



By [Barbara Meltzer](#) – Tuesday, August 2, 2011

## End of Adult Day Health Care Could Leave Hundreds of Seniors in Jeopardy

With four months until the elimination of the Medi-Cal service, West Hollywood's only center seeks adequate care for local seniors.

Step inside the West Hollywood [L'Chaim Adult Day Health Care Center](#) and you will find it bustling with senior men and women—some eating, some talking with friends, others watching the news or playing games. Still, others just staring into space, hands tightly clasped in their laps. Many are frail and suffering from various stages of dementia.

A licensed Medi-Cal health facility, L'Chaim opened in 2002 and serves 240 participants with various chronic conditions, five days a week, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Up to 150 seniors are treated daily, with one registered nurse and one social worker for every 40 participants.

The services are provided on an individual basis and include nursing supervision, medication monitoring, physical and occupational therapy, speech therapy, psychological counseling, and dietary assessments. Companionship and social stimulation are made available in the form of planned group and therapeutic activities, and games—all vital since depression is common among isolated seniors.

But come December 1, 2011, Adult Day Health Care will no longer be a Medi-Cal "optional benefit." The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, under the Obama administration, approved California's request to delay the elimination 90 days.



The imminent elimination of the Medi-Cal service could mean the end of 300 centers throughout California, including L'Chaim. Credit Hapal



L'Chaim is one of 300 centers throughout California that will be affected. Credit [Rhett Nadolny](#)

"Most of our participants are frail and are suffering from various stages of dementia. Those who do not live with family members are also assisted by a specified number of hours from In Home Supportive Services, which provides no medical care," said Natalie Liberman, L'Chaim's program director.

Proposed in January by Gov. Jerry Brown to ease the enormous budget deficit and approved by the Legislature in March as part of a larger bundle of spending cuts, the imminent elimination of the Medi-Cal service could mean the end of 300 centers throughout California, including L'Chaim.

That action will create the need to transition approximately 35,000 participants statewide—23,000 in LA County—to comparable and adequate services in order to keep them out of nursing homes. "If we shut down, most will be transitioned to nursing homes at a cost of \$200 per day per person," Liberman said.

According to all reports, Brown believes that his plan to transition the 35,000 patients to alternative programs is workable.

Those fighting to keep the centers open firmly believe other taxpayer-funded services lack the special expertise to serve the complex medical and cognitive needs of the state's rapidly growing low-income aging population.

For more information, contact the California Association for Adult Day Services at 916-552-7400 or email [caads@caads.org](mailto:caads@caads.org).