Community Collaboration

PA Partners with USF’s School of Nursing and Health Professions

For the past 18 months, the Public Authority has been partnering with the University of San Francisco’s School of Nursing and Health Professions in an internship program. The program originated with a suggestion from PA Governing Body member Dr. Judith Karshmer (dean of USF’s School of Nursing and Health Professions) to have students from that program and related ones at USF come and do their undergraduate, or in some cases master’s,

Continued on page 5

Photo credit: Loc Chau

Graduate student Deloras Puran (right) discusses her project with the PA’s David Araujo, the new One-Stop Center liaison.
What We Do...We Do for You!

The San Francisco IHSS Public Authority Provides Seven Major Services:

• We operate a Registry that matches IHSS independent providers (IP's) of home and personal care services looking for work with consumers who need to hire someone to assist them. Due to recent Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) regulations, particularly those regarding an overtime cap, the Registry has had to be able to cover those situations where a consumer needed to hire another provider to cover hours previously worked by the consumer’s primary IP. In our expanded role, we now assist consumers in finding a back-up IP to ensure there are no service gaps.

• Our On-Call Program provides immediate assistance to consumers referred to us by the Department of Aging & Adult Services (DAAS) and Homebridge. These consumers are either in urgent need of personal care when they suddenly need a worker but haven’t yet hired one, their regular provider is not available, or when they’re discharged from the hospital or some other facility without anyone scheduled to help them make the transition back to their own residence. On-Call is vital in helping consumers in crisis remain at home and avoid hospital stays.

• We are the “employer of record” for the IP workforce and have a union contract with SEIU Local 2015. This means that we are formally appointed to negotiate wages and benefits with the union that represents our IP’s.

• As of March 31, 2016, we offered benefits to 17,856 IP’s through our health and dental plans. (Note: Not every IP works long enough to qualify for benefits.) Currently, 11,262 IP’s are enrolled in our health plan and 9,860 in our dental; of these, 8,520 are enrolled in both health and dental. Our Benefits Coordinator handles on average over 790 calls and requests a month relating to Coverage, Eligibility Status, Enrollment, Insurance Cards, Termination Service, Reinstatement, IRS 1095-B Health Coverage tax form and other services for IP health and dental benefits.

• As part of a criminal background check, all current and prospective IP’s must be fingerprinted by the Department of Justice (DOJ) as a condition of employment. The PA’s DOJ Documents Technician tracks IP’s with current convictions to assess whether they are eligible to work for IHSS. In addition, our Technician runs a monthly report for the State that confirms each provider’s status in the system, then sends out notices to the IP’s. From November 1, 2014 through March 31, 2016, 6,514 Notice to Provider of Inactivity letters were mailed; of these, 1,098 IP’s requested to remain active.

• We educate the community and various policymakers (e.g., Board of Supervisors, state legislators) about IHSS and consumer-directed services and advocate for consumers, their workers and related causes.

• The Mentorship Program runs the Public Authority’s One-Stop Center, where older adults, people with disabilities and their workers can come for on-site workshops and trainings that will increase their knowledge and improve their quality of life. In addition to providing all of the FLSA training for consumers, various workshops cover nutrition and health, living on a budget, public transportation and communicating with your provider. The Mentorship Program also offers a program for residents transferring out of the Laguna Honda Rehabilitation Center and back to the community. Lastly, working with the Registry, mentors also assist IHSS consumers in hiring providers.

Outreach & Education:

• Worker trainings and workshops. The Public Authority has cooperated with DAAS and Homebridge Training on the creation of a training program for IHSS providers. We partner
with Homebridge Training on the development of trainings and workshops that enhance the skills of our Registry providers to ensure that our consumers receive the very best in home care. All Registry providers are now required to participate in Homebridge trainings to join or remain active on the Registry.

• **Meetings with policymakers.** The Public Authority staff and board meet with federal, state and local policymakers and legislators, including the Board of Supervisors, state assembly members and senators to update them on the agency’s work as well as advocate for funding and various reforms and improvements.

• **Media outreach.** As part of our campaign to familiarize the public with the work of public authorities and their importance, we try to educate through the media.

• **Conferences and other forums.** Over the years, as important issues have arisen, we have held conferences and other such events to address them: a series of *Where there’s a Will, there’s a Way* conferences for consumers and workers, consumer forum luncheons, a worker appreciation celebration, *got Rights? Fulfilling the Promise of Human and Civil Rights for People with Disabilities* forum, the *IHSS Under Pressure: Community Living at Risk* and *IHSS: Into the Future - Advancing Disability Rights* conferences, and in 2015, the PA’s 20th anniversary open house and co-sponsorship of the ADA’s 25th anniversary celebration at City Hall.

For more information, please contact the Public Authority at 415-243-4477 (TTY: 415-243-4430), visit our website at www.sfihsspa.org or check out our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/sfihsspa).

The mission of San Francisco’s IHSS Public Authority is to provide and promote a service delivery model of consumer-directed in-home support that maximizes the potential of older adults and people with disabilities to live independently and participate in their communities.

Who We Are

Governing Body

The Public Authority Governing Body determines policy and makes legally binding decisions on the Authority’s behalf. Its members are both older (55+) and younger consumers, public agency representatives, a worker representative and a union representative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melvin Beetle</td>
<td>Older Consumer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mike Boyd</td>
<td>Older Consumer</td>
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<td>Luis Calderon</td>
<td>Younger Consumer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judith Karshmer</td>
<td>DPH Commissioner</td>
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<td>Tatiana Kostanian</td>
<td>MDC Representative</td>
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<td>Kenzi Robi</td>
<td>Younger Consumer</td>
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<td>Rita Semel</td>
<td>DHS Commissioner</td>
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<td>Gustavo Seriña</td>
<td>DAAS Commissioner</td>
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<td>Patricia Webb</td>
<td>Younger Consumer</td>
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<td>Patricia Wooley</td>
<td>Worker Representative</td>
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President
Vice President
Treasurer
Secretary

(Note: Dept. of Aging & Adult Services = DAAS, Dept. of Human Services = DHS, Dept. of Public Health = DPH, Mayor’s Disability Council = MDC)

Staff

The Public Authority’s executive, administrative, operations and program staff: operate the Central Registry, manage fiscal affairs, monitor state and local policy affecting IHSS, and collaborate with other organizations to improve IHSS for consumers and workers, especially in San Francisco.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David Araujo</td>
<td>One-Stop Center Liaison</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shelia J. Auzenne</td>
<td>Support Services/On-Call Counselor</td>
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<td>William Chan</td>
<td>Support Services/On-Call Counselor</td>
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<td>Loc Chau</td>
<td>Fiscal &amp; Operations Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yvonne Cunningham</td>
<td>Administrative Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kelly Dearman</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vladmir Etalis</td>
<td>Support Services/On-Call Counselor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eren Gutierrez</td>
<td>Support Services/On-Call Counselor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patrick Hoctel</td>
<td>Executive Assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Betty Hom</td>
<td>Receptionist/Admin. Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melanie Huang</td>
<td>Senior Human Resources Generalist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poni Ma</td>
<td>DOJ Documents Technician</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ophelia Ng</td>
<td>Benefits Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>María A. Olivares</td>
<td>Programs Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emilio Ramirez</td>
<td>Support Services/On-Call Counselor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tomiko Russell</td>
<td>Laguna Honda Project Liaison</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irina Selskaya</td>
<td>On-Call Program Coordinator/Support Services Counselor</td>
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<td>Jingle Tang</td>
<td>Support Services/On-Call Counselor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perry Vermilyea</td>
<td>Mentorship Program Coordinator</td>
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internships at the PA. The idea was to have students learn more about the fields of aging and disability and perhaps get them interested in them as possible career paths. Also, the students assisted our staff with projects, studies and surveys that strengthened and improved our various services.

Last year, Cara Padilla-Nalagan, Karen Ha and Renesha Westerfield worked at the PA and completed their internships here. Kathleen Raffel, assistant professor of the School of Nursing and Health Professions, helped coordinate their internships with PA Executive Director Kelly Dearman, who supervised the interns. Ms. Dearman is now working with Ms. Raffel and Justin Moore, coordinator of USF’s Bachelor of Health Services Program, to create, develop and complete projects for our current group of interns.

Four new USF interns are helping out at the PA. Undergraduate Shea Losh is working with Programs Manager Maria A. Olivares and Administrative Coordinator Yvonne Cunningham on streamlining the Registry application process for providers and cutting back on staff time spent on the process. Cristina Catu, in conjunction with the Mentorship Program and the One-Stop Center, is developing training modules for consumers on diabetes and its prevention, so they can take better care of themselves (e.g., diet), more
effectively train their providers on this issue and take charge of their health. Alyssa Parkeenvincha is working with the Mentorship Program on creating a PowerPoint presentation on the new Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) regulations, especially those dealing with overtime and travel time, for consumers primarily, but the presentation may also be used to train providers and mentors.

Deloras Puran is completing her master’s of science in Behavioral Health at USF and is due to graduate in August. She’s collaborating with Ms. Raffel, Ms. Dearman, PA Mentorship Program Coordinator Perry Vermilyea and Department of Aging & Adult Services (DAAS) IHSS Program Director Megan Elliott on her project concerning consumers new to the IHSS program. Initially, she met with Ms. Elliott to try to figure out just what consumers are having trouble with once they sign up for IHSS, what the issues and needs are—and not just for PA or Homebridge consumers, but all the approximately 22,000 IHSS consumers in the City and County of San Francisco.

To get to the heart of these issues and how best to assist consumers, Ms. Puran will conduct focus groups with current consumers and use their experiences and input to create educational materials geared to someone about to enroll in the IHSS program. So far, she has held one pilot focus group in English, and is planning to have one more in English but others in Spanish, Cantonese and Russian. The purpose of the pilot was to learn how to better conduct the other groups, refine the process.

What emerged from the first group was that consumers do not understand what it means to be a consumer when they sign up. They have no concept of their role, beyond the expectation that they will be hiring a provider. No “List of What IHSS Consumers Need to Know” exists. The current consumer journey is often one filled with roadblocks. A consumer gets a list of providers, but few of them know how to screen and/or interview a worker; how to set up a meeting, what questions to ask, how to negotiate, how to arrange hours and get their needs met. Many of them simply don’t feel comfortable doing this, and safety is a big issue for them as well. They worry about being taken advantage of, letting a stranger into their home and finding a genuinely reliable worker. They feel vulnerable and uneasy about depending on someone they don’t know.

For many consumers, the process can come to a halt if providers don’t show up for an interview or stop coming to work. They don’t know what to do next, where to go or who to turn to for tips or advice. Their journey is often a self-taught one, because they’re not aware that, for example, they can call the PA or their DAAS IHSS social worker for assistance. They think they’re alone. More succinctly put, the number one thing consumers wish to know is how to effectively and efficiently hire a provider.

After conducting the four focus groups, Ms. Puran, with input from those mentioned above, will create various consumer resource materials—pamphlets, PowerPoint presentation, a video component—by the end of July that will hopefully remove many of these roadblocks for consumers and connect them to those people and places—the PA One-Stop Center, Mentorship Program, DAAS IHSS Unit—that can help them make the provider hiring process a smoother, safer and more successful one.

Ms. Raffel enthuses that it’s “exciting to see” the students’ work and its impact on both them and the PA. She is “looking forward to more partnerships in the years to come.” A new crop of USF interns is slated for this summer, and the PA and the university are at work developing projects strategic for the agency and inspiring for the students.
Filling in the Cracks

Supervisor Mar’s Support at Home Program

Much of the following article is from a proposal developed by San Francisco Supervisor Eric Mar’s office and community organizations about a new program that could potentially benefit thousands of “upper poor” older adults and people with disabilities in the City and County who may be in urgent need of home care assistance.

Many thousands of older adults and people with disabilities living in San Francisco need home care providers to live safely and independently in their homes and avoid potential institutionalization. Support might include assistance with the activities of daily living: cooking, eating, dressing, toileting, bathing, shopping, laundry, transferring, etc. Such support might simply enable someone to get out of bed and go see a friend. A home care worker can make a household clean and safe, plus keep a consumer healthy and active.

In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) are available to very low-income people with assets under $2,000 ($3,000 for a couple). However, everyone else must figure out how to pay an individual or an agency for assistance. According to the San Francisco Budget and Legislative Analyst’s Office Report, an estimated 14,000-plus older adults (the “upper poor”) do not qualify for IHSS but can’t afford private home care, either. Many younger people with disabilities fall into this category as well. The same report finds that private certified

“This program advances our commitment to being an age-friendly and disability-friendly city, where seniors and people with disabilities can remain in their homes and thrive in their communities.”

— Supervisor Eric Mar
home care can run over $25,000 per year in San Francisco. The average cost of living for a senior in San Francisco is over $30,000. If we add the cost of home care to this average, the typical older adult would need an income of $55,000 to afford home care.

The Support at Home Program, sponsored by Supervisor Mar, would subsidize the cost of home care for “upper poor” older adults and people with disabilities in San Francisco. These are the people who currently are without home assistance, but with access to care, are less likely to experience isolation and depression and more likely to avoid unnecessary institutionalization and, in some cases, even death. Supervisor Mar recently declared that “we have an opportunity here to lead the country in implementing a program to address what is not a unique need in San Francisco, but one that is particularly dire for seniors, people with disabilities, and their families, due to our high cost of living. This program advances our commitment to being an age-friendly and disability-friendly city, where seniors and people with disabilities can remain in their homes and thrive in their communities.”

Support at Home will primarily serve two groups of people. First, for people who qualify for IHSS but have a high share of cost that must be met before they can receive IHSS, the program will pay part or all of the share of cost. The average share of cost in the City and County is $425 per month. Once the program pays this amount, the participant can get thousands of dollars of home care hours through IHSS, making this approach extremely cost-effective.

Second, for middle-income older adults and people with disabilities who are interested in paying privately but can’t afford the minimum hours or as many hours as they require, the program will pay some portion of their home care costs. Payments will be on a sliding scale, based on the consumer’s income and rent.

Funding will pass through the Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) and be contracted to a community-based organization (CBO).

Eligibility for Support at Home will be based on the consumer’s need for home care and their financial means. People under 80% Area Median Income (AMI)—or $57,100 per year for one person—can benefit on a sliding scale. A simple assessment process will keep administrative costs low and make it easy for seniors and people with disabilities to join.

The program can be launched with $2 million for each of the first two years. This seed money will cover between 120 and 240 people. Initial evaluation of the program will include consumer feedback on social isolation, health outcomes and life satisfaction. Hopefully, this effort will provide much needed assistance to the thousands of San Franciscans who now “fall through the cracks” when it comes to home care.

Mayor Lee and the Board of Supervisors have been asked to include funding for Support at Home in the 2016-17 City and County Budget. The program has been endorsed by more than two dozen community coalitions and nonprofit organizations, including the SF Long Term Care Coordinating Council, the Bay Area Care Council, the Community Alliance of Disability Advocates, Independent Living Resource Center SF, Community Living Campaign, Family Caregiver Alliance and the SF IHSS Public Authority.

If you are someone who could benefit from the Support at Home Program and would like to share your story or get involved, please contact Senior and Disability Action at (415) 546-1333 or info@sdaction.org.
Outreach in Chinatown

The May 13th community resource fair hosted by the Chinese Newcomers Service Center (CNSC) at the City College Chinatown campus was a great success, attracting 400-500 participants. Representing the Public Authority at the event were (left to right) Support Services Counselor William Chan, Mentor Caina Li and Benefits Coordinator Ophelia Ng.

Chinatown residents jam the resource tables area, looking for services that could potentially benefit them or their families.
“I Will Get By/I Will Survive”

Profile of PA Mentor Tom Merz

Hey now. First impressions aren’t necessarily final impressions. A grand and impressive figure in a motorized wheelchair, maneuvering a throne on wheels with preciseness and confidence, a Grateful Dead patch on his hat, Tom Merz is full of thoughts about disability and senior needs and advocacy, all spot-on. Enter his studio apartment on Mission Street and you’ll be treated to Dead music floating from high-quality speakers and a tuner from the ‘70s. His last decade’s story is not for the faint of heart, but it is for every person who ever thought they had been dealt a losing hand. Tom’s cards have certainly been cursed; however, his approach to disappointment and fear is nothing short of inspiring.

Arriving in San Francisco in 1979 in a custom-built van, renting in the Haight and Bernal, tending bar at Artichoke Joe’s in San Bruno as well as the historic Vesuvio’s, settling in the Excelsior in 1997, woodworking in his own shops, designing and building bar counters for the likes of Luna Park, The Last Supper Club and the Shoreline Amphitheatre—all seemed comfortable until 2005 when his rental unit was sold and an eviction notice taped to his door.

One afternoon, after lunch at a café in the Mission, he leaves and wakes up two days later in a hospital bed, two fractures of the hip, a plate had been inserted. He’s told he fell. Six weeks later, he’s discharged with a walker and two new hip fractures sustained when dropped during his stay. Soon thereafter, he enters SF General Hospital (SFGH) for a second round of hip surgery and remains 10 months. This time, Tom Merz: “I’d put seniors with mechanical skill sets to work. It’ll get them out of their house and raise their self-esteem.”
he’s discharged in a rented wheelchair with a pressure ulcer on his foot.

Tom takes up residency at a hotel in North Beach for the next three years, eventually needing to fly to his hometown in Connecticut to care for his sick mom. He lives out of the only hotel within 20 miles that would accommodate his disability. He stays three months, hiring a 24/7 staff to care for her and returns to SF, the foot ulcer compromised. His podiatrist suggests a toe be amputated; only, the leg below the knee actually needs to be removed. A prosthetic becomes his new lower limb. He remains at SFGH for four months.

From there, Tom is transferred to Laguna Honda Hospital, where he accepts the only available bed in a 30-person ward for seniors with dementia. Here he remains for two months, receiving much needed rehab from the staff and interventions from nonprofit agencies and housing advocates, through which he lands his present studio. The year is 2010.

Today, his apartment is arranged to satisfy his music needs, a narrow path to guide his chariot, and cupboards and cabinets within reach. He receives IHSS services and has joined the PA’s Mentorship Program. He has strong and reasonable ideas: “How about a pop-up wheelchair repair workshop at the public library?” He has a complete business plan to construct functional cabinets for wheelchair users and those who live in SRO’s: “People who live in a shoebox need a place to store their utensils, cup, bowl and pan. I’d put seniors with mechanical skill sets to work. It’ll get them out of their house and raise their self-esteem.”

Regarding the PA’s One-Stop Center, a resource hub for IHSS consumers, he declares, “Today’s consumers are yesterday’s baby boomers, hippies who saw the Dead at the Fillmore in the ’60s. Cater to their visual and simple needs, paint the walls in pastel colors and have a pot of coffee on—they will show up.”

As I listen to Tom recite his thoughts and opinions over the backdrop of Jerry Garcia’s sweet whippoorwill voice, he gags uneasily from the chemo pills he takes for lymphoma of the lungs. Recently diagnosed, it’s apparent his human spirit will take a hit from the medication. But if you have your lens focused on the positive side of life, as Tom does, one will persevere, even continue to make a difference in this world.

— Perry Vermilyea

When the Newsletter Is Not Enough...

Once a month, the Public Authority sends out eNews to over 800 IHSS consumers, providers, colleagues, legislators, etc. on some urgent issue or topic, such as the FLSA regulations on overtime and travel time or our revamped Mentorship Program. These short 250-word blasts give you the lowdown on some hot topic or another and keep you in the know.

If you’re interested in staying up-to-date and informed, please send your email address of choice to photel@sfihsspa.org.

Thanks! ☺
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