



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LEGAL AID TO EDUCATE PUBLIC ON MEDICAID HOME CARE CUTS

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JONESBORO, Ark., June 2, 2017– In response to widespread cuts in Medicaid ARChoices home-care services for roughly 4,000 Arkansans with disabilities, non-profit Legal Aid of Arkansas will host two public education meetings in northeast and northwest Arkansas. The meetings will focus on the Medicaid ARChoices program, the computer algorithms used by the state to determine how much care clients receive, and how individuals affected by the cuts can fight the reductions.

The first meeting will happen in Jonesboro on June 7 from 1 to 3 p.m. at the East Arkansas Area Agency on Aging at 2005 E. Highland Dr. #303. The second meeting will happen in Bentonville on June 16 from 1 to 3 p.m. at the central library at 405 S. Main St. Both events will be accessible for people with disabilities.

The events will also be broadcast via Facebook Live from Legal Aid of Arkansas's Facebook page and via webinar (for webinar registration, contact Kevin De Liban at kdeliban@arlegalaid.org).

Since the Department of Human Services started using computer algorithms in 2016, nearly half of the 8,000 ARChoices program clients have been cut. Individuals with disabilities like cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, and quadriplegia have seen cuts in services between 20% and 60%, forcing them to lie in their own waste, skip meals, stay shut in, miss medications, and go without other basic necessities. Although ARChoices is supposed to keep people who are elderly or disabled at home in their communities, the cuts could force people into nursing homes, which cost around three times as much on average as community-based care.

These public education events follow litigation led by Legal Aid on behalf of the over 100 ARChoices clients who have come to Legal Aid for help in the last year. In 2016, Legal Aid sued DHS in federal court and won, with the judge ruling that DHS did not adequately explain the cuts. After DHS refused to negotiate around remaining problems with the algorithms, Legal Aid was forced to sue DHS again, this time on behalf of seven plaintiffs in state court. In February 2017, Legal Aid won a temporary restraining order forcing the state to halt the cuts for the seven plaintiffs. Although a trial on the issue was set for July 2017, DHS appealed that ruling, causing the trial to be delayed indefinitely. The appeal is currently pending in the Arkansas Supreme Court.

Legal Aid of Arkansas is a non-profit legal aid provider that helps low-income Arkansans in civil legal matters. For further information on the ARChoices public education meetings, contact Kevin De Liban at (901) 834-0436 or at kdeliban@arlegalaid.org.

