



**SOLANO COUNTY GRAND JURY**  
2018-2019

**QUALITY ASSURANCE/QUALITY IMPROVEMENT  
AND PROGRAM INTEGRITY/ANTI-FRAUD  
FUNCTIONS OF  
IN-HOME SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**

# **Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement and Program Integrity/Anti-Fraud Functions of In-Home Supportive Services**

Solano County Grand Jury 2018-2019

## **I. SUMMARY**

Prior Solano County Grand Juries published reports regarding the County's In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) in 2007, 2009, 2013 and 2017. The 2018-2019 Solano County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) assessed changes and improvements in the Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement and Program Integrity Unit/Anti-Fraud functions of the IHSS. While the Grand Jury acknowledges there have been advances, we believe increased staffing, better distribution of duties and ongoing training would serve IHSS well in facing future challenges.

## **II. INTRODUCTION**

The Solano County IHSS is a California Department of Social Services (CDSS) program, administered by the Older and Disabled Adult Services (ODAS) Division of the Health & Social Services Department. This program administers caregivers (providers) to assist elderly and disabled people (recipients/consumers) so that they may remain safely in their homes with non-medical support and personal care services.

In December 2018, management and supervision of the Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement and Program Integrity Unit/Anti-Fraud functions moved from ODAS to the Public Authority, a separate program of Solano County Health & Social Services. The Public Authority serves as the employer of record for all IHSS providers and provides services to assist IHSS consumers to hire quality providers. The Public Authority also negotiates wages, provides training and administers benefits.

Solano County's IHSS program cost \$93.2 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017-18. The IHSS program is paid for by federal, state and county funds as reflected in the below chart.

<b>Solano County</b>				
<b>IHSS MOE** and Program Costs</b>				
<b>Fiscal Year 2017-18</b>				
	<b>Administration</b>	<b>Services</b>	<b>CMIPS*</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Maintenance of Effort (MOE)</b>	\$882,842	\$11,214,265	\$39,573	<b>\$12,136,680</b>
<b>Program Costs</b>				
Federal	\$4,879,402	\$44,913,619		<b>\$49,793,021</b>
State	\$2,979,972	\$27,470,257		<b>\$30,450,229</b>
County	\$1,698,395	\$11,214,265	\$39,573	<b>\$12,952,233</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$9,557,769</b>	<b>\$83,598,141</b>	<b>\$39,573</b>	<b>\$93,195,483</b>

SOURCE: Solano County Health and Social Services Department

\*Case Management, Information and Payrolling System

\*\*Maintenance of Effort (MOE) - Stipulations attached to new funding sources which require the local agency receiving the funds to maintain the same level of local funding as it did before the new funds were available.

There are specific differences between the roles and responsibilities of Quality Assurance (QA) and Program Integrity staff (CDSS All-County Letter No. 10-39, dated August 19, 2010).

Welfare & Institutions Code §12305.71 mandates that each county have a dedicated QA function. The IHSS QA program was established through Senate Bill 1104 (Chapter 229, Statutes of 2004), which outlined a number of enhanced responsibilities for CDSS and counties including: routine scheduled desk reviews, home visits, targeted reviews, general verification of receipt of services, third-party liability and cooperation with data match and error rate studies.

In October 2009, legislation allocated monies to counties for program integrity/anti-fraud positions to strengthen efforts within the IHSS program [Assembly Bill (ABX) 4 19 (Chapter 17, Statutes of 2009) Fourth Extraordinary Session]. Subsequently, in March 2013, CDSS released the Uniform Statewide Protocols for Program Integrity Activities in the IHSS Program. These protocols reflect the guiding principles of the IHSS Program Integrity and Fraud Prevention Stakeholder Workgroup: process transparency, recipient well-being, recipient and provider dignity, emphasizing program education, safe and respectful mitigation, a commitment to ensuring that no one is unfairly targeted, with minimal disturbance or confusion caused to the vulnerable members of the IHSS community.

The duties of the Program Integrity/Anti-Fraud staff may include conducting unannounced home visits, directed mailings to IHSS providers, reviewing the results of criminal background checks, assisting as needed with the facilitation of provider orientations, reviewing a sample of provider timesheets, compiling and reporting fraud-related data, meeting with State and other designated staff regarding anti-fraud issues, and referring cases of suspected fraud in the IHSS program to the appropriate investigative agencies.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

#### **Interviewed:**

- Staff of the Solano County In-Home Supportive Services Public Authority
- Staff of Solano County's Adult and Disabled Adult Services Division

#### **Researched:**

- In-Home Supportive Services Public Authority website:  
[www.solanocounty.com/depts/hss/public\\_authority](http://www.solanocounty.com/depts/hss/public_authority)
- California Department of Social Services website:  
[www.cdss.ca.gov](http://www.cdss.ca.gov)
- Senate Bill 1104 Budget Act of 2004: Human Services (2003-2004), Chapter 229(14)
- Welfare and Institutions Code §§12305.71, 12305.82

#### **Reviewed:**

- California Department of Social Services, Adult Programs Division, IHSS QA/QI Policy Manual 2013
- California Department of Social Services Report of Program Integrity and Anti-Fraud Efforts in the In-Home Supportive Services Program Fiscal Year 2013-14 issued June 2015, and Fiscal Year 2014-15 issued May 2017
- California Department of Social Services County Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Activities Statewide Annual Reports: Fiscal Year 2012-13 issued June 2014, Fiscal Year 2016-17 issued December 2018, and Fiscal Year 2017-18 issued March 2019
- California Department of Social Services All-County Information Notice No. 1-17-19, dated March 18, 2019
- In-Home Supportive Services Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Quarterly Activities Reports (SOC 824) for the 1<sup>st</sup>

and 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of Fiscal Year 2018-19: July-December 2018

- In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Fraud Data Reporting Form SOC 2245 for Fiscal Years 2016-17 and 2017-18, and 1<sup>st</sup> three quarters of Fiscal Year 2018-19
- California Department of Social Services Adult Programs Division In-Home Supportive Services Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Policy Manual 2013
- California Department of Social Services All-County Letter No. 10-39, dated August 19, 2010
- Assembly Bill (ABX) 4 19 (Chapter 17, Statutes of 2009) of the Fourth Extraordinary Session
- County of Solano Office of the Auditor-Controller Internal Control Review of the In-Home Support Services (IHSS) Program dated April 27, 2017
- County of Solano Office of the Auditor-Controller Follow-Up Review on In-Home Support Services (IHSS) Internal Control Review dated May 18, 2018
- County of Solano Office of the Auditor-Controller Second Follow-Up Review to the In-Home Support Services (IHSS) Internal Control Review Report dated January 22, 2019
- CDSS Letter to the Director Solano County Department of Health & Human Services dated February 4, 2019 with CDSS Monitoring Review Summary
- Solano County Grand Jury 2017-2018 Report: In-Home Supportive Services Program Oversight and Management

#### **IV. STATEMENT OF FACTS**

##### **Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Activities**

The Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement (QA/QI) function includes routine scheduled reviews of IHSS cases and the reporting thereof. Counties report QA activities quarterly to CDSS using State of California (SOC) Form 824 (IHSS QA/QI Quarterly Activities Report). CDSS produces an annual report summarizing the County reported QA activities. Changes in the annual report were made for FY 2017-18 to include summary findings resulting from CDSS's State QA monitoring reviews.

The State utilizes a county’s total caseload and the allocated number of QA full time equivalent position(s) as reported on SOC Form 824, to determine the number of required minimum case reviews each year, consisting of both desk reviews and home visits. The minimum number of QA home visits is 20% of a county’s required desk reviews. Home visits conducted by county QA staff are performed to ensure program consistency and uniformity, as opposed to home visits conducted by non-QA social workers to assess recipient needs. The most recent SOC Form 824 focuses on quality and result reporting rather than tracking quantity and process.

The key findings regarding case reviews by Solano County obtained from the most recent CDSS Statewide QA/QI Annual Reports follows.

**Solano County  
Case Review Compliance Data**

	Activity	FY 2016-17	FY 2017-18
	Caseload	4,311	4,593
Desk Reviews	Desk Review Minimum	310	311
	Total Desk Reviews	266	211
	QA/QI % Completed	86%	68%
Home Visits	Home Review Minimum	62	62
	Total Home Visits	44	56
	Home Visit Compliance	71%	90%

Case reviews are the primary method for County QA to check that appropriate services are being provided to IHSS recipients. These reviews form the foundation of County QA. Solano County’s caseload has increased from 2,901 in FY 2012-13 to 4,593 in FY 2017-18. More desk reviews were performed in FY 2016-17 than in any prior year, and home visit compliance in FY 2017-18 was at a high of 90% with a total of 56.

**Solano County  
Desk Review Findings**

Activity	FY 2016-17	FY 2017-18
Desk Reviews Requiring Action	186	143
Missing, Incorrect or Incomplete State and County Forms	130	92
Insufficient or Inaccurate Case Documentation	146	131
Increase in Service Authorizations	23	13
Decrease in Service Authorizations	30	25

According to CDSS All-County Information Notice No. 1-17-19, dated March 18, 2019, QA/QI efforts of the counties were beneficial.

The counties reported 19% of desk reviews conducted on active cases resulted in findings of “No Further Action Required,” and 81% resulted in findings of “Further Action Required.” A single desk review might result in multiple findings. The FY 2017-18 annual report reflected the importance of County QA case reviews, as County QA teams identified errors in 80% of active cases reviewed. Insufficient or inaccurate case documentation continues to be the most frequently reported finding among QA desk reviews requiring action, totaling 45% in FY 2016-17 and 48% in FY 2017-18. The second and third most common findings requiring action involved issues concerning State and county required forms. Desk reviews that resulted in changes in service authorizations was the fourth most common finding.

IHSS provided the Grand Jury with its Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Quarterly Activities Report – SOC Form 824 for the first two quarters of FY 2018-19. The SOC Form 824 is an initial collection of preliminary data followed by five sections with a greater focus on result reporting, such as targeted reviews with outcomes and quality improvement efforts completed. The first and longest section captures counts of IHSS QA case reviews completed. The count is compiled to include denied applications reviewed, desk reviews that resulted in no action required, desk reviews requiring action, home visits with no action required and home visits requiring action.

**Solano County**  
**IHSS QA/QI SOC Form 824 for FY 2018-19**

Selected Activity per Quarter	1: Jul-Sep	2: Oct-Dec
Number of Desk Reviews	34	60
Number of Home Visits	12	13
Reviewed Cases with Timely Reassessments	10	18

Although the above counts are not used to determine case review compliance (only completed reviews are counted towards the case review minimums), the SOC Form 824 data for the first two quarters of FY 2018-19 indicates Solano County is on target to meet its case reporting and review requirements for FY 2018-19. The Grand Jury noted, however, that in sections four and five of those quarterly reports no targeted reviews and no quality improvement efforts were completed. The Grand Jury was advised by the Health and Social Services Department that target reviews are performed once per year, typically towards the end of each fiscal year. It is expected that the target reviews for the current fiscal year will be completed by June 28, 2019.

On April 27, 2017, the County of Solano Office of the Auditor-Controller (OAC) issued a report based on an Internal Control Review of several areas within the IHSS program requiring improvements and making recommendations. The report stated that reassessments were not consistently performed in a timely manner. IHSS recipients are subject to annual reassessments to ensure needs are properly met. This is accomplished by case workers performing scheduled

home visits. A follow-up review was done by OAC, and its report of May 18, 2018, indicated that their prior recommendation that cases due for reassessment be monitored with staff timely performing those reassessments, was not implemented by IHSS. In their second follow-up review report of January 22, 2019; however, the OAC stated IHSS management implemented policies and procedures for managing social worker caseload, and that the number of overdue reassessments was down from 934 cases to 518 as of December 31, 2018.

Pursuant to the data provided to the Grand Jury by IHSS for FY 2018-19, Solano County's Fiscal Year-to-Date Reassessment Compliance Rate is 87.46%, exceeding the State mandate of 80%. As of November 2018, the County was at 89.62%. CDSS conducted a QA monitoring review in December 2018 that showed all forty cases reviewed requiring reassessment received a timely reassessment. CDSS concluded that the County is "making great efforts" to address all overdue reassessments.

QA/QI staff do not conduct reassessments for IHSS services but have responsibility to ensure reassessments are conducted in compliance with State and County policies and procedures.

## **Program Integrity/Anti-Fraud Activities**

In March 2013, CDSS implemented uniform statewide protocols for Program Integrity Activities in IHSS. Following these protocols, counties agreed to track and submit fraud data, and CDSS agreed to release annual reports summarizing the data. A fraud data reporting and collection process was developed resulting in the Fraud Data Reporting SOC Form 2245. The SOC Form 2245 provides structure for the CDSS to analyze the data and compile an annual report for the purpose of improving the quality and integrity of the IHSS program. The annual reports include data and analyses regarding county fraud-reporting activities statewide. Directed mailings and unannounced home visits information is also included.

The first annual CDSS Report of Program Integrity and Anti-Fraud Efforts was completed for FY 2012-13. Thereafter, CDSS released reports for FY 2013-14 and FY 2014-15. At the time of this Grand Jury report, no additional annual program integrity/anti-fraud reports have been released.

The table below is a comparison of relevant data for Solano County from the two most recent annual reports.



Solano County  
Integrity and Anti-Fraud Efforts

Activity	FY 2013-14	FY 2014-15
Number of Fraud Complaints	173	126
Fraud Complaints by Source (County Staff)	106	105
Referred for Investigation to County	173	125
Early Detection Savings by Case Termination	65	115
Number Hours Terminated/Reduced as a Result of Early Detection	5,660	11,041
Fraud Investigations Completed	156	107

CDSS groups and analyzes data according to county size. A medium county is defined as one having a caseload of 1,000 to 9,999. In FY 2013-14, 25 counties were classified as medium counties and in FY 2014-15, 26 counties met these criteria. Solano County is currently classified as a medium county.

Medium counties reported receiving 6,169 fraud complaints in FY 2014-15, an increase of 68% over the 3,680 fraud complaints received in FY 2013-14. Solano County's fraud complaints decreased from 173 in FY 2013-14 to 126 in FY 2014-15.

Ten of the 25 medium counties in FY 2013-14, and 13 of the 26 medium counties in FY 2014-15, did not report any fraud investigations data. Solano County reported the most fraud investigations completed. Out of 839 total fraud investigations for medium counties, Solano County reported 156 or 19% completed in FY 2013-14, and 107 or 18% of the 609 completed in FY 2014-15. Of the fraud investigations completed, most of the investigations (71% and 51% respectively) were referred for administrative action (corrected internally), such as an overpayment recovery or a termination of services.

Counties reported early detection savings by two principal measures: the number of cases terminated, and the number of hours reduced. Medium counties reported the highest number of hours terminated or reduced with 53% of the statewide total, and 35% of the cases reduced based on early detection. Medium counties reported 78,503 hours reduced and 1,269 cases terminated. Of those totals, Solano County reported 11,014 hours reduced and 115 cases terminated.

CDSS began directed mailings in FY 2013-14. These mailings are sent annually to a specific group of IHSS providers based on characteristics they share. The purpose is to convey program integrity concerns, to inform IHSS providers of appropriate program rules and requirements, and to convey information about the consequences of failing to follow the rules. The goal is to increase participants' knowledge and create better-informed providers to reduce errors, fraud and

abuse in the IHSS program. After the mailings are sent, counties are required to send a final list to CDSS of providers and recipients who were sent directed mailings.

The Solano County Program Integrity Unit completed its directed mailings for FY 2016-17 and FY 2017-18 and provided the required notification to CDSS. For FY 2018-19, IHSS directed mailings were done in March 2019. The Grand Jury was informed at the time of this report that the official email notification to CDSS is in the process of being sent.

Counties submit the SOC Form 2245 to CDSS quarterly. Unannounced home visits and directed mailing data are submitted to CDSS throughout the fiscal year but are due by the end of the fourth quarter. The SOC Form 2245 is divided into six sections including: fraud complaints, early detection savings, fraud investigations-completed, prosecutions-county, totals (\$) and comments, with subsections under each heading.

In section one of SOC Form 2245, under fraud complaints, number of complaints received by source, is a subheading entitled “Other.” That section contains the reporting figures for unannounced home visits. FY 2013-14 was the first year that unannounced home visits were conducted. The purpose of unannounced home visits is to serve as a monitoring tool to safeguard recipient well-being. This includes verifying receipt of appropriate levels of services and reminding recipients of program rules and the consequences for failure to follow them. In FY 2015-16, the Solano County IHSS did not perform any unannounced home visits.

The Grand Jury received SOC Forms 2245 for FY 2016-17 and FY 2017-18 and the first three quarters of FY 2018-19. Key data from those forms is set forth in the table below.

**Solano County  
IHSS Fraud Data Reporting SOC Form 2245**

Fraud Data	FY 2016-17	FY 2017-18	FY 2018-19 1 <sup>st</sup> 3 Quarters
Total Number of Fraud Complaints Received	173	184	180
Total Number of Cases Terminated/Reduced	68	125	49
Total Number of Hours Terminated/Reduced	5,773	10,894	6,454
Fraud Investigations Undertaken/Completed	20	0	8
Total Amount Identified for Collection through County Overpay Recovery	\$3,264	\$9,668	\$42,805
Other (Unannounced Home Visits)	6	7	23

## **QA/QI and Program Integrity/Anti-Fraud Staffing**

The documentation provided to the Grand Jury showed the most common reasons given by counties for reporting difficulties were staff turnover, training issues and increased caseloads. The Grand Jury discovered issues regarding staffing, varying from personnel shortages, turnover, training and maintaining updated written procedures. Other issues included lack of job description, procedural guidelines and accurate evaluation of job performance.

Attachment 1 to the CDSS All-County Letter No. 10-39, dated August 19, 2010 [most recent available], lists the number of new program integrity positions by county. Most medium counties on the attachment with similar-sized caseloads reflect three QA positions and two program integrity positions. Solano County lists three QA positions and only one program integrity position.

At the time of this report, the QA/QI unit has two full-time social workers. The program integrity/anti-fraud unit has one full-time social worker.

## **V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **FINDING 1**

During the Fiscal Year 2018-2019, the IHSS faced staff turnover and changes in positions and duties that impaired its quality of performance.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1**

Cross-train the staff to assist management in preparing for planned vacations, illness and possible additional turnover. Periodic assessment of potential increase in caseload by management is an additional tool for planning purposes.

### **FINDING 2**

Based on the County's current caseload and the job's requirements, the IHSS's program integrity/anti-fraud unit requires an additional full-time social worker.

### **RECOMMENDATION 2**

Hire an additional full-time social worker for the IHSS program integrity/anti-fraud unit.

### **FINDING 3**

Unannounced IHSS home visits increased from zero in FY 2015-16, to six in FY 2016-17, seven in FY 2017-18 to twenty-three in the first three quarters of FY 2018-19, a positive change.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3**

Continue to focus on State mandates, including unannounced home visits, as well as verification of the receipt and quality of services to the recipients, their well-being and any related concerns.

### **FINDING 4**

The quality of IHSS services could be improved with QA targeted reviews and quality improvement efforts.

### **RECOMMENDATION 4**

Complete targeted reviews (although optional by State requirements) and perform quality improvement efforts with corresponding outcome reports.

### **FINDING 5**

Even though errors in desk review findings (missing, incorrect or incomplete State and County forms) decreased in FY 2017-18, the count remains high and should be addressed.

### **RECOMMENDATION 5**

Strive for more accurate and complete reports.

## **COMMENTS**

The California Department of Social Services dictates much of the implementation of the IHSS program. Individual counties have minimal input into the program's procedures and operations.

## **REQUIRED RESPONSES**

Director, Department of Health and Social Services (All Findings)

## **COURTESY COPIES**

Solano County Board of Supervisors  
California Department of Social Services, Adult Programs Division