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Gov. Schwarzenegger will hurt Central Coast foster kids' futures



Tuesday, July 28, 2009
Reported by: Melissa Mecija

One local organization says the governor is sending the wrong message by cutting money for social services, including foster care.

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Raye Vega

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger made additional cuts Tuesday, including \$80 million for child welfare programs.

Family Care Network is facing a 10 percent reduction in their budget, thanks to this fiscal mess. Now, local foster parents speak out.



Jim Roberts

With the number of foster kids Raye Vega has helped, you might want to call her "super mom."

"We've had over 123 kids in our house over the last seven to eight years," Vega said.

The former foster child says as an adult, it was her turn to give back.

"We're able to help them be successful when they needed us the most," Vega said.



Now that the governor has signed the new budget, reality is sinking in for FCN. The private non-profit group serves about 150 foster and high-needs children. It will lose up to \$300,000. It is a huge hit for an organization already on a tight budget.

"The state's saying, we don't care about you... Some legislators have actually made the comment, 'We know kids are going to die. Too bad.' That bothers me tremendously," said Jim Roberts, FCN's executive director and CEO.

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"It really is a slap in the face to foster kids that have got special needs and the foster parents that take care of them," Roberts said.

Roberts believes excess spending in state government needs to be cut, not childrens' programs. It is a slash in services, leaving some to wonder what will happen next.

"These kids in foster care are the kids in our future and if we don't take care of them, then who will take care of us?" Vega questioned.

FCN worries eventually, the community will not be able to handle demand, sending kids out of state to be taken care of. In the meantime, they will just beef up fundraising efforts, an already difficult task in a dismal economy.

Those cuts to FCN will take effect on October 1.

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