

January 27, 2022

Kim Johnson, Director  
California Department of Social Services  
744 P Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Via Email: [Kim.Johnson@dss.ca.gov](mailto:Kim.Johnson@dss.ca.gov)

CC: [Leora.Filosena@dss.ca.gov](mailto:Leora.Filosena@dss.ca.gov)



**John Baackes**

Chief Executive Officer

RE: Comments on the IHSS Career Pathways Program

Dear Director Johnson:

L.A. Care Health Plan is writing regarding the significant opportunities available in the IHSS Career Pathways Program. As background, L.A. Care is the nation's largest Public Plan with more than 2.5 million Medi-Cal, Covered California, Cal MediConnect (Dual Eligibles), and PASC-SEIU IHSS Homecare Worker enrollees. L.A. Care has extensive, firsthand experience with IHSS training programs.

Specifically, L.A. Care has a unique partnership with the Center for Caregiver Advancement (CCA) and SEIU Local 2015. L.A. Care funds the IHSS+ Home Care Integration Training Program (IHSS+), a 10-week program that educates and empowers caregivers who provide services to seniors and persons with disabilities through the California In-Home Support Services (IHSS) program. In these classes, IHSS caregivers learn how to take on the enhanced roles of Monitor, Communicator, Coach, Navigator, and Care Aide while developing the skills needed to be integrated into the consumers' care teams. Since the program's inception in 2017, L.A. Care has invested \$15 million and has produced more than 4,000 IHSS students that utilize their training to care for our L.A. Care members. Our utilization analysis, produced in November of 2019, shows that the training program has significantly reduced hospital admissions and visits to the emergency room. We are proud to sponsor this training which has resulted in a workforce of caregivers who are confident, highly skilled, and integral to our members' overall health and well-being.

As a result of our first-hand experience with training programs for the IHSS workers, we are offering the following comments for your consideration as you design the IHSS Career Pathways Program. In addition, L.A. Care supports comments raised by SEIU Local 2015 and the Center for Caregiver Advancement (CCA) on this important program.

#### Fostering Equity, Access, and Advancement in Program Design

The IHSS workforce is demographically diverse in the languages they speak, their educational background, age, immigrant status, and race and ethnicity, among other characteristics. They are disproportionately women, people of color, immigrants, older than the working age population at large, and have a high school education or less. Any training program must recognize this and address the concomitant structural barriers and inequities many IHSS providers face. Consequently, we believe the IHSS Career Pathways Program should be modeled on evidence-based practices for career pathways for adult learners. Given the linguistic diversity of the IHSS workforce, we also strongly urge the Department to make any future listening sessions accessible for non-English speakers to participate. The Zoom platform allows for the use of translators and can effectively host virtual meetings that bring together individuals who speak different languages.



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## Adult Education

L.A. Care recommends that the Department adopt an adult education framework that uses evidence-based strategies to promote learning, retention, and advancement among adult learners. In this framework, we recommend the Department require in-person engagement with an instructor to cultivate the trainees' understanding, competency, and retention of the information taught. While we recognize that the Department will likely want to offer online training as well, we know you are cognizant of the obstacles that many face regarding lack of digital literacy and access to technology. These obstacles are significant for many throughout our state, especially for this population, and that is why we stress there should be an in-person training option, as well as online, once the COVID-19 pandemic emergency orders are lifted and it is safe to do so.

## Curriculum Standards

During the December listening session, the Department described a training program where IHSS providers would choose from a menu of classes within a career pathway to reach 15 hours of training to be eligible for a monetary incentive. L.A. Care recommends the Department create specific standards for curricula and training, in consultation with stakeholders, to ensure quality, equity and continuity in trainings across the state.

Having been a part of the success of a formal IHSS worker training program, L.A. Care is excited to see a similar program being planned at the statewide level. The IHSS Career Pathways Program has significant potential to positively change the lives of IHSS providers and consumers, and we are pleased to help the state be successful in this endeavor.

Sincerely,



John Baackes

## ***About L.A. Care Health Plan***

*L.A. Care Health Plan serves more than 2.5 million members in Los Angeles County, making it the largest publicly-operated health plan in the country. L.A. Care offers four health coverage plans including Medi-Cal, Covered California, Cal MediConnect, and PASC-SEIU IHSS Homecare Workers. As a public entity, L.A. Care's mission is to provide access to quality health care for L.A. County's vulnerable and low-income communities, and to support the safety net required to achieve that purpose.*



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