

Governor Schwarzenegger Proposes Major Expansion of Mandatory Medi-Cal Managed Care

Governor Schwarzenegger has proposed a major expansion of mandatory managed care for Californians with disabilities whose health care is covered under Medi-Cal. The Medi-Cal program serves 6.6 million people and spends over \$34 billion, many on a fee-for-service basis. The proposed redesign will move many beneficiaries into a managed care program, considered to deliver better quality care and better access.

During the last two legislative sessions, the legislature has resisted the administration's attempts to proceed with the proposed Medi-Cal redesign. The legislative hesitancy is attributed to the opposition voiced by such consumer groups as older adults, adults with chronic conditions, persons with disabilities, and other advocacy groups. Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs), on the other hand, have argued that they have evolved and are now ready to provide appropriate care to those consumer groups. In January, 2006, the Schwarzenegger administration is expected to make another strong push in the legislature for authority to implement its proposed changes. Tremendous budgetary pressure exists to enact the proposal.

As policymakers explore this major change to a vital health care option, The California Health Care Foundation (CHCF), an independent philanthropy, has commissioned a report with recommendations for Medi-Cal contract standards and performance measures for health plans serving those with disabilities and chronic conditions. The 96-page report, or a short summary, can be viewed in its entirety on the Internet at www.chcf.org/topics/medi-cal/perfstandards/index.

SARreport readers are urged to monitor these events closely and to call SAR staff with questions or concerns.

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A Word from SAR

From the President...

This is a busy season for your Association. We are preparing for our Annual Membership meeting and election of Board Officers and Members in late January, arranging for our annual Appreciation Dinner in late March, and preparing for a conservatorship futures planning seminar in early March. On top of that, the lease on the space occupied by your Association's administrative staff for the past five years ends early next year, and we are working to move to a more congenial and less expensive space. All of this sets a program of very focused work for staff.

Speaking of staff, I want to take a moment to welcome two new staff members to the Association. Kelly Montelongo is our new Office Manager. Her predecessor has retired and moved closer to her children in Texas. Kelly has many years of experience as an office manager and has quickly settled into her new position and claimed it as her own. I also want to welcome Doris Kussner, our new Staff Associate providing support to SAR's Conservatorship Program Committee and to the Sacramento County Developmental Disabilities Planning and Advisory Council, and assisting families who call seeking information, referral and advocacy services. Doris has worked in residential facilities and for the Department of Developmental Services, and has a good foundation of knowledge in the developmental services field. Her predecessor has moved on to a job as a service coordinator at Alta California Regional Center. It is my very great pleasure to welcome Kelly and Doris to SAR, and to wish them the very best in their endeavors.

- Jay Vallone, President

... and the Director's Desk

I want to add my own welcome to Jay's to the two new staff members, Kelly and Doris. These are two knowledgeable and energetic individuals, and I look forward to working with them in the months and years ahead to advance to goals of the Association.

Meanwhile, there are important issues being debated that call on the strength and determination of everyone whose lives are affected by the presence of mental retardation. Federal and State efforts to control the cost of health care provided through Medicaid programs (Medi-Cal in California) can threaten vital benefits now provided to persons with developmental disabilities, along with older adults and others with disabilities. More will be known after the fiscal year 2006-07 budget is released in January. I invite all SARreport readers to watch their news outlets as these matters are debated, and to call SAR at (916) 568-2088 with questions or concerns.

EARLY DOWN SYNDROME DIAGNOSIS: Editorial Debates Smolder

The November 25th, 2005 edition of the Sacramento Bee carried an editorial by Kathryn Jean Lopez, editor of the National Review Online (www.nationalreview.com) and a regular contributor to the Bee on Fridays. Ms. Lopez cited a story in a recent edition of the Washington Post with the headline, "Down Syndrome Now Detectable In 1st Trimester: Earlier Diagnosis Allows More Time for Decisions."

The 'decision' is clearly a reference to the question of abortion and brings with it all the divisive baggage that has encumbered that debate for decades. On a more poignant note, the 'decision' discussed by Ms. Lopez refers to estimates that "between 80 and 90 percent of Down [syndrome] children are now aborted after prenatal test 'warnings.'"

Ms. Lopez continued her discussion, citing the ensuing editorial controversy through two commentators, one who delivered a child with Down syndrome and who must contend with the negative judgments of her peers, and one who chose to abort her child with Down syndrome, and foreclosed the public portion of the discussion. She then went on to decry the view that children with Down syndrome display 'avoidable human suffering' and embrace them as 'worthy of life as any of the rest of us with problems and imperfections.'

Ms. Lopez' column finished with a paragraph worth citing in its entirety. "And in denying Down [syndrome] children their lives, parents close themselves off to beautiful blessings. John McGinley, who plays Dr. Cox on the NBC comedy "Scrubs," was pretty down to earth about it in an interview last year, "When you have a child who was born with special needs, it's very confusing and disconcerting and you really don't know which end is up and you feel like you're from Mars and you did something wrong. It turns out that God blessed you with a really special package."

This issue was also addressed by the New York Times on November 10, 2005, which reported that the new first trimester test detected 87% of Down syndrome children as opposed to 81% of second trimester tests (New England Journal of Medicine). Down syndrome affects two million people worldwide, occurring about once in every 700 to 900 live births. Down syndrome is the world's leading cause of mental retardation. The new test involves a combination blood and ultrasound tests, conducted at 11 to 13 weeks gestation. Some doctors question research that makes it easier to abort children with Down syndrome, and that so many parents believe a diagnosis of Down syndrome is a reason to terminate a pregnancy.

The Sacramento Association for the Retarded Announces its Annual Membership Meeting

**Mr. Gary Blumenthal, Executive Director,
Alta California Regional Center
will be the Guest Speaker.**

**Mr. Blumenthal will discuss the direction he has set
for the regional center's future.**

| |
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| DATE: Thursday, January 26 th , 2006 |
| TIME: 7:00 p.m. |
| PLACE: SAR's administrative offices – 1791 Tribute Road, Suite A, Sacramento |

There will be an election of Officers and Board Members at this meeting.

Plenty of FREE, SECURE parking available.

Plan now to attend, and meet Gary Blumenthal!

ANNOUNCING

SAR's Annual Appreciation Dinner

Scheduled for Thursday, March 23rd, 2006

DoubleTree Hotel

6:00 p.m. – No Host Cocktails

7:00 p.m. – Dinner Seating

**Watch your mail for a chance to nominate a service provider
to receive an award at the dinner.**

Call (916) 568-2088 if you want to place an advertisement in the Annual Dinner program.

Test May Reveal Brain Damage Caused By Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

In a study conducted on 22 children – ten with fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) and twelve without – a Canadian team led by James Reynolds, professor of pharmacology and toxicology at Queen's University on Kingston, Ontario, has reported that a simple eye-tracking test may detect brain damage attributed to FAS. Children with FAS have a distinctive pattern of visual movement linked to specific areas of the brain. Such eye tracking tests – asking the subject to focus on a steady light while distracting them with a moving light – have been widely used to discern neurological problems, but the technique is new to diagnosing FAS. Kids without FAS or other brain damage can do the task, but it takes a lot of concentration to accomplish it. Kids with FAS or with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) can't suppress the brain structures involved in reflexively tracking the moving light. Kids with FAS appear to have unique deficits that are not present in kids with ADHD. Further research is expected to demonstrate whether the eye-tracking test is conclusive.

It is important to identify a diagnostic tool that can spot FAS, as opposed to ADHD. FAS occurs as a result of a fetus' in-utero developmental response to its mother's use of alcoholic beverages during pregnancy. Current diagnoses are based on physical characteristics, intelligence assessments, and behavioral and learning difficulties. A child with FAS may have any of the following distinctive facial features: small eye openings; a webbing of skin between the eyes and the base of the nose; droopy eyelids; a thin upper lip; and low-set or poorly formed ears. Further, brain damage caused by the in-utero exposure to alcohol may lead to such behavioral disturbances as poor impulse control, lying, stealing, tantruming and aggression. Those behavioral disturbances can be caused by such other conditions as ADHD, and often kids with FAS can be misdiagnosed with another condition. The misdiagnosis can lead to missed opportunities. A child must be provided the specialized therapies needed for an effective intervention based on an accurate diagnosis and in a timely manner. It is the specialized therapies that can facilitate their ability to learn and to modify thinking patterns and behaviors.

Reynolds shines a bright light on the hope that the eye-tracking test will provide a definitive diagnosis of fetal alcohol syndrome. "When they're not identified and they're thrown into school systems where they cannot cope, they fail. They drop out, they don't get a proper education, they often end up on the street, they end up in trouble with the law."

ABOUT THE BOARD CANDIDATES

FOR OFFICERS OF THE BOARD

FOR PRESIDENT:

JAY VALLONE

Jay Vallone owns and operates a licensed care home in Sacramento. He has been working in the mental retardation services field since 1982, has served on the SAR Board of Directors for the past ten years and currently serves as its President. Jay has worked as the QMRP (Qualified Mental Retardation Professional) at Mt. Olivette, the Meadows, has served on the Human Rights Committee at PRIDE Industries, and has been the Association's Treasurer.

FOR FIRST VICE PRESIDENT:

MAXINE RICHEY

Maxine Richey retired from state service as a supervising hazardous substances scientist for the California Environmental Protection Agency. She has been a long-time volunteer for the Sacramento Natural Food Co-op where she wrote a column for their newsletter profiling member workers. Maxine has served on a local Community Area Planning and Advisory Committee for the County Board of Supervisors. She has served on SAR's Board of Directors since 1995, and currently sits as the Conservatorship Program Committee Chair. Maxine has five children, including a son, Jason aged 40 years, who is a special education teacher, and a daughter, Rebecca, aged 38 years, who has mental retardation.

FOR SECRETARY:

GINNY PETRINOVICH

Ginny Petrinovich has worked as an instructional assistant in the full inclusion program at Cameron Ranch Elementary School and at Pershing Elementary School, and as secretary at Orange Grove Adult School. She was a long-time member of the Special Education Community Advisory Committee in the San Juan School District, and served on its Least Restrictive Environment Committee. For the past year she has served on SAR's Board as its Secretary and as a member of the SAR Grants Committee. Ginny and her husband, Mike, have three sons: John, aged 31, works at

FOR OFFICERS OF THE BOARD, CONTINUED

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Orangevale Community Center through In-Alliance; Matthew, 28, teaches 5th grade in the Elk Grove School District; and Nicholas, 24, graduated from California State University – Sacramento, completed his Emergency Medical Technician training and is working to become a paramedic.

FOR TREASURER:

COLLETTE SZYMBORSKI

Collette Szymborski is a certified public accountant operating a firm, Elk Grove CPA Accountancy Corporation, in Elk Grove, where she lives with her family. While she is not a parent of a child with mental retardation, she has long been familiar with the Association as a donor to its reusable household goods home pick-up program. Her professional expertise is a valuable asset to the Association where she has served as Treasurer for the past eighteen months.

FOR CONTINUING BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Linda Stilson (family), **Mary Lou Stilson** (parent), **Nettie Fischer** (parent), and **Donna Wooley** (parent) will continue their terms through 2006. **Heather Prieto** (parent), **Elaine Linn** (parent), and **Delilah Jordan** (parent) will continue their terms through 2007.

An election of Board Officers and Members will be held at SAR's Annual Membership Meeting on Thursday, January 26th, 2006.

The Board Officers and Members elected at that time will be installed in their positions at SAR's Annual Awards Dinner on Thursday, March 23rd, 2006.

SARreport readers are invited to note each of these dates on their calendars, watch for further information in their mail, and plan to join us on those dates.

Donate your used vehicle to SAR

- Cars • Trucks • Boats • RVs • Motorcycles

Free pick-up - Running or Not

Your donation of a used vehicle to the Association is tax deductible and will help SAR provide valuable services to persons with mental retardation and their families in the Sacramento area.

**To donate your vehicle, call: (916) 568-2088
or visit our website at www.sacramentoar.org**

Local Artists Place Work in Bistro

New Artwork installed in the "Buy Californian Bistro" showcases the work of artists with developmental disabilities. Located in the Food and Agriculture Department office building at 12th and N Streets in downtown Sacramento, the display in the Bistro is designed and created by artists from Sacramento's Southside Arts Center, Grass Valley's Neighborhood Center for the Arts, and Yuba City's Creative Art Center. The theme of the artwork is California produce, and presents a delightful array of farm animals and cleverly presented produce. The best designs are displayed on twenty-one hand-painted Plexiglas panels hung in front of the Bistro's windows, creating a stunning stained glass effect. The Bistro is operated by and employs individuals with developmental disabilities, thus further showcasing the skills and abilities of the creators of the art work.

This coalition of artists continues to display the work of artists with developmental disabilities at the New Visions Gallery, located at Country Club Plaza in Sacramento at the intersection of Watt and El Camino Avenues.

Thrift Town to Open New Store Soon

As many SARreport readers know, the Association generates the majority of its revenue from collecting donations of reusable household goods which are then sold to Thrift Town Stores. Due to the tremendous success in the local thrift shop market, the operators of Thrift Town stores are pleased to announce the opening of their third Store in this area. SARreport readers are invited to watch for the Grand Opening celebration coming soon. The new store will be located at 6328 Fair Oaks Blvd., at the corner of Fair Oaks and Marconi, in Carmichael. Thrift Town looks forward to continuing success in their new, additional location, as well as further success in both their current store locations, as they work together with SAR to build a better future for people with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities. Thrift Town operators are delighted to take this opportunity to thank SARreport readers for their support, and to say that they look forward to seeing you soon in one of their three Sacramento area Thrift Town locations.

- Thrift Town at 410 El Camino in Sacramento
- Thrift Town at 5005 Stockton Blvd. in Sacramento
- Thrift Town to open this fall at 6328 Fair Oaks Blvd., in Carmichael

To arrange a donation pick-up, call SAR's Donor Services office at (916) 737-3433!

**Donating gently used household items
to SAR's Household Recycling Program
is a great way to help SAR!**

Supporters of the Sacramento Association of the Retarded often want to know how to help. A large portion of the Association's funding is generated by people like you who donate their 'useable' clothing, furniture, toys and other household items to SAR. Donations like these are always appreciated and valuable to SAR. Next time you clean out your garage or closet, don't throw away your 'useable' items. They make a BIG difference to SAR! It's simple. It's tax deductible. It's good for the environment too!

**To schedule a donation pick-up, call:
(800) 421-9442 or (916) 737-3433**

All Thrift Town sales benefit the Sacramento Association for the Retarded.

With over 4,000 items arriving daily, every day is a treasure hunt!

Visit either of the two current Thrift Town locations in Sacramento:

5005 Stockton Blvd. – (916) 454-0435

4210 El Camino Ave. – (916) 922-9942

www.thrifttown.com

FUTURE PLANNING AND CONSERVATORSHIP SEMINAR

The Association will offer several future planning and conservatorship seminars next year.

The next one will be on Thursday, March 2nd, at the School District Offices at 9510 Elk Grove-Florin Road, in Elk Grove.

A small registration fee will be charged to reserve your space at the seminars. The fee will help offset the full cost of the Conservatorship Handbook available at the event.

For details, call SAR staff at (916) 568-2088

Court Rules Against Parents of Disabled Students

As reported in the Sacramento Bee on November 15, 2005, the U. S. Supreme Court has ruled that parents of special education students bear the burden of proof when disputing individual education plans (IEP) proposed by schools and believed by the parents to be inadequate. The case was brought by a Maryland couple who felt that the IEP proposed by the Montgomery County school system for their son, Brian, was unacceptable. They sought tuition reimbursement for the year Brian spent in a private school and argued that the school system had an obligation to defend the adequacy of the proposed IEP.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guarantees each student with a learning disability a free and appropriate public education based on their individually assessed needs, and provides a right to a formal hearing in front of a neutral party if the plan is deemed inadequate. Most special education litigation is initiated by families seeking changes to IEPs proposed by a school system but deemed by the families to be unresponsive to the identified needs of their student. The burden of proof is decisive in only a small number of cases. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor wrote that, "We will conclude that the burden of persuasion lies where it usually falls, upon the party seeking relief."

More than 6.4 million children, about 13.4% of the national public school population, receive special education services. Nationwide, in 1999-2000, such litigation cost school systems \$146.5 million.

If you or someone you know needs help with an IEP, call SAR at (916) 568-2088.

MEMORIALS

*Your Association is pleased to memorialize the members
of the SAR family who have passed away.
Your donation in their name contributes to the efforts
to continue the work they have done
and the work done on their behalf.*

Joseph Conti

Frances Castilone
Mr. & Mrs. Kenn Munn

Richard A. Wilson

Sally Argys
Roger W. Chapman & Family
Matt Flynn
Andrew & Anita Hazen
M Susan Mecum
Nirmala Prasad
Willard A. & Elizabeth B. Shank
Lois Shewmaker

Terre Fields

Karen Fields
Craig Fields

In special memory of a dear friend and humorous companion

SACRAMENTO ASSOCIATION FOR THE RETARDED

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(916) 568-2088

Your Association depends on your donation of reusable items.

To arrange pickup service, call (916) 737-3433.

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*On behalf of the Board of Directors and Staff
of the Sacramento Association for the Retarded,
we wish you the very best of the Holiday Season!*