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Committee Chair Asks for Four-Month Delay of ADHC Elimination

by David Gorn

Assembly member Mariko Yamada (D-Davis) called yesterday for a temporary delay of the scheduled Dec. 1 elimination date for adult day services as a Medi-Cal benefit. She wants that date to be extended to Mar. 31.

Yamada, chair of the Assembly Committee on Aging and Long-Term Care, said the state's transition plan moves too quickly for the large scope of the changes it's undertaking involving a vulnerable population. She and other legislators have serious concerns about the rapid time frame, and a number of them have signed the request for delay, according to Yamada.

The state Department of Health Care Services is trying to shift services for 36,000 elderly and disabled ADHC patients by Dec. 1. That includes an effort to move most of those recipients into managed care programs by Oct. 1, so those managed care plans can conduct assessments on many of those patients and make sure their services are in place before the Dec. 1 benefit cut-off date.

"We only recently received the transition plan from the administration, and with the few details released, we see an ill-conceived and potentially dangerous shift in service delivery for these clients," Yamada said in a press release. "We must slow this process down and approach this transition more deliberately in order to avoid risking a gap in service delivery for this extremely vulnerable population."

Norman Williams of the DHCS said the department is only interested in doing what's best for those 36,000 ADHC recipients, and in helping them get similar services in place by the time the benefit ends.

"We believe our transition plan is appropriate, to ensure people are in the appropriate setting for them," Williams said. "Our top goal since Day 1 is to make sure beneficiaries are able to remain independent and living at home."

If the transition plan isn't meeting DHCS expectations, its deadline would be moved, he said.

"We are constantly assessing and reassessing the transition plan, to determine how it's working, and if appropriate, we will adjust it," Williams said. "We strongly believe we have the right plan in place, and as we assess, if we determine that we need to change it at all, we will."

DHCS Director Toby Douglas has delayed the elimination date before. In July, he asked for and received federal approval to push the Sept. 1 elimination date back to Dec. 1 -- as he said then, "so we do this thing right."

Oversight and monitoring of the ADHC benefit elimination and those recipients' transition to other services is the focus of a state Senate budget subcommittee hearing tomorrow.