

Governor signs workfare bill

Program will train, put to work able-bodied welfare recipients

□ Gov. Deukmejian shows another side at the workfare bill signing. Page A27.

□ The governor pledges to sign a "latchkey" child-care proposal. Page A27.

By Thorne Gray
Bee Capitol Bureau

A pioneering statewide program designed to train and then put to work able-bodied welfare recipients went into effect Thursday with Gov. Deukmejian's signature.

The governor also announced he soon will sign a companion bill to provide before-school and after-school child-care programs for welfare and low-income working parents throughout the state.

Deukmejian said his so-called "Greater Avenues for Independence" program, a decade or more in the making, would accomplish two goals: "replacing dependency with opportunity for thousands of welfare recipients and ensuring that everyone who is able must make an effort to work."

Administration officials predicted the workfare program and the companion "latchkey" child-care program would be in effect for as much as 25 percent of the people who receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children as early as next July and half the people or more a year later.

About six counties already have said they want to start their workfare programs early, including San Diego, where an experimental workfare program has been in effect for three years, said Carl Williams, a special assistant to Department of Social Services Director Linda McMahon.

In addition, nine San Joaquin Valley counties are eager to explore the new programs on a regional basis, perhaps launching a valleywide workfare program, Williams said. Included are the counties of San Joaquin, Fresno, Tulare, Kings, Kern, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera and Mariposa, where unemployment rates have reached double digits.

Williams said the workfare program would cost, when fully operational, \$304 million a year, of which \$146 mil-

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lion would be new expenses.

Proponents have contended the plan would eventually pay for itself in reductions in welfare rolls and other benefits from putting people to work.

All the counties were due to receive letters from the department introducing the program today or Saturday. The counties must write their own workfare plans, count jobs, prepare economic analyses and hold public hearings before the programs can actually begin.

Under the program, portions of which proponents said were unique to the nation, the counties must develop or contract for training programs and work assignments for welfare recipients. The recipients' rights and responsibilities will be spelled out in contracts binding upon them and the counties. Some recipients will continue with college programs. Others will take vocational classes or subsidized on-the-job training, with child care and transportation provided.

As the result of negotiations by Assemblyman Art Agnos, D-San Francisco, welfare recipients will be able to avoid the workfare program for numerous reasons. They also can take complaints to an independent arbitrator.

Participants who failed to get jobs would end up working for their grants at the rate of \$5.07 an hour for government or non-profit agencies for up to a year before being recycled back into the training programs.

Ultimately, those who refuse to take part in the program will see their grants reduced or terminated for as long as six months. Counties will step in to manage family fi-

nances as punishment for some compliance failures.

Williams said administration officials "kind of hope" Los Angeles County, with its huge welfare caseload, will be among the last to switch to workfare, after the bugs have been worked out elsewhere.

For the politicians, Deukmejian's signature signified a historic accomplishment, achieved through bipartisan efforts, for which Agnos received much of the credit. Agnos broke ranks with workfare opponents early this year to forge the workfare plan with Deukmejian and Health and Welfare Secretary David Swapp.

Deukmejian also commended Senate President Pro Tem David Roberti for his leadership in coupling the latchkey program to the workfare bill.

Deukmejian vetoed a similar latchkey program a year ago, but this year the measure was Roberti's price for bringing workfare to a vote on the last night of the 1985 legislative session.

The Senate debate boiled down to an exchange between Sens. Diane Watson and Bill Greene, Los Angeles Democrats with large welfare constituencies.

Watson called the plan "still a forced-labor program," mandatory work for welfare parents with children over age 6.

Greene argued that the program should become law even if no one ended up with a real job. Education is compulsory and should continue for welfare recipients through workfare training and job assignments.

Opponents of the proposal included most representatives of the poor, including the Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations.

Kevin Aslanian, legislative advocate for the welfare-rights coalition, said counties would throw people off welfare under the bill to save money.