

ANALYSIS: VITAL MEDI-CAL; BENEFITS ON CHOPPING BLOCK FOR 2.5 MILLION CALIFORNIANS REAL CUTS, REAL PAIN

Facing a \$17.2 billion – and growing – budget shortfall, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger bluntly slashed programs by 10 percent across-the-board. Large numbers and detached descriptions of programs to be eliminated do not adequately put into context the true impact and loss of dignity for Californians who will suffer under these cuts the most. All told, the cuts proposed total \$85.4 million – less than .06 percent of the total budget, but would devastate the lives of 2.5 million adults who depend on these services as their lifelines. In many cases, these adults who earn less than \$1,000 a month would be hit several times.

Cut	Impact on Health and on Lives	% and \$ savings to General Fund	Patients expected to be turned away <small>(based on # of unduplicated users in 2006-07)</small>
DENTAL CARE FOR ADULTS: Adults on Medi-Cal would no longer be able to receive preventive teeth cleanings, x-rays. Dental care, such as a tooth extraction, which can be performed by a physician is still covered and may provided by a dentist.	Preventive dental care prevents cavities, gum disease, abscesses and chronic pain. If not identified and treated, adults could lose their teeth, which impact their ability to eat properly and stay healthy, or to even hold a job. Abscesses and infections could also lead to fevers, swelling in the glands and jaws or even death.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.07% • \$73.8 million 	909,090
EYEGASSES AND CONTACT LENSES: Medi-Cal recipients would no longer be able to fill their prescriptions for eyewear.	Seniors with disabilities fill 70% of the prescriptions under this program. Medi-Cal contracts with the Prison Industry Authority to make eyeglasses at a cost of \$20 per pair. Filling prescriptions at a retail location would cost this population, who survive on – at most \$997 a month, hundreds of dollars for both frames and lenses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.003% • \$6.1 million 	485,873
EYE EXAMS AND PREVENTIVE SCREENINGS: Optometrist visits would no longer be covered, but these services could still be provided, at greater expense, through an ophthalmologist.	In addition to prescribing glasses and contact lenses, routine eye exams performed by an optometrist screen for glaucoma, cataracts, high blood pressure, macular degeneration and diabetes. In fact, patients with diabetes should have their eyes examined annually. Delayed or skipped screenings could mean that treatable illnesses would not be caught until later, when they became more expensive and harmful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.0004% • \$1 million 	214,522

<p>SKINCARE FOR INCONTINENT PATIENTS: Medi-Cal recipients would no longer be able to receive prescribed incontinence creams and washes.</p>	<p>All people must keep their skin clean and dry to avoid irritation, infections and sores. For people who are incontinent, wheelchair- or bed-bound, have poor leg circulation or are receiving radiation in their pelvic area, these treatments assist with keeping skin clean and protect against moisture. Failure to do so leads to painful infections and sores, and possibly death. Through Medi-Cal, very low income patients do not have to pay for this basic medical necessity. The aged and disabled population, which lives on (at most) \$997 a month, would need to pay \$10 to \$20 for each tube or spray if this benefit is eliminated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.0036% • \$3.6 million 	<p>65,591</p>
<p>ACUPUNCTURE: Access to an acupuncturist would no longer be available.</p>	<p>Acupuncture is used to help manage and lessen chronic pain. Ninety percent of patients using this service are aged, blind and disabled, earning, at most \$997 a month.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.001% • \$1.4 million 	<p>32,906</p>
<p>FOOT CARE: Access to a podiatrist would no longer be available.</p>	<p>Podiatry services are especially important for patients with diabetes, a chronic disease which damages nerves and blood vessels. That means foot sores (such as rubbing from a shoe), ulcers and infections could go undetected because a person cannot feel and blood does not circulate to the area to hasten healing. Infections spread and could eventually lead to amputation. More than half of all amputations (not caused through trauma) occur in diabetic patients; diabetic patients make up about 3 percent of the entire population. About 15 percent of Medi-Cal recipients have been diagnosed with diabetes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.0009% • \$855,000 	<p>85,129</p>
<p>HEARING AIDS: Access to audiology services to screen, diagnose and evaluate the need for hearing aids and therapy would be limited to what physicians could provide.</p>	<p>In order to hear and listen to the world around them, patients would need to pay for their own screenings and hearing aids.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.002% • \$1.7 million 	<p>28,061</p>
<p>SPEECH THERAPY: Access speech therapists would no longer be available.</p>	<p>Speech therapists help retrain patients who have had a stroke, suffer from Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis or other disorders how to talk and swallow.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.0001% • \$110,000 	<p>1,593</p>
<p>CHIROPRACTIC VISITS: Access to chiropractors would no longer be available.</p>	<p>Patients would need to pay for chiropractic visits, which help lessen chronic back pain.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.0002% • \$196,000 	<p>12,439</p>
<p>MENTAL HEALTH: Access to a psychologist for behavioral therapy, currently at two treatments a month would be scaled back to none except where a patient is severely mentally ill.</p>	<p>Patients would no longer be able to see a therapist to help cope with life events, including death, divorce, employment and any range of issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.00009% • \$95,000 	<p>4,970</p>