

# Elder Care Advocates Continue Long Fight to Save Adult Day Health Care

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By Vincent Lim

The Los Angeles Aging Advocacy Coalition (LAAAC) and the California Association for Adult Day Services (CAADS) issued statements last week that encouraged citizens who were troubled by the proposed elimination of California's Adult Day Health Care (ADHC) to once again voice their concerns to Governor Jerry Brown and Health and Human Services Secretary Diana Dooley.

CAADS told ADHC supporters to "urge Gov. Brown and Secretary Dooley to honor the deal made in March to keep half the funding for ADHC."

Efforts by LAAAC and the California Senior Partnership saved the program from elimination earlier this year. In March, state lawmakers passed a budget that ended state funding for ADHC but also allocated \$85 million for the creation of a new, half-sized version of the program.

However, Gov. Brown's revised budget proposal in May put the program in jeopardy again. It provided only \$25 million for adult day health care services, which was set aside to be used to transition ADHC beneficiaries into In-Home Support Services (IHSS) and other state programs.

Part of the problem with transitioning beneficiaries to programs like IHSS is that caregivers in those state programs are not trained to provide the same type of intensive care as nurses and therapists provide through ADHC.

Legislators in the state senate and assembly quickly moved to restore the \$85 million in state funding in the 2011-12 budget. Assemblyman Bob Blumenfield (D-40th district, Woodland Hills) authored AB 96, which sought to convert ADHC from a Medi-Cal benefit program to one operating under a federal waiver. The bill would require the submission of a waiver application to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) by Sept. 1, 2011—the day when the current ADHC program was scheduled for elimination—to implement the newly named Keeping Adults Free from Institutions (KAFI) program. The bill passed both chambers of the California state legislature and was included in the updated budget package that was sent to Gov. Brown.

Gov. Brown ultimately vetoed the budget, and the status of AB 96 remains uncertain. To complicate matters further, Disability Rights California recently filed a lawsuit claiming that the elimination of ADHC was illegal to begin with and called for the original program to be restored with the same level of funding—\$177 million in state funds that was matched with an equal amount of federal funds.

Roughly 37,000 low-income older adults and people with disabilities receive care at adult day health care centers, which allows them to remain living independently in their homes and out of full-time care facilities. Although Gov. Brown continues to tout the potential cost savings of eliminating programs such as ADHC, a study by The Lewin Group reported that shutting down ADHC could cost the state \$51 million annually as a result of the higher health costs associated with cost-shifting to other services.