

Growing Older: Cutbacks in the works for Adult Day Health Care

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The state of California plans to transition Medi-Cal-enrolled participants in adult day health care (ADHC) to a new model before Dec. 1, the date the state has decided to cancel current ADHC Medi-Cal funding. Most of the 37,000 ADHC participants are Medi-Cal enrollees. The small number of private-pay Medicare-only enrollees and people with long-term care insurance that covers ADHC will not be directly affected by the impending changes.

ADHC is a long-standing, comprehensive program. It helps to manage care and provides medical and social support services and meals in congregate settings for frail elders with multiple chronic conditions and people with developmental disabilities or severe, persistent mental illness. This cost-efficient service helps prevent excessive hospitalizations or nursing home placements and reduces the need for in-home support and other separate services.

The state's plan is to mail notice of the ADHC benefit elimination to ADHC Medi-Cal participants beginning in late August. It will then enroll all ADHC participants (automatic enrollment for those who do not self-enroll) covered in both Medicare and Medi-Cal or in Medi-Cal only in county or other managed care plans effective Oct. 1, and will evaluate new members' needs and develop care plans. It also will coordinate care by working with programs such as In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) and Multi-Purpose Senior Services Programs (MSSP) which have their own funding and access problems. It also plans to provide other services currently offered by ADHC by contracting with ADHC or other programs.

The anticipated changes already are resulting in fallout. Because of recent uncertainty about ADHC's future, several programs (although none in the East Bay) have closed because some participants and volunteers backed out. Professionals in the field expect that many participants will not successfully transition, but instead will be placed in nursing homes.

Studies show that costs for the state's new plan and any resulting nursing home placements will be far greater than what it currently costs to support individuals' participation in all three, ADHP, IHSS and MSSP.

ADHC participants and those considering ADHC or wanting to make donations or offer volunteer assistance can contact their local ADHC or the Adult Day Services Network of Alameda County (510-883-0874), www.adsnac.org; or the Adult Day Services Network of Contra Costa County (925-682-1000), www.aduldaycc.org.

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