

Patients, families, staff say goodbye as Sacramento adult care center closes

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Patients, family and staff members gathered Friday to recall challenges and successes as they tearfully contemplated life without the Robertson Adult Day Health Care Center.

"I don't know what we will do," said Helen Chapman of [Rio Linda](#), whose son Jeffrey, 50, has been coming to the center five days a week since 1986 after suffering [head trauma](#) in a [car accident](#) that left him quadriplegic at age 21.

"He seems to be doing OK today," she said, "but he will probably be upset come Monday when he's not getting ready to go."

Helen Chapman and her husband, David, learned Wednesday that the center, which has operated at 3400 Elvas Ave. since 1985, would close Friday, the victim of state funding cuts and rising medical costs.

Chapman hasn't had time to seek an alternative program.

"It's just a sad day for us," said [Jim MacDonald](#), a physical therapist who purchased the center in 2006 and sought to run it as a for-profit operation. The center had employed about 25.

The combined federal and state \$76-per-day reimbursement per patient doesn't cover the costs of physical therapy and other skilled [health services](#) that the center provides, along with transportation and a meal.

MacDonald said he was unable to obtain state permission to increase the center's licensed capacity from 49 patients per day so he could serve more private-pay patients to compensate for state funding cutbacks.

Rosemont resident Barbara Reagan said the program was a godsend for her family. Her mother, Dorothy Davis, 93, suffered dementia due to depression brought on by the death last fall of her 33-year-old grandson — Reagan's son — who fell ill while serving as a missionary in Thailand.



Robertson Adult Day Health Care Center certified nursing assistant Rayna Baldwin, at right, sheds a tear as she says goodbye to Ilene Daggs, 85, during the center's last day of operation. The center, which opened in 1985, closed due to anticipated decreases in state funding, state staffing requirements, rising medical costs and related factors that the owner says make is not long fiscally viable. With 110 clients on the books, it has served up to 49 patients a day. The clients are seniors suffering from Alzheimer's, dementia, strokes or heart disease, and other adults with physical or developmental disabilities that might otherwise require more expensive nursing home care.

Photo by Manny Crisostomo | mcrisostomo@sacbee.com

Davis had to leave her Placerville home and move in with Reagan and her husband, who also care for toddler-age grandchildren. Reagan said her mother had stopped talking and eating, and was unable to walk when she started coming to the Robertson center three months ago.

On Friday, Davis was getting around with a walker and chatting with fellow patients.

"I like being here," Davis said as she sat down to lunch.

Norman Williams, a spokesman for the state Department of Health Care Services, said in a telephone interview that Gov. Jerry Brown has proposed \$25 million for a transition plan to provide patients with services while eliminating adult day health care as a Medi-Cal benefit. Options include more in-home services and physical therapy programs targeted to patients' specific needs.

"There's no doubt that Adult Day Health Care is a valuable program," Williams said, but eliminating the approximately \$169 million in funding is a step toward closing the state budget gap.

Democratic legislators seek to include \$85 million in the 2011-12 budget, about half this year's funding.

Families say the socialization the centers provide is key to patients' well-being. In addition to physical therapy and other health services, patients spend time with others participating in crafts, planting vegetables and flowers in raised garden beds, and sharing meals.

Reagan said she fears that if her mother is at home all day with the family's toddlers she will retreat to her bedroom and sink back into depression.

The centers also provide much needed respite for [family caregivers](#).

Helen Chapman said she is up most of the night tending to her son's needs and she typically naps while he is at the day center.

Reagan said she has contacted a couple of day centers, but many have waiting lists.

Eight centers continue to operate in [Sacramento County](#). For lists of state Adult Day Health Care Centers, see the state Department of Aging website at www.aging.ca.gov/programs/adhc/adhc_centers.asp.



Robertson Adult Day Health Care Center certified nursing assistant Rayna Baldwin, at right, sheds a tear as she says goodbye to Ilene Dags, 85, during the center's last day of operation.

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Robertson Adult Day Health Care Center occupational therapy assistant Kristin Criste, at left, and physical therapy aide Faith Laurente shed tears during the center's last day of operation.

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Mossie Bowens a patient at Robertson Adult Day Health Care Center is comforted by physical therapy assistant Cindy Harmon during the center's last day of operation.

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Ray Campagna, 60, shares a laugh with Robertson Adult Day Health Care Center certified nursing assistant Michelle Jones during the center's last day of operation.

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Bradley Hector, 54, shares a laugh with Robertson Adult Day Health Care Center certified nursing assistant Michelle Jones and medical social worker Michelle Reyes during the center's last day of operation.

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Helen and Gaylord Chapman are upset that their son Jeffery wouldn't be using the services of Robertson Adult Day Health Care Center which closed Friday.

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Jeffery Chapman goes down the hallway of the Robertson Adult Day Health Care Center on last time on Friday.

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Robertson Adult Day Health Care Center, owner Jim MacDonald speaks to the press during the center's last day of operation. The Robertson Adult Day Health Care Center, which opened in 1985, is closing due to anticipated decreases in state funding, state staffing requirements, rising medical costs and related factors that the owner says make is not long fiscally viable. With 110 clients on the books, it has served up to 49 patients a day. The clients are seniors suffering from Alzheimer, dementia, strokes or heart disease, and other adults with physical or developmental disabilities that might otherwise require more expensive nursing home care.
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Velma Harmen, 88, has been getting therapy five days a week for the last six years at Robertson Adult Day Health Care Center. She enjoyed her last meal on Friday, the center's last day of operation.
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Robertson Adult Day Health Care Center, client Charles Sorenson, 65, heads down the center's hallway filled with pictures and art work one last time on Friday.
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