

Making *it* happen



IN-HOME NURSING CARE SERVICES

Guidelines for Families



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Introduction

Harbor Regional Center (HRC) provides in-home nursing services for our clients and families, based on what it says in their Individual Family Service Plans and guided by our HRC Service Policies. These services are provided by selected home health agencies which are licensed and regulated by the State of California and must operate within certain rules. We have an agreement with these agencies regarding the services they may provide under specific circumstances.

If you are receiving nursing services for your son or daughter, you probably have questions about these services. Questions like:

- How do we know how many hours per month have been approved?
- Can we use more than the number of hours that have been approved?
- How do we make arrangements for the home health agency staff to come to our home when we need them?
- What is the minimum number of hours for each visit?
- What is the maximum number of hours for each visit?
- May we ask the home health agency staff who come to our home to baby-sit for our other children at the same time they are taking care of our child with a disability?
- Whom do we contact if we have complaints about the home health agency staff that come to our home?

The purpose of this booklet is to help answer those questions and provide you with other useful information. Let's start with a definition of nursing care.

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What is

In-home nursing care **is a service designed to meet the medical needs of your son/daughter or relative to protect the person's medical well-being and to prevent the need for hospitalization.** It is **not** the same as **respite care.** Even though your family may be able to leave your home when the nurse is present, and thus have a break from care and supervision responsibilities, this is **not the purpose** of nursing care.

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HOW DO YOU DETERMINE OUR CHILD'S ELIGIBILITY FOR NURSING

CARE? In-home nursing services are specifically for medically fragile and technology dependent children and adults who have intensive physical and medical needs that require nursing care, treatment and monitoring. Before your Counselor can authorize these nursing services, one of our region-

al center nurses must conduct a comprehensive nursing assessment. An interdisciplinary team, using your input and the recommendations contained in the nursing assessment, will make the final decision about whether or not your family is eligible for nursing services.

No two clients are exactly alike and no two families are exactly alike. This is why different families are approved for different amounts of nursing services. Most families do not receive nursing services, and many families who do need nursing services have their own resources (especially through their insurance). Some families whose family member needs nursing services can also get IHSS (In-Home Supportive Services) or EPSDT (Early Periodic Screening and Diagnostic Treatment) which provide for some or all of the services that are needed. If your family member might be eligible for any of these other services, your HRC Counselor will help you to apply for them.

Because other resources are usually available, there are very few families who need to rely on Harbor Regional Center for nursing services. For those that do, the maximum number of hours of nursing care that we authorize is 16 hours per day. Most families who do get nursing services for their family member with a disability receive between 4 and 8 hours per day for 3 or 4 days per week.

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HOW DOES HRC DETERMINE THE AMOUNT OF NURSING CARE FOR OUR FAMILY MEMBER?

Your Counselor determines the number of hours per month that your family member will be authorized to receive nursing care services after s/he has discussed the matter with you and the interdisciplinary team. Your Counselor will consider all the information you provide about the care needs of your child and will also rely heavily upon the observations of the nurse who conducts the comprehensive assessment. The more complex the medical interventions that are needed, and the more frequently these interventions must be made, the greater the need for nursing services (for example, a person who needs suctioning every hour probably requires more nursing service than a person who needs suctioning only 4 times a day).



WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE AMOUNT OF

NURSING AUTHORIZED? Our clients always have the right to appeal any decision made by Harbor Regional Center. Just inform your Counselor that you disagree with the decision and s/he will provide you with the proper form to use to begin the appeal process. We try to keep the appeal process informal and, even if we disagree, we try to work collaboratively with families in a positive and constructive relationship. We will continue to provide services for your family even on those occasions when we need a third party to help us resolve matters.

FOR HOW LONG WILL OUR CHILD BE APPROVED

TO RECEIVE NURSING SERVICES?

The number of months that nursing services can be authorized varies, but is usually between six months and a year. After the authorization period expires, you may no longer need nursing services (especially if your family member's health has improved significantly), or you may need fewer hours (especially if

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you have been able to get your insurance company to provide some hours or if your family member has qualified for IHSS or EPSDT), or you may need more hours (if your family member's health has gotten much worse). Because people and circumstances change over time, we always review the need for services **at least annually**.

It's important that you keep track of the beginning and ending dates of authorized nursing services because if there is not a new authorization to continue the nursing care hours after the authorization expires, the home health agency will not provide the services when you call them. Your HRC Counselor will keep track, too.

ONCE OUR CHILD HAS BEEN APPROVED FOR NURSING SERVICES, HOW DO WE GET THEM? **If your family member**

is to receive nursing care, a coordinator from the home health agency will call you to arrange a visit to assess your family member's nursing care and treatment needs. Also, the home health agency will need

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to contact your family member's doctor to receive appropriate physician's orders (a nurse can provide care only under doctor's orders, and the home health agency licensing regulations require that these orders must be renewed once every two months). These doctor's orders are called a "Plan of Treatment" and the home health agency nurse who comes to your home will care for your family member according to this Plan of Treatment. It's important that you cooperate with the home health agency staff by scheduling the initial visit as soon as possible, and by coordinating the home health agency's communication with your physician.

You'll be given the name and telephone number of the home health agency that will provide your family member's nursing services. All you have to do is contact the agency **during regular business hours and not less than two days before** you will need services. Most families make regular arrangements for specific hours and days of the week (for example, 9 in the morning until noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays), though you may vary these according to your needs.

Remember, **nursing care is something you are expected to plan for in advance**. Home health agencies can sometimes accommodate you in case of an emergency, but they may not always be able to do so. **This is why advance notice is required**. Remember also, that if your plans change and you need to cancel or reschedule the arranged care, it's most important that you contact the home health agency coordinator as soon as you are aware of the needed change.

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HOW MANY HOURS OF THE AUTHORIZED MONTHLY HOURS CAN WE USE AT ONE TIME? You **may not** request fewer

than four hours of nursing care on any given occasion and you should not exceed eight hours **with the same worker** on any given occasion.

If you do exceed eight hours **with the same home health agency staff member at one time**, you need to know that **you will be responsible to pay** the agency directly for the overtime pay which they must, by law, provide to a person who works more than eight hours in one day.

If you regularly need two full, or near full, shifts per day, the home health agency can make arrangements to have two different workers take shifts in order to avoid a situation where you would have to pay for overtime. For example:

Maybe you need 14 consecutive hours of nursing care on two days per week, and you have that many hours authorized and available. It may be

possible for the home health agency to send one worker to your home for 8 hours and another for 6 hours on each of those days. In this way, no worker would need to work more than 8 hours in one day and there would be no overtime pay needed.

WHAT HAPPENS IF WE WANT TO USE SOME HOURS ON A HOLIDAY?

The home health agencies must also pay their workers at the rate of double time on holidays. This means that if you want nursing services on a holiday, you must pay for the overtime costs at twice the number of hours used. That means that Harbor Regional Center would pay for only half of the cost and ***you would be responsible for the other half.***

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HOW DOES THE HOME HEALTH AGENCY KEEP TRACK OF THE HOURS WE HAVE USED?

Home health agencies have systems in place to keep track of how many hours you have used and how many you have available. They need to keep these regular tracking systems in place because we cannot pay them if they provide service beyond that which was authorized. If you call to arrange for care and their system indicates that you do not have any hours left for that month, they will not be able to fulfill your request.

Sometimes families think they have hours available when they don't, because they have not kept track themselves. ***We think it would be helpful for you to keep track of the hours of nursing services you use as you use them.*** You may prefer to keep track on a calendar you have at home – or you may want to use the nursing care services log we have designed. It's in the back of this booklet, and you can make copies as you need them.

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CAN WE SAVE HOURS FROM ONE MONTH AND THEN USE THEM THE NEXT MONTH?

No. If your child has been approved for 80 hours per month of nursing services and you use only 60 one month, **you MAY NOT carry over** the 20 hours you didn't use into the next month. Remember, you have been authorized up to a certain number of hours per month – and you may use all that you need **up to, but not more than**, that amount.

IS IT OKAY FOR US TO ASK THE WORKER TO TAKE CARE OF OUR OTHER CHILDREN?

No. When your family member is receiving **nursing services, it is not permissible for the nurse to take care of your other children at the same time**. This is because the nurse will be too busy taking care of your family member who is either medically fragile or technology dependent. It would be a possible danger to the well-being of your family member to have the nurse distracted by the needs of your other children.

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You may be aware that home health agency staff who provide **respite** services are able to care for your other children if you pay them extra for this. But, **remember that nursing services and respite care are not the same.** When the nurse comes to your home for nursing services, his/her whole job is to care for your **family member with a developmental disability only.**

WHAT IF THE NURSING CARE WORKER DOES

NOT SHOW UP OR IS LATE? The home health agency worker is expected to arrive on time and to leave at the agreed upon time. You will be responsible for signing their time cards.

Please review the cards to be certain the hours provided are accurately stated.

If the home health agency worker is late, we hope you will understand that sometimes traffic and other similar situations may cause late arrival on

occasion. But if workers are very late, or if they are frequently late, you should contact the home health agency coordinator and inform them of this behavior. It is unacceptable for workers to be consistently late and the agency will want to take appropriate action. You should also let your Harbor Regional Center Counselor know if lateness is a persistent problem.

It would be highly unusual for a worker not to show up at all. If this does happen, you should contact the home health agency to inform them. If this happens more than once, you should contact your Harbor Regional Center Counselor. HRC will not continue to do business with a home health agency that is unreliable, but we may not know there are problems unless you tell us.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER RULES ABOUT HOME HEALTH AGENCY WORKERS THAT WE SHOULD KNOW? Some families have asked us if they need to prepare and leave meals for the home health agency workers.

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The answer is no. **Home health agency personnel are expected to provide their own meals.** While it is kind of you to invite them to share your meals or snacks, it is not necessary.

Home health agency personnel should not use your telephone except as required by nursing agency regulations. This means that there may be occasions when workers need to report in to their agencies or to make certain calls of an emergency nature. We ask that you respect these requests. However, **home health agency workers should not use your telephone for personal calls.** If you discover that any agency worker has used your telephone inappropriately, this matter should be reported to the home health agency coordinator. And if there has been a serious and costly misuse of your telephone, please report this to your Counselor as well.

Home health agency personnel are not to bring their children to your home while they are providing services for your family member. If they do so, you should report this matter to the home health agency coordinator.

WHAT IF WE HAVE A QUESTION THAT IS NOT ANSWERED IN THIS BOOKLET?

Whenever you have a question about a service that is provided by Harbor Regional Center or by one of our service providers, feel free to call and ask your Counselor. If your Counselor does not know the answer, s/he will find out from someone who does and will let you know. If your Counselor is not available and you need to have an answer right away, you may speak to our “officer of the day” or to your Counselor’s supervisor. Remember, there is always someone from Harbor Regional Center available to help you.



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