

# Ageing Alliance warns of changes to Medicare and Medi-Cal

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State Assemblywoman Mariko Yamada speaks at the Yolo Healthy Aging Alliance town hall meeting on the Coordinated Care Initiative at the Yolo County Library, Davis Branch on Monday. Yolo County Supervisor Jim Provenza, left, and Yolo County Department of Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Director Kim Suderman, center, look on. (Joe Proudman/Special to The Democrat)

A change is on the way for those dually enrolled in Medicare and Medi-Cal in Yolo County.

Though it will be several years before the change reaches residents, they will have plenty of help gathering information thanks to a new agency dedicated to informing seniors in the area.

The Yolo Healthy Aging Alliance, which is chaired by Yolo County Supervisor Jim Provenza, is helping to guide seniors who are enrolled in both Medicare and Medi-Cal and will see their benefits from each possibly come under the Coordinated Care Initiative in the next few years.

Sheila Allen, who is the executive director for the alliance, said Yolo County will be in the second batch of counties to take on the initiative.

According to the state Department of Health Care Services the first eight counties to implement the initiative will be Alameda, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Mateo and Santa Clara. They will begin between March 2013 and June 2013.

A change in service of this magnitude is generating concern for those Yolo County residents dually enrolled in both services Allen said. This is where the alliance steps in, which hosted a town hall meeting in Davis on Monday for those with questions about Coordinated Care.

"What most people want to know is: What does it mean to me?" Allen said. "The first question everybody asks is will I be able to see my same provider, and that is a question we haven't answered yet.

"In theory this could

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really be a great thing."

The Yolo Healthy Aging Alliance officially got off the ground this past June, but was concocted after a 2010 county-wide aging summit that revealed gaps in senior services in Yolo County. The alliance is looking to be the information and coordinating hub for the decentralized elderly services available to Yolo residents.

"It was because the summit identified that first of all that there was a gap in services and there was no voice for seniors in Yolo County," Allen said. "We were wanting to fill that gap, and bring people together through collaboration and be a voice for seniors in Yolo County.

"Barely a week goes by that I don't get an email that says, 'I heard about this Yolo County Healthy Aging Alliance and I need to be part of it.'"

The alliance will work with organizations providing senior services in Yolo County, and specifically will focus on In-Home Supportive Services, Adult Day Health Care and, of course, the Coordinated Care Initiative in the near future.

On Monday about 45 people attended the town hall meeting. Supervisor Provenza, Assemblywoman Mariko Yamada and Yolo County Department of Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Director Kim Suderman were among those that spoke at the meeting.

"We need to make the best of what is going to be major health care delivery changes at the federal level and state level," Yamada said at the meeting.

She also advised those in attendance to pay attention to what happens in the first wave of counties, "and what could happen here in Yolo County."

If and when Yolo County adopts the Coordinated Care Initiative will depend on how it is accepted in the first eight counties.