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PERSPECTIVES FROM THE FIELD

CalAIM Community Supports Early Adopters Spotlight on Personal Care and Homemaker Services and Respite Services

CalAIM (California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal) enables managed care plans to offer 14 Community Supports — services not traditionally covered by Medi-Cal that address health-related social needs. Some, like housing navigation, housing tenancy and sustaining services, and medically tailored meals, have been readily adopted by participating health plans since the launch of Community Supports in 2022, while others have gotten off to a slower start. In this fact sheet we profile two of these services with relatively low adoption, **Personal Care and Homemaker Services** and **Respite Services**.

Personal Care and Homemaker Services (hereafter referred to as “personal care services”) are provided for people needing help with activities of daily living (ADLs), such as bathing, dressing, toileting, walking, or feeding. Personal care services can also include help with instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), such as meal preparation, grocery shopping, and money management.

Respite Services are the same services provided for people who need help with ADLs or IADLs, but they are provided on a short-term basis when the usual caregiver is absent or in need of relief. They can be provided in the home or in a facility, like an assisted living community.

This fact sheet focuses on how personal care services and Respite Services have been implemented by Kern Family Health Care, the local Medi-Cal managed care plan in Kern County. The plan has partnered with a

local community-based organization, SD Healthcare Consulting, to deliver these services to its members. Overall, Kern Family Health Care has been an early adopter of Community Supports, offering 13 of the 14 services available.

The material in this fact sheet is [based on a webinar](#) hosted by the Center for Health Care Strategies on March 19, 2024, with support from the California Health Care Foundation.

Goals of Personal Care and Homemaker Services and Respite Services.

The goal of personal care services is to provide caregivers to help Medi-Cal enrollees who would not otherwise be able to safely stay in their own home. Personal care services can be a bridge or supplement to the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program, or they can be a short-term alternative for those not eligible for IHSS.

The goal of Respite Services is to provide a back-up caregiver to Medi-Cal enrollees who have a usual caregiver. This could be to cover a planned caregiver absence (e.g., a vacation, a surgery) or to provide short-term relief to a caregiver who needs a break. Respite Services for caregivers are different from [Recuperative Care](#) (also called medical respite), another Community Support, which provides people experiencing homelessness a place to recuperate after an illness, injury, or hospitalization.

Who is eligible.

Those eligible for personal care services include:

- ▶ People who are at risk for hospitalization or institutionalization in a nursing facility
- ▶ People who have functional deficits and no other adequate support system
- ▶ People who are approved for IHSS

Those eligible for Respite Services are people living in the community who depend on a caregiver for help to complete their ADLs and/or IADLs or who require protective supervision. In addition, the member must require caregiver relief to avoid institutional placement.

What the services include.

Personal care services include:

- ▶ Personal care, such as bowel and bladder care, bathing, and grooming
- ▶ Paramedical services, such as administration of medications, puncturing the skin, or inserting a medical device into an opening in the body
- ▶ House cleaning
- ▶ Meal preparation
- ▶ Laundry
- ▶ Grocery shopping
- ▶ Taking patients to medical appointments
- ▶ Protective supervision

Similar services available through IHSS should always be used first.

Respite Services can include any of the items listed under personal care services. These services can either be provided in the home or in a facility setting and can include interaction, socialization, and continuity in daily routines that would usually be provided by the caregiver. They are provided on a short-term basis, either by the hour or by the day/night, and are limited to 336 hours per calendar year.*

Advice for Other Organizations

Consult with the local aging and adult services department to determine which members are already receiving In-Home Support Services (IHSS) and could use some supplemental hours for assistance with ADLs.

"We go into a home, and they need Homemaker Services, and later you realize their wife needs Respite Services. They need services for food and transportation. We're finding a lot more when we go into these homes. So, when we're educating about our programs, we educate about all 14 Community Supports and give them information to contact Kern Family."

— Sonia Dhillon, SD Healthcare

How people get into care.

In Kern County, most people are referred to these Community Supports from the county's Department of Human Services, which includes the IHSS team; the foster care team; the [Kern Regional Center](#); and doctors' offices.

Sonia Dhillon, RN, co-owner of SD Healthcare, described how the organization conducts regular outreach to the IHSS team. "In-Home Support Services also have their own case manager. So, when they call the case manager, [they come and do] the evaluation, but the process takes a little time, like 30 days. I think usually turnaround time is 30 to 60 days. So in between those 30 days we can provide our caregivers," Dhillon said.

How Personal Care and Homemaker Services and Respite Services fit into the continuum of care.

Personal care services are an important supplement to the IHSS program. They cannot be used in place of referring the enrollee to IHSS, but are instead to be used in one of these three situations:

* Exceptions can be made when a caregiver experiences an episode, including medical treatment and hospitalization, that leaves a member without care.

- ▶ When additional hours are required beyond the approved county IHSS benefit hours
- ▶ During an IHSS waiting period (i.e., after a member has been referred to IHSS but before services begin)
- ▶ For enrollees not eligible to receive IHSS to help them avoid a short-term stay in a skilled nursing facility

Personal care services are distinct from home health services, private duty nursing, and rehabilitative therapies (e.g., physical therapy, speech therapy, and occupational therapy).

Both personal care services and Respite Services can be used in conjunction with other services like Community-Based Adult Services in an adult day health center.

Key takeaways from the webinar for others implementing the service:

- ▶ Addressing social drivers of health is a win-win. “Being nurses, we understand and acknowledge the importance of the social determinants of health,” said Sangeeta Datta, co-owner of SD Healthcare. “Now these services will be helping out [patients and families] and then keeping health care costs down, and at the same time empowering our members in the community so our hospitals are not overwhelmed with some simple problems.”
- ▶ Sustaining the caregiver is important. “We can go fill in and the caregivers can go and take care of their own health ... because they’re feeling burned out or they’re overwhelmed,” explained Datta. “[The caregiver can] then come back with the fresh mindset to say, ‘Okay, I got some relief, and now I can take care of my loved one.’”

Organizations Profiled

[Kern Family Health Care](#) is a managed care plan based in Bakersfield that provides health care and supportive services to Medi-Cal enrollees in Kern County. Its network includes more than 800 providers and 10 hospitals. Kern Family Health Care started offering personal care services in the third quarter of 2023, and 194 people received these services in the second half of that year. In 2024, the pace picked up, with 131 cases in the first quarter and 58 referrals. Respite Services began in early 2023, and by the end of that year Kern Family Health Care had provided 230 instances of respite care. Another 71 instances plus 24 referrals were provided in the first quarter of 2024.

[SD Healthcare Consulting](#) is a community-based organization in Bakersfield that provides in-home services for Medi-Cal enrollees. In addition to the Personal Care and Homemaker Services and Respite Services Community Supports, it also offers Asthma Remediation.

About the Perspectives from the Field Series

As California’s Department of Health Care Services administers changes to the Medi-Cal program, especially those that are part of the [CalAIM initiative](#), CHCF is intermittently publishing short reports that highlight the perspectives of those in the field who are implementing the changes. These “Perspectives from the Field” seek to inform policymakers and other health care leaders about insights and experiences from people on the ground who work directly with patients.

About the Author

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About the Foundation

[The California Health Care Foundation](#) (CHCF) is dedicated to advancing meaningful, measurable improvements in the way the health care delivery system provides care to the people of California, particularly those with low incomes and those whose needs are not well served by the status quo. We work to ensure that people have access to the care they need, when they need it, at a price they can afford.

CHCF informs policymakers and industry leaders, invests in ideas and innovations, and connects with changemakers to create a more responsive, patient-centered health care system.