

County of Santa Clara
Board of Supervisors
Supervisorial District Two
Supervisor George Shirakawa


Inventory Item
#3



BOS2-052809-1

DATE: May 28, 2009

TO: Supervisor Dave Cortese, Chairperson
Supervisor George Shirakawa, Vice Chair
Children, Seniors & Families Committee

FROM:  AFS
George Shirakawa
Supervisor, District 2

SUBJECT: Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Advocacy

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Consider recommendation to the Board of Supervisors relating to the modification of the Fiscal Year 2010 recommended budget, for inclusion on the Budget Inventory List.

Possible action:

- a. Consider a recommendation to restore 5.0 FTE filled Social Worker II (Y3B) positions that were previously being recommended for elimination from Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Advocacy.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The fiscal implications of not restoring the 5.0 FTE Social Worker II positions to the SSI

Advocacy Unit could result in the ongoing loss of revenues from medical billings totaling \$7.8 million of which \$2.9 million is from unbilled health services, and \$1.45 million is from one-time reimbursements.

CONTRACT HISTORY

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Advocacy Unit was established in Santa Clara County in 1985. This program provides targeted assistance to General Assistance (GA) clients who appear to meet the qualification for federal SSI, and recipients who need assistance in completing the SSI application. Once clients are approved for SSI, they are also qualified for Medical benefits retroactively to the date of the their SSI application. The SSI Advocacy Unit consists of 11 staff members with 10 being Social Worker II positions and 1 Supervisor. The Unit carries case loadsof approximately 650 GA clients. The Unit was set up to be fully self supporting based on the recovery of SSI interim assistance. As reported in previous and current Harvey Rose (Board of Supervisors Management Audit Division) audit reports, the SSI Advocacy Unit is fully self supporting.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

After carefully reviewing the proposal to reduce staffing in the SSI Advocacy Unit and reviewing the Harvey Rose Audit (Board of Supervisors Management Audit Division), it is my recommendation that the SSA Advocacy Unit continue to focus its efforts capturing revenues that are due to the County as described in the audit. The audit describes in detail how the County can capture up to \$7.8 million in Medical billings and an additional \$2.9 million in health services reimbursements in addition to \$1.45 million in one-time reimbursements.

It is my further understanding this work requires the advocate social workers having to be consistently following up with clients on their caseloads in order to keep their information current and preventing cases from being closed. It is not uncommon for cases taking longer than expected during the transition from General Assistance (GA) to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) .

As a Board, we are tasked with identifying potential revenue streams and opportunities to recover lost revenue, a reduction in the workforce in the SSI Advocacy Unit would exacerbate their ability to recover the revenue that is due to the County as described in the Harvey Rose Audit. Therefore, my recommendation is to restore the 5.0 filled Social Worker II positions in the SSI Advocacy Unit.

BACKGROUND

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Advocacy Unit was established in Santa Clara County in 1985 and provides services to disabled General Assistance (GA) recipients related to completing requirements needed to receive Federal SSI benefits. Qualifying these residents for SSI relieves the County of the financial responsibility for this segment of the community. Clients who are approved for SSI are also automatically approved for Medical benefits retroactively to the date of their SSI application.

The SSI Advocacy Unit is currently staffed with 11 positions which include 10 social workers and a supervisor. The Unit carries a case load of 650 General Assistance clients. The unit is assisted by a Deputy County Counsel who consults with the social workers on their cases.

Since the Unit's inception, the County's Management Audit Division has performed a cost benefit analysis to determine if the Unit is fully self supporting based on the recovery of SSI interim assistance. Reviews were performed in 1988, 1992 and the latest in 2009 which show that the Unit is fully self sufficient when both the recovery of interim assistance payments from Federal SSI monies and Medical reimbursements of all health and hospital costs were considered.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

Consequences of a negative action could result in an ongoing loss of Medical billings totaling up to \$7.8 million, unbilled health services reimbursements of up to \$2.9 million and up to \$1.45 million in one-time reimbursements on an annual basis. This is potential cost recovery the County cannot afford to loose considering the ongoing economic crisis we are facing.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

Forward a favorable recommendation from Children, Seniors and Families Committee to the Board of Supervisors for consideration during the Budget Hearings.

