend with you during the interview. This will help you feel safe and more comfortable. Your friend or family member may think of additional questions to ask to help you with interviewing the applicants. If possible, practice what you plan to say to prospective care providers with a friend or family member before you actually do an interview.

You may also request that an IHSS Family Service Worker assist with interviewing potential care providers. Call your IHSS social worker if you need help.

### **During the interview:**

- You may ask the applicant to show you a picture. This includes a Driver's License or Department of Motor Vehicles I.D. card.
- Become acquainted with applicants by letting them tell you about themselves. This also shows that you have interest in them as a person.
- Give the applicant your *Notice of Action* to read.
- Ask all the questions you want.
- Remember, you can interview as many applicants as you want. You always have the right to change your mind about your choice.
- If you have concerns or doubts about anything the applicant says, write it down and check it out.

### **POSSIBLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

- What kind of work have you done other than what is listed on the application?
- What kind of training have you had?
- What types of work do you enjoy? Not enjoy?
- Do you have any physical or emotional problems that would hinder you in this job?
- Have you been convicted of a felony in the past year? What? Where? When?

- Do you mind being around someone who smokes?
- Would you be willing to take me to doctor's appointments?
- Are you allergic to cats or dogs?
- Do you have a driver's license?
- Would you be willing to work together with me on some tasks?
- Would you cook according to my needs or plan menus with me?
- Do you drink or take drugs?
- Is there anything on my Notice of Action that you cannot or would not do?
- Would you ever bring someone with you?
- Do you have any problems with the days or hours I need you to work?
- Would you be willing to agree upon a trial period?

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS**

A care provider may need to be trained by you or your family. For example, you may have to use a special kind of transfer lift or your spouse may have a severe memory loss problem. Here are some questions that may help in interviewing for special needs:

- Have you had any experience in care for a person with severe memory loss?
- How would you handle a wandering person?
- How would you deal with a person who refuses to eat?
- How would you handle aggressive or abusive behavior?
- What is your training in providing domestic and personal care services?
- Can you change a bed with someone in it?

- How would you handle a medical emergency?
- Have you ever been certified to give first aid?
- Can you change wound dressings?
- Can you measure and document liquid intake?
- Do you know how to operate a lift that is used to move someone?

## **AFTER THE INTERVIEW**

- Thank the applicant for coming to the interview.
- Tell the applicant you have other interviews and will contact them when you have made your decision.
- After the interview, write down your impressions and discuss them with the person who helped you with the interview. This can help you decide who is best qualified.
- Select the applicant you feel most comfortable with and who you think can best help you. Personal or business references may be used.
- **Never hire someone without first checking their references.**

## **POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO ASK APPLICANT'S REFERENCES**

- How long have you known the applicant?
- What was the applicant's position with you?
- What were the job responsibilities?
- Was your relationship good? Not so good?
- What were your impressions of the quality of the work?
- Was the applicant reliable? Dependable? Courteous? Trustworthy?

- Were there any problems? What were the problems?
- Why is he/she no longer working for you? ( Listen carefully to the answer. An unhappy former employer may tell you things you really need to know).
- Would you hire this individual again?

## **SUPERVISION**

Supervision includes praise, accountability, good communication and record keeping. It is important that you try to do as much as you can for yourself.

You may want to do some activities together with your care provider, such as folding clothes or cooking. You may want to post a list of your needs on the refrigerator. If you want certain tasks completed in a specific way, it is important to write them down and post them in convenient places, such as the bathroom or kitchen. This makes communication and supervision easier. Remember that it is not important that all tasks are always done exactly the way in which you would do them. There are many ways to do things. It can be a cooperative effort. The following guidelines will help you supervise your care provider.

### **Supervision and Communication**

- Some people find it difficult to accustom to being in charge. Keep in mind that **YOU** are the employer.
- Clearly explain what you want and what you expect. Open communication can solve many problems!
- Give clear instructions.
- Give training where or when needed.

- Encourage your care provider to let you know if he/she does not understand you.
- Daily duties should be checked twice a month. Weekly duties should be checked once a month. The care provider should know that you will check to see if the tasks you agreed upon are done.
- Although it may be difficult to comment on performance, be up front and do this regularly. Give praise and correction when needed.
- Be respectful of your care provider. This encourages them to be respectful of you.
- If your care provider has to leave, and you have become close, be aware that you might feel real loss. Know that there are others out there waiting to help you.

### **Giving Praise**

- When your care provider is working hard and doing a good job, a little praise is appreciated.
- Give praise as deserved and immediately ( *i.e.*, “*I liked the food you prepared today. It tasted like my mother’s cooking.*”)
- It is important the both you and the care provider are pleased.

### **Offering Corrections**

- Discuss problems as they arise. Don’t bottle them up. Discuss problems fairly and calmly.
- When offering corrections, first try to comment on a task that has been done correctly. Then let the care provider know pleasantly, but firmly, how you want the task done.
- When making corrections, the following is a suggested comment: “*I am happy to see the bathroom so clean, but next time could you remember to rinse out the tub more thoroughly.*”

- Blaming them and making them feel ashamed does not help keep your care provider. If you find it difficult to correct your care provider, ask for help from a family member or friend.

## **SAFETY**

- Do not leave valuables lying around. Also, keep your jewelry, cash, checkbook, and credit cards put away safely and securely.
- Ask for a receipt any time your provider shops for you.
- Do not add your provider's name to your savings, checking, charge account, Social Security (SSI), or any other documents.
- Keep an eye on things such as phone usage, medications and food items.
- Do not get overly involved with your care provider's private life. **Do not** lend them money, vehicles, household furnishings or clothing.
- If your care provider is abusing you (hitting, screaming, endangering your health or making you feel afraid), tell family or friends immediately and call the police or Adult Protective Services (874-9377) at the Department of Health and Human Services.

## **DISMISSING A CARE PROVIDER**

There are many reasons for letting someone go. It may be that you just do not feel comfortable with the person. He/she may be bossy or just not doing what you both agreed upon. He/she may bring someone to your home without permission, may consistently arrive late to work or may miss days without giving notice. Other reasons for dismissal may include abuse of drugs or alcohol, excessive use of the telephone or missing items. Be sure to mention your concern at the first sign of a problem. This makes dismissal easier if things do not work out. Have someone with you when are dismissing your employee.

### **Possible reasons for immediate dismissal:**

- **Theft:** Confront your care provider and ask for his/her explanation. If you are certain that something of value is missing, call the police.
- **Abuse:** If you are afraid your care provider will harm you or is mistreating you in any way (hitting, hurting, screaming or yelling at you) let the police and Adult Protective Services know immediately.

## **DO NOT REMAIN IN AN ABUSIVE SITUATION**

Adult Protective Services: (916) 874-9377  
Sacramento County Sheriff: (916) 874-5115  
Sacramento City Police Dept: (916) 264-5151

**Other Information:**

- When you know you may need to let someone go, plan ahead for a replacement, if possible.
- The care provider may be told (several times) of unacceptable behavior before being dismissed.
- Be sure to get your house key returned if you have given one to the care provider.
- Ask if there are any of the care provider's personal belongings on your property.

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING THE IN-HOME SUPPORTIVE SERVICES PROGRAM**

1. In-Home Supportive Services are provided solely to help a person remain **SAFELY** in his/her own home and to prevent the person from being placed in a care facility. Authorized services are to be performed **ONLY** if you and not for any other family member or guest. If you are away from your home for any reason (i.e. hospital, vacation, etc.) you must notify your IHSS social worker. No payment will be made for the time period that you are out of your home.
2. Domestic Services (light housework) does **NOT** include washing windows, walls, cupboards, or window coverings, or shampooing or scrubbing rugs or carpets. These activities are considered *Heavy Cleaning* and can be done only if *Heavy Cleaning* is authorized.
3. Accompaniment to a medical appointment or alternative resource means assisting you with ambulation while being transported to a destination. For instance, the care provider may go with you to help you get into or out of a car, taxi or bus, or into the doctor's office if you cannot do these things alone. In other words, IHSS does not pay for chauffeuring. If it is done, it is at the care provider's/client's own risk.  
**Remember: providers are not required to have cars.**

4. Care providers are NEVER allowed to give injections or administer medications unless under the supervision of a physician.
5. Bowel and bladder care is limited to assistance with enemas, emptying of catheters or colostomy bags, assisting with bed pans, changing diapers, changing rubber sheets, and helping with getting on/off commodes or toilets.
6. The care provider must have his/her own car insurance. IHSS does not provide car insurance.
7. Services may include time for grocery shopping and errands as authorized on your *Notice of Action*. Errands may include picking up commodities (brown bag items), paying bills, and traveling to the bank. Remember that providers are not required to have automobiles.
8. If you own a car, the care provider is not required to wash, wax, clean, service or maintain your car.
9. The care provider is not expected to water/mow lawns nor do any other yard maintenance, unless authorized.
10. Rubbing of Skin/Repositioning includes rubbing of skin to promote circulation, turning in bed, seat and wheelchair transfers, transfers in/out of cars and authorized range of motion exercises.

11. The care provider is not authorized to care for or clean up after pets.
12. Any activity not specifically authorized by the *Notice of Action* will not be covered under Workman's Compensation. If the care provider is injured while performing a task not allowed on the agreement, you will be held liable.
13. **ALL** injuries that occur while a care provider is performing a task authorized by the *Notice of Action* must be reported immediately to the IHSS social worker.
14. If your Share of Cost is not paid to the care provider, you will be discontinued from IHSS and your Medi-Cal card will be stopped.
15. Any changes in care providers must be reported immediately to the IHSS payroll unit.
16. You **MUST** report to your IHSS social worker any changes in the number of persons in the home, entry into a care facility, changes of address, medical condition, income, resources, and marital status.
17. Care providers under the age of 18 must have a work permit from their school before they can perform any work. Wages cannot be paid until your IHSS social worker receives the work permit.

18. Any private arrangement made between you and the care provider to pay more than the authorized rate or to perform tasks not authorized is strictly between you and the care provider. It is not the responsibility of the Department of Health and Human Services IHSS Program.

## **QUESTIONS**

If you have any questions about the hiring, supervision or dismissing of a care provider, contact your IHSS social worker.

# IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Adult Protective Services.....(916) 874-9377  
In-Home Supportive Services.....(916) 874-9471  
IHSS Payroll Help Desk.....(916) 874-9805  
Family Service Worker Unit ..... (916) 874-9471  
Sacramento County Sheriff .....(916) 874-5115  
Sacramento City Police Dept.....(916) 264-5151  
IHSS Public Authority Caregiver Registry...(916) 874-4411  
Emergency.....911