

Medi-Cal cuts could affect skilled nursing centers, including Barton

Publisher's note: In regards to the following article, Barton Health Vice President of Finance Dick Derby said, "The affects of Medi-Cal cuts to Barton Health's Skilled Nursing Facility is currently under review. Currently, the estimated annual negative impact to Barton is \$1.5 million. The Skilled Nursing Facility at Barton Memorial Hospital is always at capacity and generally has an average of 47 out of 48 'residents' funded by MediCal. We understand the great benefit this facility has on our community and are researching options to assist us in continuing to provide this vital service to our residents. In addition, the California Hospital Association has filed an injunction against the reduction and the case is to be heard on Dec. 19."

By Darrell Smith, Sacramento Bee

Hospital officials in California's rural counties say the latest round of cuts to Medi-Cal could leave thousands of the state's neediest people without access to medical care.

At particular risk, they say, are elderly and long-term patients who need skilled-nursing care.

"This is a real crisis," said Anthony Wright, executive director of Health Access California, a patient advocacy group. "We have been skeptical of providers' claims in other areas, but not with Medi-Cal cuts."

The cuts are intended to save the budget-strapped state up to \$623 million. Reimbursement rates will be trimmed as much as 10 percent, but earlier cuts blocked by legal action could also take effect, making the effective reductions 20 percent

or more.

“This is a difficult decision,” said Norman Williams, a state Department of Health Care Services spokesman. “California is facing a tremendous shortfall. There is pain.”

Medi-Cal is the name for the state’s federal Medicaid program. It serves more than 7 million low-income Californians – approximately 20 percent of residents – and costs the state more than \$41 billion a year, about 13 percent of the budget.

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