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Illinois budget leaves agencies bracing for cuts

John David | Reporter
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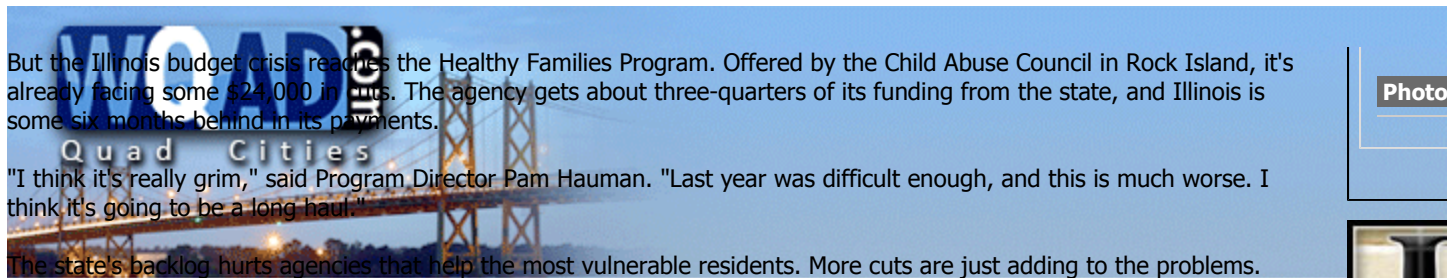
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MOLINE, Illinois - Illinois Governor Pat Quinn is unveiling the latest budget details by announcing \$1.4 billion in cuts. That's to fight the state's growing \$13 billion deficit. While the governor pledges to preserve education, health care and public safety, many other agencies and programs are preparing for the worst.

The latest job casualty is at Bethany for Children and Families in Moline. The Juvenile Justice Diversion Program is losing a worker due to the budget crisis. That means 15 kids won't get the help they need.

"The people of Illinois want their state government to be lean, but they also want their state government to invest in important things that help us create jobs," Gov. Quinn said.

Popular



But the Illinois budget crisis reaches the Healthy Families Program. Offered by the Child Abuse Council in Rock Island, it's already facing some \$24,000 in cuts. The agency gets about three-quarters of its funding from the state, and Illinois is some six months behind in its payments.

"I think it's really grim," said Program Director Pam Hauman. "Last year was difficult enough, and this is much worse. I think it's going to be a long haul."

The state's backlog hurts agencies that help the most vulnerable residents. More cuts are just adding to the problems.

Bethany for Children and Families received state contracts with \$32,000 in cuts. And Illinois warns that the figures aren't final.

"Our workers are doing more with less," said Katie Nelson, Bethany's communications coordinator. "It creates a strain on Bethany and the clients we serve."

Illinois also cut \$8,000 from Bethany's Teen Parent Services program. It means that 30 teens and their babies currently in the program will no longer receive services.

Mounting financial problems at the state level are reaching into community services during trying times.

"Our clients and workers are wondering, what's going to be here tomorrow?" Nelson said.

State officials say they'll be meeting with agencies like Bethany and the Child Abuse Council in coming weeks. But for now, funding remains uncertain even with a budget.

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