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Editorial: Settlement is a win for adult day care

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Until last week, Adult [Day Health Care](#), a vital state program that helps keep frail elderly in their homes and out of expensive [nursing homes](#), was headed for extinction. Because of [state budget cuts](#), some 300 centers across the state were to close Dec. 1.

The threatened closures made no sense either on fiscal or humanitarian grounds. The state's burgeoning populations of fragile adults go to these centers to socialize and exercise. Nurses monitor their health and physical therapists keep them moving. Patients play games, garden or just talk, and their exhausted caregivers at home get a break.

Adult day care got an 11th-hour reprieve. It took two years and a federal lawsuit, but the state agreed to start a similar community-based program. While reimbursement will switch from a fee for service to a managed care model, the services for some 35,000 elderly, low-income adults will endure.

It won't be an easy transition. Bureaucrats will be scrambling to put new eligibility rules in place and perform new patient assessments, but if things go as intended, most patients won't notice.

State officials predict caseloads will drop by about half because of more stringent eligibility. Providers disagree. They believe most of the people served today will continue to receive services. With the elderly population growing, the need for such services will grow, an indisputable fact that made the threat of closures so senseless.

The lawsuit, filed on behalf of patients by attorneys with [Disability Rights California](#), argued that by eliminating the program without adequate replacement services the state was placing thousands of patients at risk for institutionalization in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In recent weeks, it became clear that the state was likely to lose in court. State officials working with advocates for the elderly and disabled reached a settlement, a rare win for both sides but mostly for frail, elderly Californians and their families.