

GERALD HUBER

Director
grhuber@solanocounty.com
(707) 784-8400

TONYA NOWAKOWSKI

Assistant Director
trnowakowski@solanocounty.com
(707) 784-8401

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

SOLANO COUNTY

275 Beck Avenue, MS 5-200
Fairfield, CA 94533
(707) 784-8400
Fax (707) 421-3207

www.solanocounty.com

July 23, 2018

Simona Padilla-Scholtens, Solano County Auditor – Controller
County Administration Center
675 Texas Street, Suite 2800
Fairfield, CA 94533

Re: HSS response to "Follow-Up Review on In-Home Support Services (IHSS) Internal Control Review Report Dated April 27, 2017", dated May 18, 2018

Ms. Simona Padilla-Scholtens,

We have received and reviewed the County of Solano Office of the Auditor-Controller Report of May 18, 2018 entitled "Follow-Up Review on In-Home Support Services (IHSS) Internal Control Review Report Dated April 27, 2017." We thank the Office of the Auditor-Controller (ACO) for helping the Department of Health and Social Services optimize our delivery of services to clients of In-Home Support Services (IHSS) through a diligent review of the Program.

As indicated in this Follow-Up Review, the Department has achieved some significant improvements since the ACO's findings of April 27, 2017. The Follow-Up Review Summary (page 3) notes that we have fully implemented seven of the ACO's initial eleven recommendations and have partially implemented (are in the process of implementing) two additional recommendations. We agree with the ACO's findings that the Department has implemented Recommendations D (1), D (2) 1 and 2, D (3) 1 and 2, D (4), and E (2). With respect to the other recommendations, our Management Response is as follows:

Regarding Finding/Recommendation A: Develop a process to document the supervisor's review and approval of intake cases: The Department agrees that we are in the process of implementing this recommendation. Our practice, based on a policy implemented in 2012, has been for supervisors to review all cases handled by a trainee, including all new intakes, for their first six months, as well as to review reassessments for all staff when there is an increase of ten or more hours granted to the client, or when protective supervision hours are granted, removed or modified in the reassessment. However, there has not been a mechanism in place to document these supervisor reviews. The routine capacity to document the supervisor review and approval of intake and reassessment cases is being incorporated into the IHSS Program's electronic management system, TACOMA, during the next phase of TACOMA implementation, included as an automated improvement for FY2018/19.

Regarding Finding/Recommendation B: Develop a process to randomly sample providers' timesheets: We appreciate the ACO's position regarding this finding and recommendation. To date, State IHSS Program policy regarding review of provider timesheets has been limited to review of timesheets with

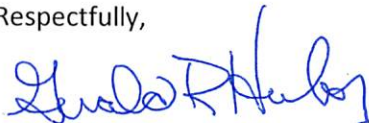
errors; as the Follow-Up Review notes, the State has a pending All County Letter that will require review and verification of 1% of error-free timesheets. Essentially, the ACO is recommending that we implement this procedure in advance of the All County Letter being issued. As we agree with the spirit of the ACO's recommendation, we propose to implement a review and verification process in two steps. The first of these has already been implemented as a practice and will be implemented as a written procedure shortly: at reassessment, for all clients whose provider is currently using the electronic timesheet system (approximately 10% of providers at present), we are querying the client about their knowledge regarding accessing the timesheet website and for any client who is unaware of the website we are flagging the provider for timesheet review and verification. In the second step of implementation we will supplement this with a review and verification of 1% of provider timesheets at reassessment. Once the State issues the noted All County Letter, we will modify our process as needed to conform to the required procedures.

Regarding Finding/Recommendation C: Monitor cases due for reassessments and require staff to perform reassessments in a timely manner: The Department agrees with the need to perform all reassessments in a timely fashion. Our struggle has been the need to juggle reassessments with new intakes, complaint investigations, quality assurance and program integrity functions while implementing both TACOMA and the State's shift from time-per-task and frequency guidelines to functional index rankings and hourly task guidelines, requiring extensive staff training. We are actively implementing new data tracking and data measures to better monitor the timeliness of reassessments and to improve the prompting of reassessments that are due, and we are trying to modify work flows for several staff so that we can free up a pair of Social Worker IIs to focus on overdue reassessments. We will continue to try identifying additional strategies to address this finding and recommendation.

Regarding Finding/Recommendation E (1): Conduct the required desk reviews and home visits; if required minimum desk reviews and home visits are not anticipated to be completed, submit a timely explanation to CDSS: The Department agrees that we are in the process of implementing this recommendation. There are two staff persons dedicated to this function. The required minimum numbers of desk reviews and home visits were being met during FY 2017/18 until one of those two individuals retired, resulting in a shortfall for the Fiscal Year as a whole; that vacant position has been filled, and the team is currently on track to meet the requisite numbers of desk reviews and home visits. However, the fragility of this activity (namely, the reliance on both positions being continually filled) has prompted us to seek a strategy to provide back-up to the team when needed.

Again, the Department thanks the ACO for this Follow-Up Review of our IHSS Program, and we will continue to work on implementing the ACO's recommendations.

Respectfully,



Gerald R. Huber
Director