



Click to Print

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)**Related Terms:** [Arnold Schwarzenegger](#), [Oceanside](#), [San Diego County](#)

Total loss of state funds imperils domestic violence shelters

By [John Wilkens](#)
Union-Tribune Staff Writer

2:00 a.m. August 6, 2009

BUDGET CUTS: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS

California has helped pay for shelters for battered spouses and other domestic violence programs since 1977.

What's changed: All funding for shelter services was eliminated from the current budget, saving the state \$20 million.

The impact: Losing the state money won't close many shelters, but it could lead to cutbacks in services or staff.

The state's financial crisis had the people who run domestic violence shelters in San Diego County and throughout California expecting a 20 percent drop in funding.

What they got was much worse.

The budget signed last week by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger eliminated all Department of Public Health funding for shelter services, a cut of \$20 million from a year ago.

That may be pocket change in a state budget totaling \$85 billion, but for the 94 programs affected statewide, it's significant – on average, about 30 percent of their budgets.

Barring a legislative reprieve – one Bay Area state senator proposed this week shifting money from a crime-victims compensation fund to domestic violence – some shelters in San Diego plan to lay off employees, reduce pay or trim programs.

“We're already struggling to meet the need, and to think of even cutting back marginally is heart-wrenching,” said Verna Griffin-Tabor, CEO of the Center for Community Solutions, which provides shelters, a hotline, counseling and legal services for about 27,000 people a year.

Her agency will lose \$414,000 in state funding, about 9 percent of its budget. She's still trying to figure out

how to absorb it. “That translates into a lot of services,” she said. “We’ll keep our shelters open, but we’ll have to serve fewer people.”

The local YWCA is losing \$200,000, about 20 percent of its budget. Its CEO, Heather Finlay, said the cutbacks arrive as the demand for help is increasing – and for the same reason: the bad economy. Financial hardship is a leading trigger in domestic violence cases.

“We understood that every program in every department in the state would probably receive some kind of reduction,” Finlay said. “But our community is absolutely stunned that we got a 100 percent cut.”

As part of the protracted negotiations on the 2009-10 budget, the Legislature agreed to trim shelter funding by \$4 million, or about 20 percent. Schwarzenegger then eliminated the other \$16 million in a \$489 million package of line-item vetoes.

“We were kind of blindsided by it,” said Marva Bledsoe, executive director of the Women’s Resource Center in Oceanside, where all employees are taking a 10 percent pay cut to offset the \$207,000 lost in state funding.

Schwarzenegger said at a news conference that he recognized what the cuts will mean to California’s “vulnerable citizens,” but called them necessary because of the state’s financial mess.

While those savings look good on paper, “We’ll wind up paying in other ways,” Bledsoe said – more police calls on domestic-violence cases involving victims who might otherwise be in shelters, more emergency room visits, more children missing school.

The state has been providing support for domestic violence programs since 1977, when it began allocating money from an increase in marriage license fees.

Camille Hayes, communications coordinator for the Sacramento-based California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, said the budget cutbacks will have the biggest impact in rural communities, where money from other sources is limited. She said she’s heard of three shelters in Northern California that will probably have to close.

But even agencies better able to absorb a revenue drop worry about the broader message of a 100 percent reduction in state support.

“To wipe these funds out completely is like wiping out years of progress and awareness,” Griffin-Tabor said. “It’s devastating what it says to women and children about our priorities.”

John Wilkens: (619) 293-2236; john.wilkens@uniontrib.com

[John Wilkens:](#) (619) 293-2236;

Find this article at:

<http://www3.signonsandiego.com/stories/2009/aug/06/1m6domestic23470-total-loss-state-funds-imperils-d/?metro&zIndex=144880>



[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

