

Fledgling workfare program

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may be forced to cut back

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SACRAMENTO — Gov. Deukmejian doesn't plan to fully fund the state's fledgling workfare program in the coming fiscal year.

Many counties may have to limit the number of poor to be given schooling and job training.

The much-heralded workfare law is supposed to make California a model state by requiring able-bodied welfare recipients to go through education and training programs so they can get jobs and leave the welfare rolls.

But officials say that a variety of factors, including greater-than-expected remedial education needs, are leading the Deukmejian administration to reduce by about 25 percent the numbers of welfare recipients expected to be served.

The plans are to concentrate available money on providing full workfare programs to longer-term welfare recipients and maintain existing services in the 26 counties that already have begun workfare programs.

Some new and shorter-term welfare recipients could be excluded from the program, at least temporarily.

The 32 other counties that have yet to start workfare programs could be hit hardest by the governor's budget proposal, although budget allocations to individual counties have yet to be announced. State officials don't yet know the impact on the counties but don't rule out limits to their programs.

Administration officials stressed that Deukmejian remains fully committed to the workfare program. They said his proposed 1988-89 budget for it would soar to \$408 million from this year's \$209 million.

"Devoting in excess of \$400 million to this new initiative clearly demonstrates the governor's feelings," said Dennis Boyle, a deputy director of the Department of Social Services.

"But to the extent that you have a lot

more people than expected who need educational services, that leaves fewer dollars to spread around to others."

Officials at first anticipated that 15 to 20 percent of welfare recipients would need remedial education before entering the job market, according to George Valverde, a budget analyst with the state Department of Finance.

"But what we are finding," he said, "is that 50 percent or even more of the recipi-

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ents need some form of basic education skills before they can even enter a job training program."

Full funding of the workfare program — called Greater Avenues for Independence, or GAIN — would provide services to about 200,000 people on welfare.

But Valverde said the proposed budget, despite its big increases, could provide full services to only about 148,000 participants.

In a tight-money situation, the existing GAIN law gives higher priority to longer-term welfare recipients and lower priority to shorter-term recipients, new welfare applicants and volunteers not required to join workfare.

Valverde said experience so far shows that many welfare recipients stay on the Aid to Families With Dependent Children program for only six months or less anyway.

He said the state continues to anticipate federal welfare reform that could pump additional dollars into California's workfare program. It already has seen controversy as coun-

ties have struggled with the remedial-education demands as well as other problems, such as providing day care for children of parents in the program.

Kevin Aslanian of the Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations said the new budget would "help a lot of people because they wouldn't be forced to join the program and be victimized."

He said many families have had their welfare benefits cut off because they had no realistic way of complying with program rules or getting adequate day care.