

Health Department budget reductions will reduce services to the public

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Substantial revenue shortfalls for the coming fiscal year will affect numerous areas of public health services and will have a widespread impact.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "The Alabama Department of Public Health is planning reductions based on projections provided by the State Finance Director's office. Changes may be made after final adoption of the state budgets by the Legislature and Governor."

Budget reductions are likely to result in the following actions:

- * A reduction in the frequency of food service establishment inspections from once every three months to once every four months.
- * An increase in the time required to approve septic tank permits and installations which will delay completion of new home construction.
- * An increase in the time required for inspection of new health care facilities, which will delay the availability of health services offered at these sites.
- * There will be a decrease in the frequency of inspection of some health care facilities (such as abortion centers).
- * Influenza vaccine will not be provided to county health departments for the 2004-2005 flu season. (Influenza vaccine will be available for the 2003-2004 season.) This will affect over 200,000 citizens who formerly received vaccine from county health departments.
- * The department will be forced to eliminate funds which provide drugs to approximately 100 patients infected with HIV and AIDS.
- * Some AIDS prevention activities will be eliminated.
- * The state match for the Abstinence Program will be eliminated. Local communities applying for federal abstinence funds will have to obtain matching money from local sources.
- * Branch laboratories in Dothan and Decatur will be forced to close.

* Perinatal service grants will be eliminated. This will result in a reduction in education to health care providers and the support for services to graduates of neonatal intensive care units. Funds which pay for medication and transportation for pregnant women will be eliminated.

* The department will reduce the amount of the funds which go to the Department of Rehabilitation Services

* WIC services may only be offered at one site within a county, which will reduce accessibility.

* The Hypertension Program will be eliminated resulting in medication no longer being available for 15,000 individuals without other sources of care.

* The Cancer Detection program will be eliminated resulting in some women who currently receive Pap smears through the department no longer being able to receive those tests.

* The department will be forced to close county health department satellite offices not fully supported by local governments in those counties with multiple sites.

Additional cuts from central office agency support including general agency administration, Financial Services, Computer Systems and others.

These cuts are expected to result in the layoff of approximately 250 employees at the state, county and area levels. While they identify some of the likely reductions which may be necessary, this list is not inclusive and may change based upon the specific funding authority which the department receives

9/12/03