

Faces

of the home care cuts



Selected recent articles, Jan.-Feb. 2010



Clients fear loss of in-home services

By Sam Womack
Santa Maria Times
Feb. 19, 2010

http://www.santamariatimes.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/article_f22fb51c-1d27-11df-98f8-001cc4c03286.html



Caregiver Susan Oeland, right, and her client and friend, Andrea Hylton, are concerned about what will happen if Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposal to cut funding for in-home services is approved. Hylton is disabled and needs help with cooking and personal care. She fears that she could be forced to leave her apartment and move into an assisted living facility if she loses her home assistance. //Mark Brown/Staff

When taxes are paid, there's a certain expectation that those hard-earned dollars will go to help children, the elderly, the disabled — the most vulnerable and helpless in our society.

And yet, in an effort to close the state's estimated \$20 billion deficit, one proposal is to take away Andrea Hylton's lifeline.

Hylton is a 64-year-old Santa Maria resident with a multitude of debilitating mental and physical issues.

She is also one of approximately 427,000 California residents with disabilities who could lose their state-funded caregiver if the state Legislature agrees with the governor's recommendation of cutting

\$1.8 billion from the program, according to a Santa Barbara County report.

Approximately three years ago, Hylton hired Susan Oeland through the state's In-Home Support Services (IHSS), a program that identifies how much assistance a person needs, and then provides the money to hire a helper, either a family member, friend or a professional provider.

The services are available to low-income people who are over age 65, blind, or with disabilities, to enable them to remain safely in their home as opposed to committing them to more expensive options, such as institutions or nursing homes.

It is a cost-saving safety net and welfare program that has been around for 35 years.

Approximately 47 hours a month, Oeland helps Hylton with housework, laundry, cooking, shopping, bathing, dressing and making it to doctor's appointments.

"Without (IHSS) I would be helpless, completely helpless," Hylton said this week.

In Santa Barbara County, there are a total of 3,000 IHSS clients who require anywhere from a few hours a week to round-the-clock assistance in their homes.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposed budget includes limiting services to IHSS

recipients to those with a functional index score of four or less — one being able to perform a certain task and five being unable even with assistance determined by a social worker.

The index scores do not take into account whether the person resides alone, has cognitive disorders, such as Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia, or needs protective supervision or paramedical services, according to Santa Barbara County analysis.

Approximately 2,700 people are at risk of losing their IHSS assistance in Santa Barbara County, and "a vast majority of these people are going to be left to languish or linger alone, without any support or assistance," said Kathy Gallagher, director of the county Department of Social Services.

"I'm just scared of what might happen," Hylton said.

The 30-year Santa Maria resident has no family, no social network and no car, and survives on a fixed income.

A few weeks ago, Hylton took a tumble in her apartment at about

3 a.m. and broke her knee cap. She crawled to the phone and called a friend, who didn't call back until four hours later. She waited on the friend to call 9-1-1, but did not explain why.

"I was scared. I was in pain. There was no one to help," she said of the upsetting experience.

Her recent accident is similar to what the county's analysis predicts as a result of the program cuts.

"There will be a portion of recipients that will be at high risk of self-neglect as they cannot physically care for themselves or meet their basic medicinal needs. This could result in serious injury, institutionalization and even accidental death," it stated.

Like many who receive IHSS assistance, Hylton doesn't have the means to afford a nursing home, but even if she did, there are not enough beds in California.

An estimated 1,300 IHSS clients in Santa Barbara County could probably qualify for a nursing home bed, but there aren't even close to that many on the Central Coast, Gallagher said.

In the state, there are only about 20,000 licensed nursing home beds, and a study from the UCLA Center for Health Research estimates that more than 200,000 clients would seek beds if the IHSS program was cut.

Ironically, in the 1980s, the IHSS program was created to reduce the high cost of nursing-home care and offer seniors a better quality of life in their own home, which is why nursing homes fell out of favor.

Hylton said she would avoid a nursing home or institutionalization for as long as possible because her constant companion "Peanuts," her pudgy Jack Russell terrier, could not come along.

But she may never need to make that tough choice, because her IHSS provider, Oeland, has become more than a part-time helper; she is Hylton's friend.

"She's like a second mom to me, and I'm like her daughter," Oeland said.

"I'll never let her be alone. I'll continue to take care of her if the program is eliminated," she vowed, even though as an IHSS worker, she faces a wage decrease from \$11.50 to \$8 an hour in the proposed state budget.

IHSS assistance is just one human-services program on the chopping block in the governor's proposed 2010-11 budget.

Also included are CalWORKS, Healthy Families, Medi-Cal, Supplementary Security Income (SSI) and the California Food Assistance Program.

The proposed budget also stipulates that if the federal government doesn't come up with an additional \$7 billion for the state, then IHSS assistance, along with CalWORKS and Healthy Families, will be completely wiped out.

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

Budget cuts threaten in-home care program

By Martin Espinoza

Santa Rosa Press Democrat

February 15, 2010

<http://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/20100215/ARTICLES/100219638/1350?p=all&tc=pgall>



JOHN BURGESS/The Press Democrat

Caregiver Doug Sutro shaves around the implant George Peinado needs to control the symptoms of his Parkinson's disease. Sutro gives 24-hour care to Peinado, who also has diabetes, but would lose his job if proposed cuts happen.

In better days, George Peinado skillfully wielded a paring knife, mixing spoon and frying pan in such places as the Beverly Hills Hotel and the Original Pantry Cafe in Los Angeles.

A proud first-generation American who grew up in a working-class Mexican family in South Pasadena, Peinado, 70, now lives in a mobile home just north of Graton — with Parkinson's disease and a caregiver.

Sitting in a wheelchair, Peinado clumsily wipes saliva from the corner of his mouth as he bitterly describes the things he can and cannot do.

“My hands don't work,” he said. “I can brush my teeth but not shave. I can use a fork but not a knife.”

There are other things he cannot do, things he describes with frustration and, inevitably, with a string of expletives.

But it's the things he can still do that would damn him under a proposed state budget cut that would eliminate in-home support services to an estimated 4,517 people in Sonoma County. That's 88.5 percent of the county's 5,100 low-income elderly and disabled who are most at risk of being institutionalized in a skilled nursing facility if they don't have in-home care.

The proposal, part of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's plan to close a \$20 billion deficit, would cap state wage and benefits for IHSS workers at \$8.60 an hour for a savings of \$271.8 million in 2010-11. It also would restrict the program to “individuals with the highest assessed needs,” according to a budget summary by the state Department of Social Services.

Restricting the program to all but the most needy would rely on something called a Functional Index (FI) score, which ranks a person's physical limitations on a scale of 1 to 5.

Schwarzenegger proposes eliminating in-home support services for everyone with an FI score of 4 and under for a general fund savings of \$882.8 million in 2010-11. The state calculates FI scores by taking a weighted average of rankings for 11 activities for daily living such as meal preparation, shopping, bathing and grooming.

Because Peinado gets enough rankings below 4 for the things he can do, his FI score falls below 4, said his IHSS social worker, Marcus Stobbe.

Stobbe said he recently evaluated a woman in hospice who had about 6 months to live and came up with an FI ranking of 3.2. Even though the woman is dying, her FI score falls below the governor's threshold, partly because she would not accept help for “toileting,” he said. “I had to put that on a 1,” Stobbe said.

Stobbe said the “bureaucrats” in Sacramento who came up with the formula are removed from its impact on lives. The proposal would inevitably result in more people being admitted to costly skilled nursing facilities, he said.

“What happens if she doesn't get help? She would become a 4 in no time. That's the perversion of it,” he said. “If you try to say that some need is not needy enough to get help, then you'll end up shooting yourself in the foot.”

Lizelda Lopez, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Social Services, said Schwarzenegger's administration does not take its proposed cuts lightly.

“The governor understands that it will have an effect on recipients. However, we have a \$20 billion deficit and reductions have to be made,” she said.

Lopez said state legislators are negotiating the budget and that changes could still be made.

Schwarzenegger's proposed budget relies on \$6.9 billion in federal funds he says the state is due. If that money does not come through, as some fear, the state proposes eliminating IHSS.

If Peinado is dropped from the program, his live-in caregiver, Doug Sutro, 52, would lose his income of less than \$1,000 a month. Part of that money helps the two cover their monthly costs, which include \$740 for rent, \$110 for PG&E and \$90 for phone service. Peinado receives \$1,100 a month from Social Security.

“The amount that I get paid keeps him out of a convalescent home,” Sutro said, suddenly interrupted by Peinado, who shook his head vigorously.

“No. No. I ain't going back,” said Peinado, who was in a nursing home about two years ago. “Not any more. I ain't going. I'll kill myself.”

Peinado, who moved to Sonoma County 20 years ago, was most recently a junk collector who sold at local swap meets. He stopped working just before he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease about four years ago.

He was diagnosed with diabetes 10 years ago. He has a deep brain stimulus implant that has greatly reduced his dyskinesia, a disorder characterized by involuntary, jerky movements. His life has become dominated by a strict regimen of medications.

Diane Kaljian, director of the county's Adult and Aging Services Division, said she was certain some percentage of the people dropped from IHSS would end up in skilled nursing facilities.

Last year, the governor's 2009-2010 budget proposed a less drastic cut to IHSS funding. The proposal was to eliminate all IHSS services to those with an FI ranking of 2 or less and eliminate domestic and related services to those with a rank of 4 or less. It also included wage reductions for caregivers. Both proposals were halted last fall by court injunctions, which Schwarzenegger has appealed.

Jo Weber, director of the county Human Services Department, said the state cuts would come on top of whatever tough budget choices are made at the county level, with “revenues not what we expect them to be.”

“I’m dismayed,” Weber said of proposed state budget cuts to IHSS and other social services. “We need to start looking for solutions that strengthen the safety net because more and more people are falling into it.”

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CONTRA COSTA TIMES

Budget cuts endanger In-Home Supportive Services

By [James Rufus Koren, Staff Writer](#)

Contra Costa Times

February 7, 2010

http://www.contracostatimes.com/california/ci_14348089



State cuts could cost Dorothy Liedtke, 90, of San Bernardino her in-home care. Her failing vision prevents her from being able to read pill bottles or cook for herself. (LaFonzo Carter/Staff Photographer)

Dorothy Liedtke can walk around her house, pet stray cats on her front stoop and sit for hours telling stories about waitressing in Hollywood decades ago.

But the 90-year-old San Bernardino woman can't see well enough to write a rent check, cook a meal or read a pill bottle.

For those and other tasks, Liedtke relies on Carla Eastman, an in-home caretaker.

"Carla does my washing and my house cleaning, because I'd just mess it up," Liedtke said. "She cooks because I can't see the food, hardly."

But Liedtke and more than 18,000 other San Bernardino County residents could lose their home care in June if the state Legislature approves budget cuts proposed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Last month, the governor recommended cutting more than \$950 million from the state's In-Home Supportive Services program, a move that could eliminate services for about 87 percent of IHSS recipients in California. If California doesn't get nearly \$7 billion from the federal government, as Schwarzenegger has requested, he proposed eliminating the program.

Some lawmakers have said the cuts must not happen, while others have said they are looking at the idea, albeit uneasily.

Assemblywoman Wilmer Amina Carter, D-Rialto, said she was disappointed to see such huge cuts proposed, but also said she and other lawmakers "are in the process of seriously reviewing all of the Governor's proposals." She added, though, that Schwarzenegger's plan to eliminate the program in the absence of federal aid is unacceptable.

Liedtke receives 64 hours of in-home care per month. The household help she gets from Eastman - including cooking, cleaning and transportation - enables her to continue living at home.

That's what the IHSS program aims to do: keep seniors and disabled Californians in their own homes rather than in costly nursing homes - the kind of place Liedtke is hell-bent on avoiding.

"I'm not going to go to one of these places where it's all old people who sit around and do nothing but complain about their aches and pains," Liedtke said. "I wouldn't stay. I'd hit the streets first."

But Liedtke wouldn't be considered disabled enough to continue getting home care under Schwarzenegger's January budget proposal. The governor called for limiting home care to those "with the highest level of need." His plan would cut off nearly 92 percent of San Bernardino County residents receiving In-Home Supportive Services, or IHSS.

Before receiving home care, applicants are scored based on how much help they need doing 11 everyday tasks - from laundry and basic cleaning to bathing and cooking. Scores range from 1, meaning they need no help with a task, to 5, meaning they cannot do the task themselves. An average of those scores gives what is called the functional index score.

Under Schwarzenegger's plan, only home-care recipients with a score of 4.0 or above would continue getting services. That's only about 8 percent of IHSS recipients in San Bernardino County and 13 percent statewide.

Despite not being able to see well enough to cook or follow instructions on pill bottles, Liedtke has a score of 2.8, meaning she would lose services.

Lizelda Lopez, a spokeswoman for the California Department of Social Services, said the cuts are so severe because of the state's ongoing fiscal crisis. The cuts are part of a plan to close a nearly \$20 billion budget gap over the next 18 months.

"The recognition here is these cuts are extremely difficult and will create extreme difficulties for our recipients," Lopez said. "But we have a \$20 billion deficit and reductions have to be made."

But lawmakers say cutting IHSS will rob the state of federal money - the program gets half its funding from Washington - and cost the state more in the long run.

"We can cut off people from this program, but ultimately they are going to end up in nursing homes," Torres said.

The state's nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office reported that, in 2007, IHSS cost about \$10,000 per recipient per year, while nursing home care cost \$55,000 per person per year.

Scott Mann, a spokesman for the union representing home-care workers like Eastman, said the IHSS program not only prevents seniors from going to nursing homes, but also keeps seniors healthier and prevents major illness and injuries.

"The governor really needs to look at the entire picture before throwing out these opinions," Torres said.

As it would lead to many fewer IHSS recipients, Schwarzenegger's cuts could put about 285,000 home-care workers in the unemployment line, Mann said. For those who still have clients receiving services, the governor proposed a pay cut - something he tried last year but that has been held up by the courts.

Eastman makes about \$1,000 a month, providing home care for Liedtke and another IHSS recipient, as well as working as a janitor at her church.

She used to be a bill collector, but was laid off. Without her job as a home-care provider, Eastman said she wouldn't be able to make ends meet.

"I'm going to be 61 this month," she said. "They don't hire people my age for much of anything."

Budget cuts endanger In-Home Supportive Services

By James Rufus Koren, Staff Writer

Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

February 6, 2010

http://www.dailybulletin.com/ci_14348045



Francis Deeds, 88, of Upland, seen in her home on Friday, receives 72 hours of in-home care per month, which she would lose if the governor's proposed cuts are approved. (Thomas R. Cordova/Staff Photographer)

Frances Deeds' arthritis has made it difficult to cook, clean or even stand up for too long.

"I can't walk around very much," said Deeds, 88, who lives in Upland. "I don't think I could use the vacuum cleaner, to tell you the truth. And I definitely couldn't strip the sheets off the bed."

For those and other chores and errands - going to the grocery store or doctor's office, opening mail, writing checks - Deeds depends on home-care worker Olga Marquez, who comes by her apartment for a few hours each weekday.

But Deeds and more than 18,000 other San Bernardino County residents could lose their home care in June if the state Legislature approves budget cuts proposed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Last month, the governor recommended cutting more than \$950 million from the state's In-Home Supportive Services program, a move that could eliminate services for about 87 percent of IHSS recipients in California.

Some lawmakers have said the cuts must not happen, while others have said they are looking at the idea, albeit uneasily.

"It should be a nonstarter with everybody," said Assemblywoman Norma Torres, D-Ontario. "These are living, breathing human beings in our communities. We have a responsibility to take care of these people."

Assemblywoman Wilmer Amina Carter, D-Rialto, said she was disappointed to see such huge cuts proposed, but also said she and other lawmakers are "are in the process of seriously reviewing all of the Governor's proposals."

Deeds receives 72 hours of in-home care per month. The household help she gets from Marquez - including cooking, cleaning and transportation - enables her to continue living at home.

"I don't know what I'd do if I didn't have it," Deeds said. I couldn't clean. I don't know how I'd get to the doctor or to the store."

That's what the IHSS program aims to do: keep seniors and disabled Californians in their own homes rather than in costly nursing homes. Asked about living in a nursing home, Deeds sounded frightened.

"I don't ever want to go to one of them," she said. "I seen three or four friends in there. After they were there a while, they weren't the same person."

But Deeds likely wouldn't be considered disabled enough to continue getting home care under Schwarzenegger's January budget proposal. The governor called for limiting home care to those "with the highest level of need." His plan would cut off nearly 92 percent of San Bernardino County residents receiving In-Home Supportive Services, or IHSS.

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Marquez, who has two children, works for Deeds and two other IHSS recipients.

If all three lose their IHSS benefits, she'll be out of work.

"I would end up on the streets," she said. "That's my support, my job. It would be very difficult for me."

BY THE NUMBERS

San Bernardino County residents receiving in-home supportive services: 20,061

County residents who would lose services if governor's cuts are approved: 18,410

California residents receiving IHSS: 489,972

California residents who would lose services: 426,733

Estimated savings: \$950.5 million

Cuts would take effect June 1.

Source: San Bernardino County Department of Aging and Adult Services, California Department of Finance.



California's proposed in-home care cutoff leaves few options

By Anita Creamer

Sacramento Bee

January 14, 2009

http://www.sacbee.com/296/story/2460474.html?storylink=lingospot_related_articles



Joe Saunders and his wife, Phyllis, left, are able to remain in the Woodlake home Saunders' parents bought in the mid-1950s because of the help of a caregiver from In-Home Supportive Services. Their caregiver, Tara Smith, standing, prepares dinner for the couple and their niece, Sandy Gridley, rear. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has proposed eliminating IHSS. Photo: Manny Crisostomo/Sacramento Bee.

Like his wife, Phyllis, Joe Saunders was born with cerebral palsy. But it took a car accident a couple of decades ago to leave Saunders, now 74, in a wheelchair, with limited use of his arms and legs, unable to continue working as a rehabilitation center counselor.

With the help of a caregiver from In-Home Supportive Services, the couple are able to remain in the small, fraying Woodlake home Saunders' parents bought in the mid-1950s.

"This way, we maintain our dignity as citizens," said Saunders. "I like my dignity. We're in our own home. That's not degrading. That's what we call the golden years."

The golden years are threatened, though. About 22,000 low-income elderly and disabled Sacramento County residents are in the middle of a fight over state finances.

As part of his budget plan, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has proposed eliminating IHSS, the state's fastest growing social services program, which pays caregivers to help the disabled and the frail elderly.

With the graying of the population, IHSS enrollment has soared, and so has its price. Founded in 1973, the program serves 400,000 Californians and will cost an estimated \$1.5 billion this year.

Sacramento County spent \$23.5 million on the program in 2009, up from \$5.9 million in 2001.

Last year the governor also proposed eliminating the program, but a political and legal fight instead resulted in deep cuts.

With more cuts, or the program's elimination, on the horizon, administrators are scrambling to find alternatives. So far they've found none.

"There isn't anything being offered as an option. There are no options," said Sharon Rehm, who helps manage IHSS in Sacramento County.

In part, said Sacramento County Senior and Adult Services division chief Bernadette Lynch, that's because previous rounds of budget cuts have de-funded a network of services that could have helped IHSS clients.

Already on the list of slashed programs are adult day services, the Older Adult Resource Center and an Adult Protective Services program that trained mail carriers to watch out for vulnerable seniors living at home.

What's more, Lynch said, the county's senior nutrition program is set to lose funding on July 1.

"Maybe churches could step up in a minimal way, but they can't step up for everybody," said Lynch. "They can't plug all the gaps."

And nonprofits, still reeling from the recession's negative effects on donations, won't be able to plug the gaps, either, said Tim Hodson, executive director of the Center for California Studies.

"It was a myth to think that the nonprofit sector could replace government," he said.

Without IHSS, many current clients would be forced to move to skilled nursing centers that accept Medi-Cal patients. At an average expense of \$55,000 a year, nursing homes cost five times as much per IHSS client.

The number of skilled nursing center beds has dwindled through the years as IHSS' success has grown at helping the elderly continue living independently, Rehm said.

Joe Saunders said he simply wants to stay in his own home with his wife and niece.

"It's a delicate situation," he said. "We're at the end of our rope. And we're part of the mass of people who have no say."

At the Saunders home – which Joe and Phyllis share with their niece Sandy Gridley, 47, who suffers from brain damage and is under the Saunders' conservatorship – caregiver Tara Smith arrives at 7:30 a.m. five days each week. First, she makes coffee and breakfast.

"I do laundry and make beds and go grocery shopping," said Smith, 36, a former convalescent center aide who has worked for the family for three years and does everything from feeding Phyllis to helping the Saunderses in the bathroom. "I pay the bills and take them to the doctor. I make sure they're clean. I'm here 11 hours a day."

Phyllis Saunders, 73, can't use her arms.

For all of this, Smith, a single mother of three, makes \$10.40 an hour. On the weekends, the Saunderses' son, Calvin, 47, takes over care duties.

More than 60 percent of IHSS caregivers are family members.

"It's hard work," Smith said. "If you're caring for a relative, you still have to go to work and get money to take care of your own family. It makes sense to pay them for this."

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