

State Budget Cuts Worry Health Providers

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Proposed State budget cuts could actually cost more money than they save.

One program potentially on the chopping block is a federal children's health insurance program called Healthy Programs. Right now about 75,000 kids around the county use the program. By cutting the program the general fund would save about \$368-million, but it would also lose about \$644-million in matching federal funds.



But the biggest cost would be leaving those children without health insurance.

"Without that insurance we wouldn't be able to make it," says Ingrid Lorto a self-employed mother of three. She has shopped around for private insurance but she simply can't afford it. "It's a choice of trying to keep shelter, food, you know and insurance."

The community clinics that are designed to be safety nets for families like Ingrid's are expected to be cut as well; losing about \$35-million in funding.

The Vista Community Clinic Director says the impact is very predictable. When people don't have preventative health care with insurance and community clinics they wait until they are very ill to get help and then go to the emergency room. The cost of that practice is passed onto those who pay for care and extend wait times in the emergency rooms.

"Anytime the increased demand in the emergency room happens with an uninsured population, those who are trying to access the emergency room for other reasons are going to feel it in our pocketbooks."