

Agency income decreases

Summit County department is forced to lower funding to several local services to make up for state, federal cuts

By Rick Armon
Beacon Journal staff writer

Each summer, Shelter Care tries to make sure that troubled children in its care have some fun.

They head to the art museum. They go to camps. And they visit the zoo.

But those activities will be more difficult to pay for this year.

The Summit County Department of Job and Family Services is ending

annual contracts with six social services, saying it won't have the money for them anymore because of expected cuts from the federal and state governments.

The county is axing all of its Title XX spending at the end of next month, including a \$100,000 deal with Shelter Care in Akron.

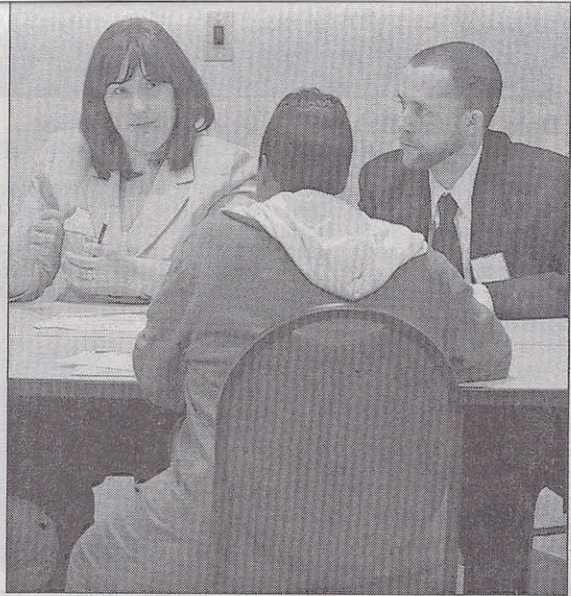
The news is a blow for the six agencies, which have relied on the money for years.

"It's not going to put us out of

business but it certainly makes every financial decision that much harder," said Wes Fair, executive director of Shelter Care, a residential treatment program for children with emotional and behavioral problems. "We'll have to focus on the essentials."

In addition to Shelter Care, the agencies losing funding are **Mature Services in Akron (\$150,000)**, **Interval Brotherhood Home in Coventry Township (\$100,000)**, **Mobile Meals in Akron (\$38,000)**, **Rebuilding Together Summit County in Akron (\$24,000)** and **Community Legal Aid**

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Attorney Corrine Hoover-Six (left) and UA law student Daryl Kowalski work with a client during a free legal clinic at the Job Center. Such services are facing funding cuts.



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UA law student Jessica Wright (second from right) works with a client Monday during a free legal clinic. Summit County is cutting funds for Community Legal Aid Services.

Funding

\$2 million total drops to \$432,000 in Summit

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Services in Akron (\$20,000).

Job and Family Services Director Patricia Divoky called each agency with the bad news.

"Nobody wants to hear it but nobody was surprised," she said.

The amount of Title XX money available locally has declined from \$2 million in 2002 to \$432,000 this year.

Mature Services Director of Home-Care Penny Holvey said the agency will have to stop providing some services - such as light cleaning, meal preparation and grocery shopping - for about 110 older clients.

The services are designed to keep people in their homes and neighborhoods, as opposed to having them move to nursing homes.

"There's no one else in the community that we know who provides this service," Holvey said.

Sara Strattan, executive director of Community Legal Aid, said her agency also will be affected. More than 27,300 families asked for assistance from Legal Aid last year.

"It's going to mean we're going to help fewer people," she said. "Right now, we're able to help less than half of those requesting help and all of them have critical legal needs."

Agency leaders said they are hopeful that the local Title XX program - which funds social services - will be restored in the future. In the meantime, they plan to be more aggressive in seeking grants and fundraising to make up the lost revenue.

"But that's hard nowadays because everybody is doing that," Fair said. "There's a lot of competition out there and it's hard to make up that money."

Summit County is warning

other agencies that their funding could disappear through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs. The county is extending their contracts, which expire at the end of next month, for only three months because of uncertainty over federal funding.

County leaders have estimated that the state will trim Temporary Assistance for Needy Families by 27 percent, along with a 10 percent cut in other areas, in the next two-year state budget. They also are expecting a 25 percent drop in Title XX funding. And Workforce Investment Act funding from the federal government may fall 10 percent.

Divoky said the county is waiting to see how much money will be available for those contracts. The county may have to prioritize its contracts with less money available and not renew some, she said.

"We really need to concentrate on jobs and work," Divoky said.

Similar discussions are taking place statewide, said Joel Potts, executive director of the Ohio Job and Family Services Directors' Association. Counties are expecting at least \$170 million a year in cuts that will affect the state's most vulnerable residents, he said.

That means layoffs in some counties and cuts in services to clients, Potts said.

The association has been keeping a running list of programs in jeopardy, including work and training, child care, summer youth, transportation services, English as a second language, GED services, fatherhood initiatives and child welfare.

"It's not going to be a fun couple of years," he said, adding that the cuts have been taking place for years. "This is just more bad news on top of what we have been seeing."

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