

Services preserved for disabled adults

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With the settlement of a federal lawsuit, many disabled clients served by Napa's Adult Day Services center will continue to get the services they need to avoid institutionalization, local officials said.

When Gov. Jerry Brown signed the state budget June 30, he eliminated Medi-Cal funding for about 300 adult day health centers, including Napa's. Funding was originally scheduled for elimination Dec. 1.

With the settlement of the class-action suit by 35,000 low-income clients with disabilities against the California Department of Health Care Services, Adult Day Services will continue to operate with Medi-Cal funding until Feb. 29, then change to offer many comparable services.

Similar to Adult Day Health Care, the new program — called Community-Based Adult Services — will offer center-based skilled health and nursing care, therapies, transportation and other services to eligible low-income seniors and people with disabilities.

The new service will be offered through Medi-Cal-managed care plans; Adult Day Health Services was a Medi-Cal optional benefit. The new program will not cap enrollment, which ensures all eligible beneficiaries are able to receive services.

Napa's Adult Day Services center has about 25 employees and 115 participants — 65 of whom are Medi-Cal patients. Most participants are elderly, low-income and suffering from Alzheimer's or a traumatic brain injury. Many participants come for services two to five days a week and spend five hours per visit.

By extending the ADHC elimination date to Feb. 29, eligible ADHC participants will be given more time to transition to CBAS. If the new program weren't available, at least 20 percent of Napa's Adult Day Services participants would need to be institutionalized, said Linda Gibson, the center's president and CEO.

"I'm very confident that most, if not all, of our participants will be eligible for the new program," Gibson said.

To provide continuity of care, Napa's Adult Day Services Center will also provide the new CBAS services. "For most participants, the transition will be seamless," Gibson said.

Current ADHC recipients who are not eligible for CBAS will receive enhanced case management to assist them in the transition to other local long-term care services.

Physical, occupational and speech therapies are just some of the programs offered by the center, which is one of the few in Napa to offer ongoing therapy for chronic conditions, Gibson said. The center employs registered nurses, social workers and various therapists who work with participants every day, she said.

The preventative care provided by these employees saves many patients from costly hospital visits and ultimately keeps them out of nursing homes, Gibson said.

Thursday's settlement resolves the entire lawsuit, which was filed more than two years ago. Plaintiffs had argued that elimination of ADHC, without adequate and appropriate replacement services, would violate the Americans with Disabilities Act and other laws, by placing tens of thousands of ADHC participants at risk of institutionalization, hospitalization, injury or death.

"All of us are just so relieved that these vulnerable people will have services," Gibson said.