

In-Home Supportive Services Basics: Services

What is In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)?

In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) is California's largest in-home care program. It is part of the Medi-Cal program. It allows older adults and individuals with disabilities who need assistance to receive non-medical care in their home if they cannot otherwise safely remain in their homes. In 2017, more than 500,000 Californians qualify for a wide range of different in-home services.

What types of services does IHSS provide?

IHSS provides a broad range of services. There are nine IHSS service categories ranging from cleaning, yardwork, and shopping to helping individuals dress and bathe. There are also approved IHSS services related to supervision and accompanying an individual to medical appointments. The nine service categories are named and explained below.

The county will decide, based on a person's need, which tasks and how many hours per task a consumer receives for all categories, except paramedical services. The total combined hours of in-home assistance per month for all tasks cannot exceed 283.

Personal Care Services

Personal care services are a broad category of services relating to a consumer's personal care needs. These include ambulation (i.e., walking); bathing, oral hygiene, and grooming; routine bed baths; bowel and bladder care; care and assistance with prosthetic devices and medication; dressing and undressing; feeding services; menstrual care; repositioning; respiration services; and transfer services (e.g. helping someone move between the bed and their wheelchair). The county social worker evaluates each task separately. Most consumers receive at least one personal care service task.

Domestic and Related Services

Domestic services are light housecleaning services, and are less individualized than personal care services. The consumer can ask the provider to perform household cleaning chores as needed up to the time allotted per month (generally, no more than 6 hours per month).

Related services include laundry services, shopping and errands, meal preparation, and meal clean-up. Each of these services is individually assessed and allotted a specific amount of time.

Paramedical Services

Paramedical services are tasks that are health care related and require judgment based on training given by a licensed health care professional. These include administration of medication, puncturing

the skin, wound care, and activities requiring sterile procedures. Any approved paramedical service must be an activity that the consumer, but for their functional limitations, would normally provide for themselves, and that is necessary to maintain the consumer's health.

Authorization of paramedical services requires more than just the county social worker's assessment. Specifically, a licensed health care professional must determine what specific paramedical task a consumer needs and the amount of time it takes to perform that task. The licensed health care professional must return a signed copy of form [SOC 321](#): Request for Order and Consent – Paramedical Services before the county social worker can approve the service. Once approved, the IHSS provider can provide the paramedical services as a part of their job duties.

Protective Supervision

Protective supervision is a different category of IHSS service. Unlike all other types of services, which are task-based, protective supervision requires a provider to watch the consumer's behavior and to intervene if the consumer is at risk of injury, hazard, or accident. Protective supervision is only for consumers who are non-self directing, confused, mentally impaired or mentally ill, and who require 24-hour a day supervision to stay safely in their home. The county will require a licensed health care provider to complete and sign form [SOC 821](#): Assessment of Need for Protective Supervision for In-Home Supportive Services Program. The consumer or his surrogate will need to complete form [SOC 825](#): Protective Supervision 24-Hours-A-Day Coverage Plan.

Advocate Tip

- Protective supervision can be a hard service to get for consumers. Consumers who most need protective supervision are often the least able to independently explain their need. Gathering supporting information explaining the consumer's need for protective supervision and the specific behaviors that put the consumer at risk of accident, hazard, or injury will be important to make sure the consumer gets the service.

Accompaniment to Appointments

When an IHSS consumer needs help to go to medical appointments or alternative resource sites, IHSS hours can be given. This service will only be provided after the social worker determines that Medi-Cal will not pay for non-emergency medical transportation. This service can include wait time during the appointment if the appointment is of unknown duration and the provider could be called upon at any time to help the consumer with an IHSS task.

Heavy Cleaning

Heavy cleaning is a limited service that involves a thorough cleaning of the home to remove hazardous debris or dirt. It is generally only authorized when IHSS is initially granted or when a consumer has not received IHSS for more than 12 months.

Yard Hazard Abatement

Yard hazard abatement is light yard work to make sure that weeds, high grass, or snow do not prevent a consumer from living safely in their home.

Teaching and Demonstration

Teaching and demonstration is a limited service to help consumers gain the skills to do a particular task without assistance. Teaching and demonstration is limited to three months.

How is the need for a particular service established?

As a part of the initial assessment and during the reassessment process, a county IHSS social worker performs a needs assessment. The needs assessment will include information about the consumer's living arrangement, alternative resources available to the consumer, and the consumer's functional ability. The social worker gives a functional rank for each service to decide whether the consumer needs help with that task. Once the social worker has determined the consumer needs a particular service, they will give the consumer a certain number of hours per week for that task.

It is important to note that paramedical services are authorized by a licensed health care professional who also determines how much time to give for each task.

How is the time needed for a particular service determined?

The county social worker is responsible for determining how much time will be given for each task. The state, however, has published a set of hourly task guidelines in order to improve consistency among county social workers. These guidelines are tied to the functional rankings used to understand the level of need for a service and include an hourly range per week for each task. The social worker can approve time above or below the hourly task guidelines based on a person's individualized need. The total hours approved per month cannot be more than 283.

What if a consumer disagrees with the services or hours approved by the county?

The consumer has a right to appeal a decision regarding services or hours made by the county. All consumers must receive a Notice of Action (NOA) explaining what IHSS services they are entitled to receive and how many hours each week they are given for those services. The NOA will also provide information about how the consumer can appeal a decision they think is wrong. Once the consumer has filed an appeal, they have a right to a hearing before an administrative law judge.

Advocate Tip

- ▶ A consumer's living arrangement affects how many hours they receive. The county will reduce the hours of assistance if it believes other people living in the house are helping the consumer with certain tasks. It is important to check with a consumer that the reduction of hours is correct based on what is actually happening in the home. For example, if a consumer needs special food and does not eat the same diet as other people living in the home, it may not be appropriate to reduce the meal preparation and clean-up tasks.