



# SOCIAL SERVICES IN-HOME-SUPPORTIVE SERVICES (IHSS)

## SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

The In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program provides assistance to eligible aged, blind and disabled individuals who are unable to remain safely in their own homes without this service. By providing assistance with daily tasks of living such as homemaker and personal care services, IHSS maintains quality of life while avoiding the more costly alternative of institutionalization.



ABX 4 4 was signed into law by the Governor with the State budget on July 28, 2009. This bill made significant policy changes in the IHSS program that eliminates (with some exceptions) all program eligibility for applicants/recipients with a Functional Index Score (FIS) below 2, and eliminates (with some exceptions) domestic and related services for applicants/recipients in each category of service with a Functional Rank (FIR) below 4.

While new applicants will be able to appeal their Functional Index Scores and Ranking, the cost of processing the appeal will likely be born by the local county department.

A real scenario depicts the real life impacts of the policy changes that were enacted in the FY 10/11 budget. This bill eliminates eligibility for an 87 year old client, who suffers from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COBD), angina and arthritis. The client lives alone and has no family support. The client has a history of falling and has limited mobility. She is unable to drive and relies on her provider for all transportation. She tires easily and is unable to prepare her meals or accomplish any domestic work. Without IHSS, this client will be at risk for institutionalization.

In addition to the change in eligibility, ABX4 4 also, amongst other fraud detection and prevention measures, requires both IHSS recipients and providers to be fingerprinted, requires providers to undergo criminal background checks, complete a lengthy Provider Enrollment form, and for new providers, attend an orientation. County social services departments will be required to implement these provisions without funding.

## PUBLIC BENEFIT/IMPACT

IHSS is a critical program, preventing costly institutionalization and directly affecting the health and safety of its elderly and disabled recipients. Few social services programs have such an immediate, positive and profound direct affect on a person's quality of life as does IHSS. However, it has long been acknowledged statewide that IHSS is woefully under-funded and has become increasingly complex to administer. Counties have struggled to provide these critical services with fewer resources and Santa Barbara County is no exception.

The County anticipates over 47% of its approximately 2,900 IHSS recipients will be negatively impacted by this policy change. Approximately 575 (19.83%) clients will no longer be eligible for services and another 800 (27.59%) recipients will have their services significantly reduced since they will no longer be eligible for one or more domestic or related services. A number of new applicants will also be denied services because their limitations do not rise to a level of 2 or above. Additionally, some recipients will be denied partial benefits in the domestic and related service areas.

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### **COST TO THE GOVERNMENT**

Included in this budget was an unanticipated fingerprinting requirement for all In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) recipients. Fingerprinting of IHSS providers has been much debated and its inclusion in the budget was not surprising. However, the recipient fingerprinting portion of the legislation was unanticipated, was not openly debated in a stakeholder forum and will result in unintentional consequences for recipients and the counties administering IHSS.

With this legislation, IHSS recipients (except minors and individuals physically unable to provide fingerprint due to amputation or other physical limitations) are to provide fingerprints at assessment and reassessment. This budget also requires recipient to place their fingerprint on each timesheet to be eligible for payment, effective July 1, 2011. We believe Fingerprinting adds additional burdens to recipients without providing any significant benefit to the state. It puts Social Workers in an adversarial police role that creates an environment of distrust which is detrimental to the social worker consumer relationship. Furthermore, reports of rampant IHSS fraud have not been substantiated so fingerprinting of recipients, in addition to being an administrative burden for the counties, are not based on sound reasoning. The new procedures, although not yet clearly defined, will be expensive and time consuming for county personnel. The changes will not result in any cost-savings, except by imposing bureaucratic burdens that force people who qualify for IHSS to stop getting the services they need.

Even prior to the policy changes, IHSS was already chronically under-funded due to an outdated budgeting and funding methodology which assumes that county workers need only 11.58 hours per client per year to provide a number of services to administer the program, including recipient enrollment into the program, individualized in-home assessments, and coordinating with other service providers for care. This budgeting yardstick was totally inadequate when it was established in 1993 and has remained relatively unchanged despite significant policy changes and increased mandates over the years. In addition, counties have not received any funding to cover increases in the cost of administering the IHSS program for the past eight years (See brief on the "cost-of-doing-business, or CODB). Note that IHSS denials, which have a significant workload associated with them, are not administratively funded.

### **REQUESTED ACTION AND STRATEGY**

The County requests that its delegation support legislation to eliminate recipients from the fingerprinting requirement and to advocate preserving existing IHSS funding and avoid further programmatic and budgetary cuts in the FY 10/11 budget year.

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