In-Home Supportive Services During a Disaster or Emergency

Frequently Asked Questions

The In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Program provides in-home assistance to eligible aged, blind, and disabled individuals as an alternative to out-of-home care and enables recipients to remain safely in their own homes. This document describes use of IHSS during a disaster or emergency.

Call 911 if someone is in immediate danger or needs emergency medical help. Give the person's location first. Do not wait for a provider or the county IHSS office to respond.

I am an IHSS recipient…

What should I do if an emergency occurs and I cannot reach my IHSS provider?

If you cannot reach your IHSS provider by phone, text, or email, and need immediate assistance with authorized essential daily activities, contact your County IHSS Office. Explain what help you need and ask whether a backup provider is available.

What should I do if I need to evacuate my home because of a wildfire, flood, earthquake, or other emergency?

Follow evacuation orders and instructions from local emergency officials. If possible, bring essential medications, identification, medical equipment, assistive devices, emergency supplies, and contact information for your provider and emergency contacts.

Once you are safe, tell your County IHSS Office where you are staying, how to reach you, and what help you need. You or your authorized representative must report changes in your living arrangements that affect the IHSS services you need. Let the County IHSS Office know if you move again.

Can my IHSS provider accompany me to an emergency shelter to provide my care?

You may still be able to receive IHSS at an emergency shelter. Tell shelter staff what help you need and ask how your provider can assist you there. Tell your County IHSS Office what help the shelter already provides, such as meals, and what you still need from your provider. The county can review which authorized services you can receive safely there.

Your provider will need to follow the shelter's access, safety, and service procedures. Services must continue to comply with applicable IHSS program requirements.

If your provider cannot accompany you or provide care at the shelter, ask your County IHSS Office about other available arrangements. If you need immediate assistance to protect your health or safety, notify shelter staff.

What if I need more help after I evacuate?

Tell your County IHSS Office what has changed and what help you need where you are staying. A disaster does not automatically increase your IHSS hours or authorize new IHSS services. If you are staying at an emergency shelter, your IHSS social worker can reassess your needs there and decide whether to temporarily adjust your authorized weekly hours.

Who should I contact at the county IHSS office if I need assistance during or after an emergency?

Contact your County IHSS Office using its designated emergency contact number or regular IHSS customer service number. Explain your situation, current location, immediate care needs, and whether your regular provider is available.

If the IHSS county office is closed or unable to respond, follow local emergency instructions and contact 211, where available, for information about community resources.

I'm an IHSS provider…

What if I am unable to contact my IHSS recipient during or after an emergency?

Call 911 if you have reason to believe the recipient is in immediate danger. Give their last known location and explain your concern.

Attempt to contact your recipient using all available methods, such as telephone, text message, or another previously agreed-upon communication method. Notify the County IHSS Office about your unsuccessful contact attempts.

If you have a specific safety concern and need someone to check on the recipient in person, you can request a welfare check. Call the non-emergency dispatch number for the area where you believe the recipient is. Stay out of closed or unsafe areas.

Can I provide IHSS services if my recipient has been evacuated or temporarily relocated to another home, shelter, or emergency facility?

Contact the County IHSS Office to confirm the appropriate procedures regarding the recipient's current living arrangement and any changes to IHSS service needs. The county IHSS office can explain any reporting requirements or limitations that apply to providing authorized services at a temporary residence or emergency shelter. Services must continue to comply with applicable IHSS program requirements.

Most services are provided in the recipient's home, which can include houses, apartments, mobile homes, relative's homes, and other safe living arrangements such as a hotel, motel, or a friend's house. Services cannot be provided when the recipient is admitted to a skilled nursing facility, licensed care facility, or hospital. Help the recipient contact their county IHSS office to confirm which services can continue safely at that location. At a shelter, ask staff how to enter and where you can provide care.

What should I do if extreme heat, cold, or a power outage makes it unsafe to provide care?

If conditions become unsafe, move yourself and the recipient to a safer environment if this can be done without creating additional risk.

During extreme heat, watch for signs of heat-related illness and seek a cooler location when needed. During cold weather or a heating outage, help the recipient stay warm, use safe sources of heat, and watch for signs of cold-related illness.

If the recipient relies on powered medical equipment, refrigerated medication, or other essential equipment affected by an outage, follow the relevant emergency plan and contact the appropriate medical or emergency service for assistance.

Notify the County IHSS Office if the conditions prevent you from safely providing services.