



Adult day care services may be cut if Gov. Brown's proposal is accepted

Franklin Stover, Humboldt Beacon
Posted: 01/26/2011 03:46:30 PM PST

Gov. Brown has proposed ending the day care and many other programs to offset a \$25.4 billion state budget deficit. Part of that plan includes extending \$9 billion in temporary sales and income and vehicle tax increases.

The voters must approve the tax extensions, and Brown is expected to ask the state Legislature for a special election in June. But even with the continuation of the tax increases, the budget deficit is so huge that proposed budget cuts, including that for adult day healthcare, would stand.

According to the Calif. Department of Aging, an adult day health care program is a licensed community-based day care program providing a variety of health, therapeutic, and social services to those at risk of being placed in a nursing home. Currently, over 300 centers exist in many urban and rural areas of the state. The centers are licensed by the California Department of Public Health and certified for participation in the Medi-Cal Program by the California Department of Aging.

The primary objectives of the program are to restore or maintain optimal capacity for self-care to frail elderly persons or adults with disabilities; and delay or prevent inappropriate or personally undesirable institutionalization. The program stresses partnership with the participant, the family, the physician, and the community in working towards maintaining personal independence.

The state Department of Finance estimates about \$176 million would be saved in the fiscal year beginning July 1 if California stopped providing Medi-Cal payments to support the Adult Day Health Care program. In Humboldt County, there are three adult day care centers, one in Arcata, Eureka, and Fortuna. There are roughly 300 adult day care centers throughout the state. It currently costs between \$25 and \$100 a day per person to run the program. Medi-Cal picks up about \$76 of the cost, with roughly \$38 coming from state funds and a similar amount from the federal government.

Lydia Missaelides, Executive Director of the California Association for Adult Day Services said, "We are disappointed but not surprised that Gov. Brown's budget eliminates the Medi-Cal Adult Day Health Care (ADHC) program. While we understand California is in a fiscal crisis, cutting ADHC does nothing to solve the problem, in fact it makes it worse. Given that half of the funding for ADHC comes from the federal government, this proposal cuts twice as deep, costing the state more than it will save," Missaelides said.

She went on to explain that ADHC is a bargain for taxpayers and that cutting ADHC "is completely nonsensical," she said. "We have fought these cuts the last two years, and we will fight them again this year - for the elderly, for the disabled, and for the California taxpayer."

The Legislative Analyst's Office reported on Jan. 12 in its Executive Summary that the \$25.4 billion budget "seems reasonable," but advocates for California's seniors and disabled adults said they will fight to ensure lawmakers understand the financial and societal benefits of providing medical day care that keeps people in their homes and out of costly institutions. Judith Wyland, Executive Director of Fortuna Senior Services expressed concern for the cutbacks.

"My family of adult siblings were caught in the dilemma facing so very many other families. We were four still working adults, working to take the best care of our aging mother whose deterioration was definitely in progress," Wyland said.

"The falls were happening frequently, she could not transport unassisted, could not remember how and when to take her medications and she couldn't get out to visit friends, many of whom had passed on. In short, she was lonely and not safe to leave at home. We could not afford full-time care for our mother, no matter how much sacrificing we made."

Wyland said that her family was fortunate that Mad River Adult Day Healthcare was starting to form.

"A jitney came each morning to pick up mom, and to assist her in and out of the vehicle. There was a return trip, safely into her home each afternoon. For a half-day, we knew she had the opportunity to socialize, get some appropriate and safe exercise, join in the activities such as having the daily newspaper read -- in other words, she still felt she was a valuable and viable part of the community-at-large."

Wyland said that the family could not have given their mother quality of life without the aid of adult day care, and that her mother was much healthier, safer and happy because she could remain in her own home.

"We are eternally grateful for the healthcare services," Wyland said.

"Any plan other than to have mom in daycare would have been a nightmare for her and for our family. We were run ragged taking care of her other needs, especially health

related ones. I spent many nights returning to the jobsite and working until 10 or 11 p.m. to make up for time lost to taking Mom to medical appointments or emergency hospital visits. I was a single parent with a school-aged teenager. It is a blur of memory those years of trying to be a good parent and a good daughter.”

In Fortuna, the Fortuna Adult Day Health Services is located at 2280 Newburg Road. According to their website, their services “are designed to provide social stimulation and health services to seniors who require supervised care. Caregivers often utilize them to take respite from their normal care-giving responsibilities.”