

California HealthCare Foundation  
**Center for Health Reporting**

## **Bittersweet goodbye at Sonora adult day health center**

By [Emily Bazar](#) | May 2, 2011

The Sierra LifeNet Adult Day Health Center hosted a bittersweet graduation ceremony Friday.

The Sonora program celebrated the strides made by its 59 participants in their time at the center, and then wished them well and closed its doors – for good.

The center, which offered a community-based alternative to nursing homes, is a casualty of state budget cuts.

California lawmakers voted in March to eliminate the adult day health care program. They also called for the creation of a replacement program with half the funding to serve people with more acute medical needs.

No one knows exactly what the new program will look like, but as a result, some of the state's 310 adult day health centers will shutter and the program will cater to fewer, sicker people, said Lydia Missaelides, executive director of the California Association for Adult Day Services.

In Sunday's San Jose Mercury News, we profiled the Grace Adult Day Health Care Center in Sunnyvale, where co-owners Suzanne and Manooch Pouransari are debating whether to remain an adult day health center, or open a nursing home instead.

LifeNet opted to close. The center offered medical services, meals, physical therapy and social stimulation to seniors and people with disabilities, but was heavily dependent on Medi-Cal funding and couldn't weather the wait, said director Carmen Reimer.

"We live month to month," she said. "It was too uncertain."

Three of the center's 59 participants already have been placed in nursing homes, Reimer said. Several more are waiting for spots to open. Ten employees, including Reimer, are out of work.

As for the rest of the participants, "the story is yet to be told what's going to happen to them," she said. "There are some who will have crises in the next six months and we will never know."

The situation could get even worse for adult day health. Assemblyman Bob Blumenfield (D-Woodland Hills), who is helping lead the effort to create a replacement program, warned that legislators are still wrangling over Gov. Jerry Brown's proposal to extend tax hikes to balance the budget.

"Unless we can find a way to get revenues in this budget, there's potentially going to be more cuts," he said. "Given that the governor wanted to cut the program to begin with completely, it's going to be a hard-fought battle to keep the half we have."