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## **State budget cuts are 'proposed on the backs of children and families in need'**

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**By Dawn Neuses, dneuses@qconline.com**

Leaders of Quad-Cities area human service agencies say Gov. Pat Quinn's proposed fiscal year 2012 budget would negatively affect their programs and clients if the budget is passed as presented.

They're counting on some changes as the legislature works on the budget recommended by Gov. Quinn for FY2012, which begins July 1, 2011,

Gov. Quinn proposed a 9.8 percent reduction in funding for the Department of Human Services from \$6 billion this year to \$5.4 billion budget for next year. It would be the third year in a row the department's budget would be cut. In 2010, it was \$6.3 billion.

Among Quad-Cities agencies to be impacted:

-- **Bethany for Children & Families:** The governor's proposal would cut funding for Bethany's Teen Parent Services program from \$80,000 now to \$40,000 in 2012, said Mary Ann McLeod, director of community services.

She said that last month, the program assisted between 50 and 60 teen parents, working to help them stay in school, teaching parenting skills and assisting with other needs the teens have.

"I'm disappointed once again the cuts are proposed on the backs of children and families in need," she said.

-- **Casa Guanajuato Quad Cities:** Executive director Michael Woods said the proposed cuts to include a 56 percent reduction to immigrant services in 2012 and a 69 percent cut to refugee services.

Casa, based in Moline, uses the money to assist people with immigration questions and other issues including legal, employment, family and health needs, Mr. Woods said.

He said the immigrant and refugee programs are very important given U.S. Census figures showing the state's Hispanic and Asian populations have grown 33.8 percent over the last 10 years.

-- **Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Peoria:** Catholic Charities, which provides services to clients in 26 Illinois counties, including 2,200 in Rock Island County, faces cuts in its prevention services program for at-risk youth in low-income areas, said Tony Riordan, chief operating officer.

Mr. Riordan said the next step is legislative maneuvering and jockeying. "We are monitoring the situation closely, doing advocacy and due diligence, and over the years we also have learned not to overreact. Our hair is not on fire because we know the budget will look very

different as it goes on," he said.

Judith Gethner, director of Illinois Partners for Human Services -- which represents 650 human service providers across the state -- said the proposed cuts continue the decimation of human services.

"It happened last year and the year before," she said. "I am not suggesting there should not be cuts to reform the budget in Illinois, but it needs to be a combination of things, like pension reform. None of that was mentioned in the governor's proposed budget," Ms. Gethner said.

"He continues to dismantle community-based programs," she added.

The members of Illinois Partners will meet Tuesday to craft a message and plan to make a case to the governor, legislators, communities and the media, Ms. Gethner said.

If the cuts do occur, the agencies affected are those that touch everyone, from veterans, the disabled, domestic violence victims, addicts, youth, the aged and people needing housing assistance.

Some may be forced to close, she said.