

Chuck Molnar, Senior corner: Shining light on endangered senior program

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My Senior Corner column of April 24, "Elderday program falls victim to funding cuts" was intended to garner support for one of the most worthwhile programs aiding the elderly. The headline may have given the impression to some that the program no longer existed. That is not the case. It is still running but is in need of the general public's support to continue. The best way you can support Elderday is to contact your local state representative and ask him to support this fine program.

Here is some additional information regarding Elderday, otherwise known as Adult Day Health Center.

Elderday is an Adult Day Health Center program of Salud Para La Gente, a federally qualified health center based in Watsonville that provides comprehensive primary medical, dental, optometric and adult day health care.

Elderday has 143 enrolled participants, an average daily attendance of 85, and a daily maximum capacity of 90. The average age of Elderday participants is 76. The predominant diagnoses of participants are heart conditions, respiratory conditions, diabetes and dementia. Statewide, some 37,000 elders are served in ADHCs, which promote the social, emotional and physical well-being of impaired individuals living in the community to help them maintain or recover to their full functional potential.

Due to the state budget crisis, Medi-Cal in March was eliminated as a reimbursement source for ADHC care statewide. This is the third proposal since 2009 to eliminate or cut Medi-Cal reimbursement for ADHC care.

The elimination of Medi-Cal reimbursement for ADHC is effective July 1. However, the Legislature and the governor agreed to create a "substitute ADHC" program at a lesser cost and with tighter requirements for enrollment.

The substitute program requires a federal waiver to institute the substitute program. If the federal waiver is granted, approval likely will not be granted until January.

At this point it is unclear how, if at all, ADHC will be funded between July 1 and January. Representatives of ADHCs statewide and their policy and advocacy groups are meeting with the state to ensure the smoothest transition possible to the substitute program, and to create the most beneficial substitute program for participants, given the financial and program constraints.

Salud Para La Gente is committed to providing the best possible care to its Elderday participants for as long as possible, given the funding uncertainties going forward. Elderday will be sending letters about the program changes to participants, their families and caregivers during the coming week.

Anyone desiring further information should contact Sara Clarenbach at Salud administration at 728-8250, ext. 1005, or Sheri Anselmi, Elderday program manager, at 458-3481.

The next meeting of the Santa Cruz County Seniors Commission will be 1:30-3:30 June 21 at the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Office, 1523 Pacific Ave., Santa Cruz.

Contact Chuck Molnar at the Santa Cruz County Seniors Commission Office: 454-2355