

REGION: Adult day care providers relieved at settlement

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Poway Adult Day Health Care Center Administrative Director Kathryn Holt addressed the crowd outside the facility during a rally on Tuesday to tell Gov. Jerry Brown to stop the elimination of funding for Adult Day Health Care. DON BOOMER | dboomer@nctimes.com

Adult day-care center officials say they are relieved at news that the state will continue funding their facilities, but remain uncertain about how they will be affected by a new agreement.

"There was a big sigh of relief from our participants and their families," said Kurt Norden, director of Redwood Elderlink, which is licensed to serve 79 people. "We intend on keeping our doors open."

Like other adult day-care centers in the state, Redwood Elderlink faced losing its state funding on Dec. 1 after Gov. Jerry Brown's decision to cut the service from the budget to save about \$169 million.

Seven people represented by Disability Rights California sued the state Department of Health Care Services, arguing that cutting funding for the service without providing alternative services would violate the Americans With Disabilities Act and other laws.

Adult day-care centers provide disabled or elderly people a place to go during the day, allowing their families or other caregivers a respite so they can work, do chores or find time for themselves. About 35,000 people in the state use the centers.

On Thursday, the plaintiffs and state reached a settlement that extends funding through the end of February and creates a new funding method.

Under the agreement, licensed adult day-care centers can continue to receive state funding if they apply and qualify to become community-based adult services providers, a newly created title.

Besides the new title, people who now use adult care centers will notice no difference in services, said Lydia Missaelides, executive director of the California Association for Adult Day Services in Sacramento.

"You can think of them as the same thing," she said. "It's just going to be called something different."



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Ruth Falardeau, a client at the AmeriCare Adult Day Health Care Center in San Marcos, joined dozens of other people out front of the Poway Adult Day Health Care Center during a rally to tell Gov. Jerry Brown to stop the elimination of funding for Adult Day Health Care. DON BOOMER | dboomer@nctimes.com

People who are eligible for the services will have chronic conditions diagnosed from their physicians and will require the care and knowledge of nurses trained to inject and administer medication, care for wounds, monitor skin breakdowns, check blood pressure and blood sugar and perform other medical services, she said.

The state provides \$76 a day from Medi-Cal for each person who uses one of the roughly 300 adult day-care centers in California. Under the new agreement, Missaelides said funding would come from Medi-Cal Managed Care, which assigns doctors to coordinate care for users.

Missaelides said there is no cap on the number of people who can be funded in the new system, although the state has estimated about 50 percent of people now using adult day care will qualify for community-based adult services providers.

People who are not eligible for the community-based adult services will be offered other long-term care services in the community, she said.

"They won't be going to anything else like adult day care, but some communities have non-health adult programs," Missaelides said about senior centers or other alternatives that may be offered to people who do not qualify for community-based adult services.

Counties also may provide more in-home supportive services for people who need care but do not qualify under the new requirements, she said.

A rally to oppose the cuts was held earlier this month outside Poway Adult Day Health Care Center.

Denise Mayes, special projects coordinator, said Monday that the center will apply to become a community-based adult services provider. She called news of the settlement a relief for people at the center, who cheered when it was announced by Administrative Director Kathryn Holt.

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Missaelides said many people were expecting the two sides to settle.

"When it was finally announced, you could hear the huge sigh of relief across the state," she said.

In a statement released Thursday, Department of Health Care Services Director Toby Douglas said he was pleased with the settlement.

"This agreement upholds the state's commitment to provide essential care and services to those most in need, efficiently and economically," he said.

Missaelides said people who use the new community-based adult services will have to qualify under the same eligibility requirements that apply to Medi-Cal funded nursing facilities.