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## Adult day health care remains on chopping block

By **COURTNEY PERKES** / THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

The future of adult day health services remains uncertain as advocates pursue a reprieve before state funding ends Dec. 1.

Late Monday, Gov. Jerry Brown vetoed a bill that would have funded a smaller version of the program. In his veto message, Brown said the state is working to prevent unnecessary institutionalization of Medi-Cal patients who are cared for and supervised during the day while their family members work.



In June, Kathleen Chesavage, 88, gets support from Certified Nurse Assistant Dedia Compay at South County Adult Day Services in Laguna Woods.

*JEBB HARRIS, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER*

The nonprofit Disability Rights California is seeking an injunction to stop closure of the program. A hearing is set for Nov. 1. Since 2009, the group has twice won court orders blocking the state from cutting adult day services, arguing that would violate the federal Americans with Disabilities Act.

About 37,000 low-income Californians receive weekday care at 300 centers, including about 20 in Orange County. Across the state, 17 centers have closed since January, said Lydia Missaelides, executive director of California Association for Adult Day Services.

The state budget called for eliminating Medi-Cal funding for the program, but it also included \$85 million in funding to transition patients elsewhere. But operators say their vulnerable clients have no where else to go.

The program costs \$340 million a year, with \$169 million coming from the state and the rest from the federal government.

Mallory Vega, executive director of Acacia Adult Day Services in Garden Grove, said centers were first told funding would end Sept. 1 and last week the state pushed the date to Dec. 1.

"It's very confusing," Vega said. "One of the big things about this is trying to keep the families up to date and not cry wolf too many times, but give the families information so they can plan."

Vega said her center, which opened almost 32 years ago, offers physical and occupational therapy, nutritious meals and activities for the 80 or so participants. She said some suffer from dementia while others have Parkinson's disease or congestive heart failure.

"If we go out of business, there's nothing in its place," she said. "For us as an industry this is either year two or three that there's been a threat of elimination and it never happens. We've always been able to turn back the tide. I think the families are hoping that's what will happen again."

Missaelides said Tuesday during a conference call to discuss the veto, that if Medi-Cal funding ends, 95 percent of centers will go out of business within two months and a quarter of patients will be placed in more expensive nursing homes.

Elissa Gershon, senior attorney at Disability Rights, said during the call with reporters that she's concerned that more centers will close amidst the uncertainty and nursing homes won't be prepared to handle the influx.

"It's obviously more costly," Gershon said. "It's not where people want to go. We believe it violates the law. Even more disturbing, these beds may not even be available."

At least one Orange County facility, Alzheimer's Family Services Center in Huntington Beach, plans to remain open regardless of what happens with Medi-Cal.

Anita Rodriguez-Lambert, director of development and communications, wrote in an e-mail that the center has "been strategic with our funding streams and have a wonderful long lasting relationship with Hoag Hospital so our doors will remain open."

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