

**COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO  
CALIFORNIA**

**RESPONSE TO 2006-2007 GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT**

**Department of Health and Human Services-Senior and Adult Services Division**

**County Heat Emergency Response (pp51-55)**

**Finding #1:**

The County could face emergencies from flood, terrorist attack, pandemic, earthquake or any number of unexpected events. After the Governor's declaration it took three days for IHSS to contact approximately 30 percent of its recipients. This result is unacceptable. IHSS has a staff of 150 and it reported that all people not on vacation were available to make calls during the emergency. Had only half of the available staff, or 75 people, along with the 20 temporary hires made just a modest ten calls per hour per person, it could potentially produce a combined total of 950 calls per hour.

**Department of Health and Human Services Response to Finding #1: Do Not Concur**

Governor Schwarzenegger directed State Agencies to redouble public safety efforts during the 2006 California heat wave. The Governor did not proclaim a state of emergency. The lack of a formal proclamation prevented Sacramento County from declaring this event an emergency, or activating the Sacramento County Emergency Standardized Management System (SEMS).

Communications from the State to the Counties lacked clarity and were ambiguous regarding the level of response or the number of client contacts required. The Governor's press release of July 26, 2006 directed counties to "conduct onsite safety checks of each resident living in single-room occupancy hotels." It also stated that "these visits will be coordinated with In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) workers who provide assistance to vulnerable seniors and persons with disabilities who do not live in residential care facilities." However, the release did not contain a directive to contact all IHSS recipients.

An All County Information Notice (ACIN), # I-53-06, from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) on July 26<sup>th</sup> referenced the Governor's press release and requested an assessment of all IHSS recipients and APS clients. However, during a conference call with counties later that day, CDSS instructed counties to prioritize responses to the most vulnerable recipients, as needed.

Senior and Adult Services Division (SAS) followed the Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Emergency/Disaster Plan and contacted its high-risk recipients. IHSS High-Risk recipients are defined as those identified as critical and urgent on the State's IHSS Caseload Disaster Preparedness Assessment Profile list. For

those recipients who could not be reached by phone, staff was deployed to their residences to evaluate their safety and well being.

During the heat wave, SAS made 10,016 calls and contacted over 6,000 senior and dependent adults. Of those contacts, 250 were home visits.

**Recommendation #1:**

SAS should work to enhance and streamline notification efforts in a way that fully utilizes all available resources to more quickly complete emergency notifications. Coordination with other County support agencies should be improved to eliminate duplication of effort and ensure a more complete coverage of vulnerable people in the County.

**Department of Health and Human Services Response to**

**Recommendation #1: Concur**

Without a proclaimed state of emergency, Senior and Adult Services Division did not have access to the Sacramento County Emergency Standardized Management System (SEMS), or the ability to utilize its resources. As a result, SAS was forced to operate with extremely limited resources, and was jeopardized by the inability to coordinate its activities and interventions with other county agencies as it could have in a declared emergency.

As of August 2006, the Department of Health and Human Services has granted utilization of the Department's resources to any Division that is directed by the State to respond to a public safety event. This effort is intended to provide SAS and other Divisions with some additional resources. In addition, SAS will be included in the joint City/County emergency planning meetings for the County's operational responses to emergency events.

**Finding #2**

DHHS and SAS conducted an Emergency Operation Review after the July 2006 heat wave and identified a number of areas, both in-house and involving coordination with outside agencies that need improvement. Among other items, they specifically addressed the need to operationally define what constitutes an extreme heat situation requiring emergency response.

**Department of Health and Human Services Response to Finding #2: Concur**

DHHS and SAS conducted an Emergency Operation Review after the July 2006 heat wave and identified that coordination and support among county and outside agencies was needed to respond to future events of this type. From this process, the Senior and Adult Services Division Emergency/Disaster Plan was revised.

SAS also addressed the need to operationally define what constitutes an extreme heat situation requiring emergency response. However, that responsibility does not rest with SAS or DHHS. The County Emergency Operations Office (EOO) takes the lead on preparing the County and its agencies for disasters and is responsible for the operational

definition of an extreme heat situation for the County. SAS will partner with the EOO in this effort.

**Recommendation #2**

DHHS, SAS and EOO should continue to work on the problems identified during the Emergency Operation Review to better prepare the County for disasters, including heat. A specific policy should be developed to establish a level of heat, humidity and length of exposure time considered to be a heat emergency in Sacramento.

**Department of Health and Human Services Response to Recommendation #2: Concur**

The County Emergency Operations Office (EOO) sets the thresholds for activating the County's heat response plans. DHHS and SAS will continue to assist EOO, as needed, in the effort to develop triggers for a heat response plan.

**Finding #3**

SAS computers depend upon an interface with State computers and do not provide the flexibility and responsiveness required to handle an emergency.

**Department of Health and Human Services Response to Finding #3: Concur**

SAS database system is extremely unstable and does not meet the information management requirements needed for the Division. DHHS is currently in the process of implementing a system change to address this issue, as explained in Recommendation #3 below.

Sacramento County's IHSS Caseload Disaster Preparedness Assessment Profile list cannot be updated at the local level. This data is maintained by the State.

**Recommendation #3**

SAS should expedite development of the planned ADAM computer system to provide real time recipient information for emergency notification. This information will be required to comply with the emergency plan currently being developed by EOO.

**Department of Health and Human Services Response to Recommendation #3: Concur**

Phase 1 of the ADAM project is currently on schedule for a ready-to-deploy date of January 25, 2008. DHHS ITS has assigned a 10-person team comprised of a Program Manager/Business Analyst, Developers, Data Specialists, Quality Assurance, and Technical Writers working closely with a vertical selection of SAS staff, with the singular goal of an on-time and successful completion of the ADAM project. The scope of Phase 1 of the project includes maintaining and providing on-line access to and reporting of SAS Client Contact Information, via modern web-based application.

**Finding #4**

The current SAS policy for allowing individuals to elect not to be notified of an impending emergency does not demonstrate a realistic understanding of an emergency situation.

**Department of Health and Human Services Response to Finding #4: Do Not Concur**

Sacramento County does not set policy or regulations for the IHSS Caseload Disaster Preparedness Designations. This policy is determined by the State, and the Counties' operational guidelines are defined in the IHSS/Case Management Information Payrolling System (CMIPS) User's Manual. SAS will continue to advocate for election of notification and educate clients on the consequences of electing non-notification.

**Recommendation #4**

SAS should review the policy for assigning codes to determine if allowing IHSS recipients to decline emergency notification truly serves the best interests of the recipients and the community as a whole. Since the recipient is benefiting from services paid for by public funds, SAS should contact them in any case of an emergency.

**Department of Health and Human Services Response to Recommendation #4: Do Not Concur**

Sacramento County does not set the policy or regulations for the IHSS Caseload Disaster Preparedness Designations. Instead the County is required to adhere to the State regulations. SAS will continue to advocate with clients regarding the importance of notification during emergencies.

**Response Requirements**

Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05 require that specific responses to both the findings and recommendations contained in this report be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Sacramento Superior Court by October 1, 2007, from:

- Sacramento County Board of Supervisors