

CAP loses \$800,000 in state funding

By Cheryll A. Borggaard / The Daily News The Daily News Online | Posted: Monday, December 13, 2010

Lower Columbia Community Action Program will be eliminating at least two of its social services programs and six staff positions in 2011 in response to a reduction of \$800,000 in state funding.

The discontinued programs include one that advocates for residents in nursing homes and adult family homes and another that gives temporary assistance to needy families while they complete their education or continue job searches.

"Like other businesses, we are having to make hard budget decisions," said CAP Executive Director Ilona Kerby. "Our first priority is to preserve as many jobs as possible because we can't offer services without staff."

The cuts will leave CAP with a 2011 budget of \$7 million for its 30-plus programs, said Kerby, who added the largest single component in the decline in state subsidies will be nonrenewal of \$400,000 in federal stimulus funds diverted to CAP from the state for use in weatherization projects.

CAP will not be renewing its regional contract for the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, which monitors 385 long-term care facilities in Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, Clark, Skamania and Klickitat counties. Three staff members and 28 certified volunteers will be let go when the contract ends Dec. 31, said Kerby. The \$165,000 program was supported largely through state Medicaid funds and matching federal funds.

Ombudsmen regularly visit facilities, educate residents and staff on resident rights, resolve complaints and empower residents to be more outspoken on their care and quality of life issues, said Cheryl Cody, Regional Long Term Care Ombudsman.

"Sadly, our most vulnerable adults will lose (those) advocates," she said.

Supported Work, one of CAP's job training and employment search programs, also is being eliminated. Supported Work provides financial help for people in need to receive temporary assistance while they complete their college certificates or degrees or while they search for employment.

"That was actual money sent (for CAP) to work with clients moving toward employment," Kerby said. "The state has cut it out. There's no money at all."

One full-time and two temporary positions in Supported Work will be eliminated.

Other cuts at CAP include reducing the number of hours devoted to the agency's in-home care program and cutting back the number of hours worked by senior management staff.

CAP is the largest private nonprofit social service organization in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. With the possibility of even larger state deficits still looming, CAP management expects there likely will be more cuts to its budget, Kerby said.

"It's hard to lose a program because they all do positive things in the community and everybody benefits when we can provide those services," she said. "But now, there's no way to support them."