



Elaine M. Howle *State Auditor*

CONTACT: Margarita Fernández | (916) 445-0255 x 343 | MargaritaF@auditor.ca.gov

In-Home Supportive Services Program

It Is Not Providing Needed Services to All Californians Approved for the Program, Is Unprepared for Future Challenges, and Offers Low Pay to Caregivers

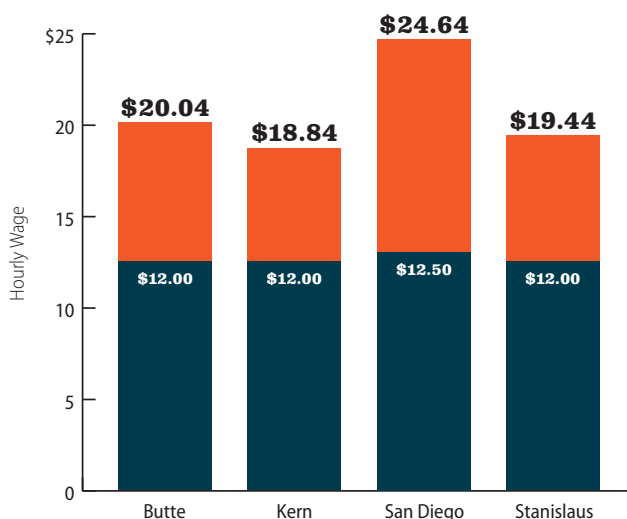
Background

More than 591,000 lower-income seniors or Californians with disabilities continue to live safely and independently in their homes, many avoiding long-term care arrangements, with the help of the Department of Social Services' (Social Services) In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program. While Social Services oversees the program, and the State pays for caregiver wages using federal, county, and state funding, individual counties are responsible for ensuring that appropriate services are provided to all qualified IHSS recipients each month—they determine what services recipients qualify for and enroll the caregivers to provide such care. In 2019, more than 520,000 caregivers provided supportive services through the IHSS program.

Key Recommendations

- To encourage counties to increase caregiver wages, the Legislature should modify the State's cost-sharing system to eliminate the ongoing costs that counties pay for local wage increases that are surpassed by increases to the State's minimum wage.
- Social Services should enforce state law that requires counties to submit annual plans. These plans should include a description of how each county will ensure that all recipients receive the services for which they have received approval.

In 2019 Caregivers Earned a Fraction of the Local Living Wage



Key Findings

- Although the IHSS program provides services to the vast majority of its recipients, tens of thousands of recipients lack care each month—the number who lacked care grew from 33,000 on average each month in 2015 to 40,000 in 2019—due in part to a lack of planning.
 - Social Services and the counties alike have failed to complete mandatory annual planning activities intended to ensure care for all recipients—none of the counties submit, and Social Services has not enforced, required annual plans for years.
 - Counties did not process IHSS applications in a timely manner, delaying services for thousands of applicants—some counties took longer than 90 days to process applications.
- Counties will likely have difficulty recruiting the number of caregivers needed to meet the State's current and growing demand for IHSS services due to low caregiver wages.
 - Caregivers earn far less than a living wage throughout the State, and many likely qualify for public assistance, even those who work full-time.
 - The number of IHSS recipients already exceeds the number of caregivers and that gap is expected to increase due to the growing senior population.
- The State's formula for IHSS cost-sharing has led to inequitable county contributions and statewide funding disparities—some counties pay significantly more than their proportional share while others pay less.
 - The formula does not account for varying rates of growth in the number of IHSS recipients among the counties.
 - Growth in IHSS program costs has exceeded the inflation factor used to calculate county contributions.