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# Funding formula threatens programs

Klamath County alcohol and drug outpatient programs would be gutted under new state plan

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Alcohol and drug outpatient programs in Klamath County would be gutted under a new state funding formula.

Klamath County stands to lose \$228,500 over five years under the Department of Human Services' plan. That would cut 50 to 60 percent of the local agency's annual operating budget.

Robert Nikkel, assistant director of the Office of Mental Health and Addiction Services, told community mental health program directors of the change in a Jan. 6 letter.

He said the change is designed to establish a more equitable funding pattern across the state. We believe the action will improve access and ensure fairness in the distribution of resources.

Rod Clarke, CEO of Klamath Alcohol and Drug Abuse, said the move will hurt adult and youth outpatient treatment. It likely will wipe out services for youths, he said.

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## Multnomah, Klamath among counties that are getting big cuts in funding

KADA, a tribally sanctioned program with an all-Indian board that reports to the Klamath Tribal Council, oversees a variety of local mental health programs. Among them is the Consortium, an innovative parole and probation substance abuse counseling program that has drastically cut recidivism rates.

"One of the programs that would be put out of business is the Consortium, which should be the statewide model," Clarke said.

He discussed the impending cutback during Tuesday's Klamath County commissioners meeting. Commissioners authorized Clarke to speak strongly against the cuts during a meeting of mental health directors Thursday in Salem, promising him a letter of support to present at the session.

Colette Fleck, behavioral health program administrator for Klamath County Mental Health, said the loss would be about \$45,000 per year beginning in 2008.

"We might lose some programs," she said.

The allocation formula is based 70 percent on a community's population and 30 percent on "prevalence," or the percentage of county residents who have drug or alcohol problems.

Karen Wheeler of the Office of Mental Health and Addiction Services said that the agency uses a 1999 state study to determine the number of people with drug or alcohol problems in each county. It also uses the annual Oregon Healthy Teens survey, which is funded by a variety of sources.

Counties that will see a big boost in funding over the five-year period include Washington, with an increase of \$500,000; Clackamas, \$495,000; Deschutes, \$188,500; Lane, \$153,500;

Linn, \$85,000; and Polk, \$58,000.

A base allocation of \$50,000 per year will be established for tribes as well as small counties.

Multnomah County joins Klamath County among the counties getting big reductions in funding. The five-year loss for Multnomah will be \$1.2 million.

Wheeler said Multnomah County is being cut despite high population and prevalence numbers because it was considered over-funded on a per capita basis in the past.

Weighting for prevalence is unfair to rural counties because of the long distances many people must drive to receive treatment, Clarke said. It is more difficult for a Gilchrist resident to access services in Klamath Falls than it is for people in urban areas to get the same treatment.

"It's a loaded formula," Clarke said. "Both of these criteria skew everything toward urban areas, which are the wealthiest areas of the state."

"Suburban Portland is the big winner because they don't have a skid row as Portland does. Portland's funds and our funds are going to suburban areas. Money goes from the most needy to the least needy."

A more equitable formula would factor in a community's geography and poverty rate, Clarke said.

Klamath County commissioners agreed with his assessment of urban winners and rural losers.

"It's an in-your-face insult," John Elliott said. "I see political correctness run amok."

Al Switzer added, "We need to stand up and say this is ridiculous. We've had great results, and now they're going to pull it away. You're going to be pulling things out that are successful."