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State Budget Cuts Hit Close to Home

Significant spending cuts to Adult Day Health Care could jeopardize countless Inland Empire residents

****For interview opportunities, please contact Dr. Barbara Porter at the Inland Empire Adult Day Health Care Center at 951-808-9600.*

Corona, CA – Last week, Governor Jerry Brown signed the package of bills calling for significant spending cuts to health care, education, and social services programs. Among the many essential health care and social services programs expected to undergo significant setbacks as a result of the budget cuts is the state's Adult Day Health Care (ADHC) program, which provides critical and life-sustaining services and care to an estimated 37,000 Californians all across the state.

The patients, families, care givers and medical professionals at Inland Empire Adult Day Health Care Center, in Corona, one of the many Adult Day Health Care providers throughout California, are particularly concerned over how these dramatic cuts to ADHC will impact their patients. Desmond D., a 39 year old Corona resident diagnosed with Schizoaffective Disorder and Parkinson Disease, is just one of sixty-five patients who regularly depend on the Inland Empire ADHC medical services on a daily basis, to help them live fulfilling, independent lives outside of the confines of a psychiatric hospital or nursing home.

Due to the severity of his diagnosis, Desmond suffers significant mood swings with episodes of psychosis. This means he hears voices, suffers delusions, and is prone to suicidal ideation. On top of this, Desmond's Parkinson's disease has impaired his ability to both walk and eat without experiencing severe tremors. He needs to utilize a walker to prevent falls, yet as a young man, his physical device is a stigma of being 'ill'. As such, he resists its use and depends on the center's staff to prevent falls while assisting him with his walker at the Center.

Desmond currently lives with his retired parents who report health concerns of their own. While Desmond's family is extremely supportive and dedicated to their son, they report they often feel exhausted and overwhelmed with the responsibility for his care. His mother states that from the time he awakes until bed time, they assist with his bathing, dressing, feeding, medications and numerous medical appointments. If he is no longer eligible to attend the Center, given the level of medical and psychological care in which Desmond depends, the family is frightened and believe he will soon be admitted to a psychiatric or medical hospital. Since attending IEADHC, Desmond has not had one psychiatric hospital admission. Prior to his attendance, he had been hospitalized over twenty (20) times in one year.

“There are two main factors to help prevent psychiatric patients from needing hospitalization. First and foremost, this includes providing them with a structured, therapeutic environment comprised of daily activities to keep them focused, distract from hallucinations, and gives purpose to a life which struggles to combat depression,” said Dr. Barbara Porter, Program Director at Inland Empire Adult Day Health Care Center.

“The other essential component is monitoring and managing the patient’s psychotropic medications. Desmond is currently taking twelve different prescription medications each day. The nursing staff at IE Adult Day Health Care Center ensures he takes the correct medication when he’s supposed to, while also monitoring for side-effects and symptom de compensation,” Dr. Porter added. “These are powerful medications and some have the side effects of increasing tremors in his legs and arms and causes continuous drooling.”

Inland Empire Adult Day Health Care Center does more than administer and monitor Desmond’s medicine, they also provide physical therapy exercises designed for his ability level; individual counseling and weekly supportive group psychotherapy; assistance with feeding and cognitive occupational therapy activities to help maintain his declining cognitive ability related to Parkinsons. The Center also keeps track of Desmond’s other ailments, including his asthma and hypertension, and offers full nursing care, including registered nurses (RN), Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVN), occupational therapists, and more.

As the proposed cuts go into effect, funding for Inland Empire Adult Day Health Care will be cut in half and the Center will be placed in the Federal waiver program. With only half our funding retained for adult day health care centers, it is clear that some centers will definitely close while many participants will no longer be eligible to receive these life-saving services.

Dr. Porter hopes that Desmond is not one of them.

“We simply cannot tell at this point in time which of our patients will be forced out of the program and into alternative care situations, such as hospitals or nursing homes, but it’s a heartbreaking position to be in. The anxiety, worry and fear expressed by patients, and families is steadily growing. Most importantly for us is ensuring that our patients receive the best medical care they need, in a compassionate and professional manner. The ripple effect of this legislative decision will devastate California. While we appreciate that our program is not totally eliminated, clearly this decision will create harm for many patients and their families, who no longer will receive our services. “

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