

Mobile Work Best Practices and Comprehensive Case Reviews:

A Proposal for Santa Clara County

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through the use of technology, companies have developed mobile work programs to improve employee effectiveness and reduce operating costs. Santa Clara County In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program has also implemented a mobile work program for social workers. As the office culture has learned new ways of doing business as a mobile work team, the IHSS supervisory team has expressed interest in flexible work options. Alameda County IHSS program has a long-standing mobile work program that has several best practices, including comprehensive case reviews of all assessments and authorizations compatible with a mobile work environment. With the implementation of best practices from Alameda County, Santa Clara County IHSS will further increase its efficiency and successfully develop a comprehensive case review process in its program. Efforts will also assist in developing a mobile work plan for supervisors, while maintaining a solid connection and supportive role with their staff in existing alternate work locations.

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Introduction

The IHSS program offers in-home assistance to eligible aged and disabled individuals that enables them to remain safely in their own home. The program includes domestic and related services such as housework, meal preparation, laundry, grocery shopping or errands; it includes non-medical personal care services such as bathing, ambulation and bowel and bladder care; it includes accompaniment to medical appointments, and paramedical services, including necessary health care activities, as well as protective supervision.

In May 2013, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) launched a new web-based application to manage the case management, payroll, and reporting system for all counties throughout California. This new web application is called Case Management, Information and Payrolling System II (CMIPSII).

For Santa Clara County, this dramatically changed business processes for IHSS supervisors in their review of cases assessed by their social work staff. In the CMIPS legacy system, supervisors would receive printouts of assessments and authorization for services after the social worker made his or her determination. Review of these assessments and authorizations occurred through the review of physical case files. When CMIPSII launched, supervisor review changed to reviewing all assessments and authorizations electronically in CMIPSII prior to the final determination. The required forms and documentation used in the authorization of services are

no longer visually reviewed by supervisors. Social workers file the forms in the physical case file, or more recently, directly to the Integrated Document Management (IDM) system, our web application for electronic case files. Many of the forms are required in the administration of the program or are directly related to authorization of time. Without a supervisor's review for accuracy and completion, this often impacts the compliance in required forms. During internal desk reviews completed by Santa Clara County Quality Assurance staff or during our annual state monitoring review conference, there have been trends of missing or incomplete forms, as well as services not matching the identified needs outlined by the physician for paramedical services form. Santa Clara County has been making several efforts to improve its compliance in program administration in a variety of areas. Its latest focus has been on developing a process that allows for comprehensive case reviews by supervisors compatible with a mobile work environment.

Approximately a year and a half ago, Santa Clara County launched its mobile work/telework program for IHSS social workers. Santa Clara County's primary interest in this project was to learn best practices from Alameda County regarding mobile work/telework. Additionally, Santa Clara County wanted to better understand how supervisor case reviews are completed, specifically how the paperwork is managed between staff and supervisors, while a mobile work/telework program is in place. Furthermore, Santa Clara County is currently considering and planning the feasibility of mobile work/teleworking for supervisors in the IHSS program. Planning for the transfer of case-related paperwork between staff and supervisor and/or electronic files and CMIPSI case reviews need to be considered. The primary purpose of this project is to learn best practices from Alameda County's mobile work program and incorporate these lessons into a proposal for Santa Clara County IHSS.

Mobile Work for Supervisor and Manager Review

There is a wide variety of research and information on the benefits of mobile work/telework. Literature reveals that the benefits of mobile work/telework far outweigh the concerns or potential consequences. This brief review will primarily focus on concerns for supervisors and managers using mobile work/telework. These concerns include technical disconnects, disconnected employees, lack of trust, and the need for a significant cultural shift.

Santa Clara County has already addressed the technical disconnects. Each mobile work social worker or teleworker is able to remotely connect to all necessary applications via a virtual private network (VPN) and a county issued laptop using his or her own personal Wi-Fi connection or the county issued hotspot. Case management social work staff received training of how to successfully use the equipment and have the resource of the HelpDesk staff to support them as needed. They all currently connect using security software and have the necessary portable equipment. The recommendation is that the technical equipment and training should follow the existing implementation for the social worker classification in establishing telework for supervisors.

The second concern literature reveals is the possibility of staff feeling disconnected when supervisors/managers telework. There has already been some adjustment to the traditional “face-to-face” time with employees and/or colleagues with the case management social workers teleworking regularly. Supervisors already had to or need to create new ways to connect. Setting up more frequent check-ins, in addition to the monthly one-on-one supervision sessions, is a necessity. Social workers also had to expand their efforts in connecting with their supervisor including stopping by to connect, communicating via phone or email regularly with relevant

updates. Continued efforts are required to change the new ways supervisors connect with their direct reports, and the efforts put in place to ensure staff are connecting with each other. Other applications, such as Skype for Business or WebEx, should also be explored for facilitation of videoconference to help create new ways for connection across units and programs.

Making a significant culture shift within a program or agency is always a challenge. Mobile work requests a shift from a presence-oriented goal to a goal-oriented approach. Supervisors and managers need training on how to maintain employee engagement, monitor performance and promote cooperation. Establishing trust is crucial to this success. Supervisors and managers need to understand how to clearly lay out goals and objectives and communicate effectively with their employees. Managers must also layout goals and objectives and communicate effectively with their supervisors. A supervisor or manager needs to hold employees accountable for achieving their performance results. A performance management system that is based on meaningful and measureable metrics is key in facilitating a productive beneficially mobile/telework policy, including a policy for teleworking supervisors.

Alameda County Best Practices and Recommendations for Santa Clara County

Field visits to Alameda County provided an opportunity to learn about the established mobile work program and best practices for case reviews. Meetings were arranged with several persons in different job classifications to clarify several different business processes in the workflow of IHSS assessment and authorization, including the supervisor case review process. Three best practices were identified, including program-wide use of a shared Outlook calendar feature, use of county-issued cell phones, and comprehensive case reviews business processes. Consideration

of these Alameda County best practices will assist Santa Clara County in the implementation of efficient mobile work for supervisors.

Expansion of Outlook Calendar Application

Alameda County's social work classifications are all mobile work social workers; their primary office and work locations are in their homes. Microsoft Outlook Calendar, email, and county cell phones are used for primary communication between supervisors and social work staff. Each social worker staff keeps all appointments with clients in his or her Outlook Calendar application. Each Outlook calendar appointment reflects the case name, case number, and duration of the planned visit. The requirement is that each social work staff "share" his or her Outlook Calendar with their respective supervisors. Supervisors are able to view their staff schedules and plan around scheduled visits for email or cell phone communication.

Santa Clara County is already using the Outlook Calendar function within its current email application. Santa Clara County's leadership team (which includes supervisors and managers) are currently expected to use Outlook Calendar for all appointments and planned time off. Implementation of using this feature in Calendar would expand as an expectation to the case management social worker staff. Implementation of this practice requires some training for those who are unfamiliar with this feature, establishing a clear program expectation regarding the use of the Calendar as a primary time accountability and safety tool, discussion of this implementation with SEIU stewards (Santa Clara County's labor union for the affected classification) and follow up to evaluate this practice for Santa Clara County.

Currently, Santa Clara County is using a manual field sign out sheet roster board for staff to

record their whereabouts and planned time off. There have been several identified challenges with this manual system now that most case management social workers are teleworking. These manual boards often go unused or lack required information. Now that all case management social workers are able to remotely connect to the network, this recommended practice will resolve this ongoing issue. Further, it will provide supervisors an electronic way to connect with their staff. If updates need to be made while they are in the field remotely or teleworking from home, they will be able to keep this feature updated. The easy accessibility should increase staff cooperation if this is directly tied to being able to maintain telework privileges.

If it is determined that Santa Clara County's IHSS supervisors begin teleworking, using this calendar method for all social worker staff will allow them to remotely understand and be more aware of their staff's schedule as well as monitor their time regardless of their work location. In summary, there are many benefits of replacing the manual field sign out boards with the Outlook Calendar, including efficiency, accessibility, increased compliance, and more detailed expectations of staff for daily time management such as being available to supervisors should they telework.

County Cell Phone Use

Because Alameda County social workers are completely mobile, their county issued cell phones are their primary business line used by both program staff and the clients. Their county cell phone numbers are listed as their primary phone number on their business cards and county program rosters. Currently, all Santa Clara County case management social workers are supplied a county cell phone.

However, Santa Clara County office lines are used as primary business contacts for all case management social workers. Currently, county cell phones are only regularly used by social work staff to contact clients while in the field or while teleworking. These county cell phone numbers have not been used as a secondary business contact when other program staff needs to contact the case management social worker. One recommendation is for Santa Clara County to begin using the county cell phones as a secondary line. The county issued cell phone should be listed on the program roster to provide access to all program staff to utilize if communication is required with a staff that is working remotely or teleworking. This practice will increase communication efficiency for the entire program.

When the Santa Clara County leadership team receives its county issued cell phones, it is recommended that these numbers also be posted on the roster as a secondary business line. If supervisors are to telework, they will need to utilize their cell phones so that staff will be able to contact them directly. Santa Clara County will need to set clear expectations regarding social worker response to the county cell phone and call back etiquette expectations similar to policies in place regarding office phones and voicemail responses.

Assessment Packet Case Reviews

The IHSS program requires several forms to be completed with the recipient at each assessment, both initial and reassessments. These forms need to be reviewed for completion, proper signatures, and the collaboration of the authorization and assessment of each assessment. Santa Clara County supervisors are not currently reviewing these forms in their case reviews. Alameda County has a business process in place so that reviewing required forms are a part of each and every reviewed assessment and authorization.

Alameda County social workers complete their assessments and authorizations for each case online via the CMIPSII application. At a minimum, weekly, Alameda County social workers are required to drop their required form packets at the office for review by their supervisor. Each staff has a designated spot within their unit's respective filing cabinet. Supervisors use the packets to generate the comprehensive case review, using both the CMIPSII application and the manual review of submitted packets. Supervisors review each form for completion, correct signatures, and compliance for all requirements of the program. The reviews of these packets are completed simultaneously with the electronic review in the CMIPSII application. The supervisor either approves or rejects the case. If the rejection is based on incomplete or unsigned forms, the forms are returned to social worker via his or her mailbox. If the case is approved, the supervisor then forwards the documentation to clerical staff for imaging into Webfiles, their electronic files imaging system.

Santa Clara County should also consider this practice to implement comprehensive case reviews on all assessment determinations for supervisors. Supervisors will need to establish submission areas for each of their respective units for staff to drop off their documentation related to their reviews. Staff will need to be trained that these completed documentation packets must be turned in to their supervisors timely for review. Santa Clara County's current telework policy does not permit consecutive telework days for social work staff. All staff are expected to work from the office location during two core days each week, (for most staff this is Tuesday and Thursday). Social work staff will need to learn to be diligent about preparing and submitting these each week during their core days. Assessments will need to be well-planned and take into consideration negative action minimum notification time periods when changing a recipient's

authorized hours' allocation. This will allow for proper adherence to notice of action requirements.

If social work supervisors are considered for telework privileges, they would need to be in the office on IHSS core days to allow them to receive and organize these submitted packets for reviews, and preparation for their telework day(s). They will need to be diligent in their organization for telework days and promptly submit them to Santa Clara County's electronic imaging system, IDM, upon completion of the case approval.

One type of case review that will not be identified by a submission of an assessment packet by social work staff, are *change assessments*. These *change assessment types* include those where there are no changes to the authorized hours, just an extension duration period for the currently authorized time. The CMIPSII auto-generated *Case Ready for Review tasks* do not distinguish between these types of case approval requests versus new assessment and authorization requests. Currently, many supervisors have communication outside of the application with their staff to identify these types of change assessments. Staff either informs supervisors verbally or via Outlook Email to prioritize these types of assessments. With the implementation of packet-initiated case reviews, this current process for determining these changes assessment approval requests will remain unchanged. The communication regarding these types of reviews will continue to be done in a variety of current unit practices.

Conclusion

Alameda County established its MobileWork program to improve employee effectiveness and reduce operating costs. It wanted to develop greater levels of flexibility and mobility for employees through the use of new technology. Additionally, it wanted to optimize productivity

and employee satisfaction, while maximize under-utilized office space. Through this project Santa Clara County was able to obtain three solid ideas of program improvement practices from Alameda County including the steps required to implement comprehensive case reviews of all assessments and authorizations. Santa Clara County already has many great practices in place; with the implementation of the new ideas presented in this project the county will further increase its efficiency and comprehensive case review in its programs. These practices also allow for consideration of supervisors effectively teleworking while maintaining a solid connection and supportive role with their staff in alternate work locations.

The first promising practice of expanding the use of a shared Outlook Calendar requires some planning and efforts. All staff currently has access to Outlook Calendar. Training is required to orient social work staff to the basics of Calendar use and to teach the steps necessary for “sharing” a calendar. The IHSS leadership team and labor will need to meet to discuss expectations and plans for training.

The second promising practice—expanding the use of assigned county cell phone numbers as an accessible secondary business line for mobile work staff—is already beginning to be implemented. The IHSS leadership team agreed that these numbers should be added to program rosters for easy retrieval and reference. Further discussions at labor management, leadership, supervisor, and unit meetings need to occur to communicate expectations of its use and response timeframes.

The final promising practice of comprehensive case reviews will take the most planning and discussion to implement. Although conversations about moving to comprehensive case reviews have been occurring with the supervisory team, an actual step-by-step process will need to be

created. Because it is a change to the current business processes for supervisor and worker classification, labor for both supervisor chapter and worker chapter will need to be brought in for exchange of ideas and agreement. Lastly, when a process is determined the county will need to inform all parties in a variety of meeting settings, including all staff, leadership team, supervisor team, and unit meetings.

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