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Whittier Daily News (California)

October 31, 2009 Saturday

NEWS

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**[Domestic shelters battered by the state](#)**

By Mike Sprague, Staff Writer

The present is looking much better for two area shelters for battered women now that Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has signed legislation restoring money he had vetoed earlier this summer.

But the future remains uncertain and that's why Whittier's Women's and Children's Crisis Shelter and the YWCA of San Gabriel Valley won't be restoring positions cut this summer.

Each lost about \$207,000 and expects to get about three-quarters of the money back. The original amount taken was about 20 percent of their total budgets.

"We're really concerned about what will happen next year," said Edith Norris, domestic violence director for the YWCA of San Gabriel Valley. "This is only a one-time deal."

When Schwarzenegger vetoed the entire \$16 million appropriation for 94 domestic violence shelters and centers in California, it put a major hole in their budgets.

The shelters in California serve about 105,000 women and children each year.

The 32-year-old Women's and Children's Crisis Shelter in Whittier laid off six of its 24 employees and was prepared to close two of its seven rooms used to house families in which they can stay up to 45 days.

The YWCA of San Gabriel Valley, which has operated its shelter since 1987, laid off three employees and was prepared to no longer provide transportation to legal clinics or social service appointments.

After Schwarzenegger's line-item veto in July, the state Legislature came back to pass a bill taking \$16.3 million from the State's Alternative and Renewable Fuel and Vehicle Technology Fund and using it to restore the funding.

But it's just a one-year fix with no money available for fiscal 2010-11, local shelter officials said.

As a result, they have no plans to rehire staff.

"I'd only have to let them go in six months," said Judy Gordon, executive director for the Whittier shelter. "How can I say to somebody, 'Here's a job until June 30.'"

Still, the restoration of money is going to help, she said.

"The current staff can provide better services," Gordon said. "We also cut back on other things, even groceries. We pay for taxi services."

Employees also took pay cuts and Gordon said she would like to restore those.

Norris said she's uncertain how the additional money will be used.

But what Gordon and Norris want to know is what will the state do next year.

While in the past, the state's general fund has provided money for domestic violence shelters, Schwarzenegger has said the money will have to come from somewhere else.

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"I think that we have to get creative," he said Oct. 20 when signing the legislation restoring the money.

"We're going to work together," he said. "We're going to start early. We're already working on it right now. So we're going to find a creative solution to make sure that we have a permanent solution for this."

Camille Hayes, spokeswoman for the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, said if the state doesn't do something, women will die.

"If domestic violence victims can't get out of dangerous situations, they're more likely to be injured or killed," Hayes said.

Hayes said she doesn't understand why money isn't available from the general fund.

"The money always has come from the general fund," she said. "(Schwarzenegger) chose to take our piece away."

Rachel Arrezola, spokeswoman for Schwarzenegger, said the governor understands the consequences of the cut.

"Unfortunately, the state budget doesn't have the money to continue running this program," Arrezola said. "Last year, we had to close a \$60 billion deficit. That's over half of the general fund."

The answer is to find a permanent funding solution, she said.

State Sen. Leland Yee, D-San Francisco, said he is searching for some solutions.

One might be to increase the marriage license fee, he said.

But that's only one idea.

"We need to roll up our sleeves and figure out the long-time solution," Yee said.

"We can not decrease this service," he said. "They're not only necessary, but are life-and-death services. We can't leave women vulnerable so they can be attacked by their spouse or partner."

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Customers shop at the Shelter's Right hand Thrift Shop on WashingtonBoulevard in Whittier on Friday October 30, 2009. The thrift shopraises money for the Whittier Women's and Children's Crisis Shelter.

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