

## CHS limiting new clients because of state budget crisis



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BLOOMINGTON — McLean County's mental health agency — which serves people with the greatest needs and fewest resources — is limiting the number of new clients and not replacing an open position on its mobile crisis response team because there is no state budget.

"We're not cutting existing staff positions," Tom Barr, executive director of the Center for Human Services (CHS), told The Pantagraph on Friday. "And we're not cutting off existing clients from the medical case loads."

But "if these (state) cuts stay, I would need to reduce staff," he said. "I would do that through attrition (not filling open positions) and re-assignments."

CHS is the latest local human services agency making adjustments because there is no state budget for the fiscal year that began Wednesday.

Barr received notice from the Illinois Department of Human Services that funding for CHS' medical program for the new fiscal year has been cut by \$353,000. That's about one-third of the medical program budget.

Funding for CHS' crisis team is being cut by \$227,000. That's about one-fourth of the crisis team budget.

The total \$580,000 reduction is more than 10 percent of CHS' \$5 million budget, Barr said.

"We'll use reserves to help to cover costs until we find out what the state is going to do and what are the long-term implications," Barr said.

The medical program works with people in significant need of medication management because they have a severe functional impairment as a result of mental illness, Barr explained. Medical professionals evaluate clients and help them to access appropriate medication.

Some clients are on Medicaid and some aren't. Other sources of income for non-Medicaid clients include the McLean County Board of Health, United Way of McLean County and the Scott Commission, Barr said.

"We are going to be significantly decreasing the number of new clients we can serve in the medical program," he said. "Folks with the greatest needs will be prioritized.

"We had been projecting that we would serve 1,500 unduplicated clients in the current fiscal year," Barr said. "With these cuts, we'll serve about 1,100."

The crisis team — in cooperation with police, emergency departments and other human services agencies — responds to people in mental health crises.

"We have one mobile crisis team position open and we won't be filling that position," bringing down to eight the number of people on the mobile crisis team, Barr said.

"We're readjusting schedules so we'll still always have two staff people on call at any time" and five during peak times, Barr said.

"The team will continue to respond to calls. But the staff will have the potential to be significantly busier."

"It is tremendously disappointing and concerning for our community and the people we serve," Barr said of the state crisis impact. "This will perpetuate problems for law enforcement and emergency rooms that we as a community have been working so hard to resolve."