



Familiar cries over health, welfare funds

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Gov. Deukmejian's \$9.1 billion 1986-87 budget for health and welfare was almost immediately assailed Friday by the same critics voicing the same complaints and threatening the same feuds as in years past.

The budget calls for a 5.4 percent increase overall, which would help launch the state's workfare program for able-bodied welfare recipients.

It would also provide \$14 million for acquired immune deficiency syndrome research and treatment. Because of a one-time expenditure this fiscal year, the current budget is \$5 million higher.

In keeping with state law, the governor's budget would boost by 4.9 percent aid to families with dependent children and payments to the blind, disabled and elderly.

The funds for mental health represent a 10 percent increase over the current year and include more than \$36 million to upgrade state hospitals.

"We are committed to shattering the stereotype of warehousing patients in dormitorylike facilities and bringing greater privacy and human dignity to patients in the hospitals," said Dr. Michael O'Connor, director of the state Department of Mental Health.

While the governor's proposals were lauded by many in the health care and social work fields, some of the specifics regarding workfare, abortion, family planning and Medi-Cal payments to doctors drew the ire of organizations representing physicians, welfare clients and family planning agencies.

All three promised to once again fight Deukmejian's proposal to restrict Medi-Cal abortion funding to victims of rape and incest and to cases where the mother's life is in danger or there are deformities in the fetus.

"It's the same fight. But it's an election year, so it will be interesting to see how it turns out," said David Alios, spokesman for Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California.

He said he expected the same outcome as in past years: The governor's budget proposal will be approved, the courts will overturn it and Medi-Cal funds will be available for all women seeking abortions.

The family planning funds, which became an issue in last year's budget because an error eliminated funding to agencies offering abortions or abortion counseling, are likely to become an issue again this year as Planned Parenthood and other organizations seek more money, Alios said.

Deukmejian asked for only an additional \$49,000 in his new budget, which would bring the total to \$35.2 million for family planning agencies.

There are no restrictions, though, on which agencies may receive the money.

The California Medical Association, bolstered by its status as the second highest campaign contributor in the state, is gearing up for yet another fight over the Medi-Cal payments to physicians who treat Medi-Cal patients.

George Cate, a spokesman for the organization's newly elected president, Dr. Gladden V. Elliott, called the rates already provided doctors "ridiculously low" and noted that Deukmejian offered no increase in his budget.

Cate contended Deukmejian's proposal would cause even more doctors to stop accepting Medi-Cal patients.

"We are very upset the governor did not see fit, at a time when the inflation rate is 5.1 percent, to at least start off with a 5.1 percent increase," he said. "We are already seeing fewer doctors treating Medi-Cal patients. It's just a question of when is it that we reach that last straw that breaks the camel's back."

For welfare recipients, the governor's budget would increase from \$698 to \$732 the monthly payment for a family of four receiving aid to families with dependent children. Don Owens, spokesman for the Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations, had a terse assessment of that 4.9 percent rise: "Thanks for nothing."

That increase was already in state statutes, and the only difference this year is the governor didn't try to reduce the statutory increase, he said.

His organization, however, will concentrate on seeking changes in the workfare program approved last year rather than trying to reduce the \$45 million the governor is seeking for it in his 1986-87 budget.