

## **Expediting Access to In-Home Caregivers for Seniors**

**Overview:** The Centralized Orientation and Enrollment (COre) expedites access to caregivers by streamlining and localizing on-boarding services, thereby improving the safety of senior and disabled clients.

**Challenge:** The State of California mandates counties to provide training, orientation, and enrollment for qualified new care providers caring for elderly and disabled clients enrolled in the Medi-Cal funded In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program. Research indicates that the lack of sufficient care leads to poor health outcomes such as missing meals, dehydration, falls, burns, wetting, soiling clothes, mistakes with medicine and hospitalizations. Historically, many counties, including Riverside, have responded by managing provider enrollment through several independent satellite offices. This caused a lack of standardized processes, resulting in administrative delays and slow approval and payment of in-home caregivers. Long waits for caregiver enrollment in the IHSS program have resulted in strained and sometimes premature termination of critical, less costly, caregiving relationships.

**Innovative Solution:** In 2016, Riverside County's Department of Public Social Services and IHSS Public Authority launched the COre program in response to California's mandated training, enrollment and orientation process for IHSS caregivers. In addition to being fully compliant with all state mandates, the COre program's mobility (offering services in local communities throughout Riverside County), stream-lined approach, and customer focus ensures IHSS recipients receive timely in-home care. It also helps ensure new caregivers are enrolled and paid promptly for their services. This is accomplished through the following: (1) Community Accessible Services; (2) Streamlining of the state enrollment process; (3) Centralized customer support and instruction; (4) Mobile Live Scan service and cost assistance; (5) Document scanning and data analysis; and, (6) Collaboration with community agencies.

The COre program also introduced a tracking database that allowed staff to quickly identify barriers and enabled proactive outreach to assist caregivers through the onboarding process. The centralized COre team, specialized in new provider enrollment and orientation services, ensures a speedy enrollment of caregivers. The previous operation relied on staff with competing priorities, varied responsibilities, and inconsistent tracking.

**Originality:** The COre program is unique as evidenced by Riverside County's efforts to support seniors and disabled individuals to remain safely in their home by enhancing a state-required process for approving in-home

care providers. This extra assistance, while reducing time and cost, has resulted in quicker on-boarding of care, improved access through the use of community-based locations, tracking of caregivers' progress to avoid delay, trained live scanners, assistance with cost barriers, and enhanced collaboration with all stakeholders.

**Cost Effectiveness:** The CORE program utilizes less staff overall than were previously assigned to the caregiver enrollment process. Previously, the equivalent of 16 full-time staff were allocated to the mandated enrollment process at an estimated annual cost of \$792,592. The CORE team consists of nine staff, with an estimated annual cost of \$440,943. The CORE program purchased three mobile live scan machines, with a one-time, upfront cost of \$10,000. The CORE team travels throughout the county to provide services in local communities, allowing easy access for caregivers, which helps reduce their travel costs. Overall, the CORE program represents a significant cost savings over the County's former enrollment process while improving customer service to address the needs of the county's most vulnerable residents.

**Results:** The CORE program has been tremendously successful. The safety and well-being of elderly and disabled residents are supported by CORE's expedited process. The CORE program has reduced enrollment time by an average of 23 days, with the most frequent completion time being 15 days. Prior to implementing the CORE program, new caregiver orientation took an average of 45 days. The CORE process has drastically reduced wait time by half (51%) so IHSS recipients can quickly receive much needed care at home and caregivers receive their first paycheck timely. This highlights the significant benefit and innovation of the CORE program for Riverside County in cost, efficiency, and customer service for the elderly and disabled clients receiving IHSS benefits and their caregivers.

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