

# Planned Parenthood still gets funds

Waco affiliate 1 of 3 in state receiving short-term money under new tiered system

By CINDY V. CULP  
cculp@wacotrib.com

Waco's Planned Parenthood affiliate learned last week that it is one of only three Planned Parenthood offices in Texas that will continue receiving state money to provide family planning services.

But the reprieve may be temporary.

Last year, the Texas Legislature ordered that state family planning

funds be awarded based on a tiered system that puts Planned Parenthood at the bottom. About the only way such "Tier 3" providers can get money is if no one else applies.

That is what happened here. Planned Parenthood of Central Texas was the only local organization to ask for money during the last funding round, said Carrie Williams, a spokeswoman for the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Similar scenarios played out in a few other pockets of the state, she said.

To ensure low-income women in those areas have continued access to state-funded services — which

include birth control, sexually transmitted disease testing and cancer screenings — the department awarded funds to nonpreferred providers, Williams said.

But the money is only a 2.5-month extension, versus longer-term funding given to other providers, she said.

The state already has issued a new request for applications for longer-term funding in geographic regions served by nonpreferred providers, Williams said. The hope is that Tier 1 or Tier 2 providers who may not have known about the funding will apply.

To get the word out, the state is

working with professional groups such as the Texas Hospital Association and the Texas Association of Counties, she said.

Locally, the most obvious organization that could bump Planned Parenthood out of the running is Family Health Center. It operates a network of clinics within the county that serve the poor and uninsured.

The center's status as a federally qualified health center makes it a Tier 1 provider. The tier includes public entities that provide family planning services.

The second tier is made up of

See FUNDS, Page 3B

## FUNDS

From Page 1B

private organizations that provide comprehensive primary care, including family planning services.

The third tier is for private organizations that provide family planning services but not comprehensive primary care.

Allen Patterson, Family Health's chief financial and operating officer, said there is a 50 percent chance the center will apply for the funds this time. It has not applied for state family planning money in the past because the grants come with a lot of red tape, he said.

"We just kind of felt we had too many irons in the fire to take that on," Patterson said.

But in the past several years, Family Health has become more familiar with the state grant process through two other types of state grants it receives, Patterson said. Because of

that, the center feels better poised to apply for family planning funds, he said.

But center officials still are weighing whether now is the right time, Patterson said.

"We're considering it," he said. "There are just too many other things that are organizationally vital at this point."

Felicia Goodman, director of community affairs for the local Planned Parenthood, said it wants to continue being a state contractor.

"We are known as the (family planning) experts in this community," Goodman said. "It just seems logical to continue funding the organization that has been doing this in our community for 70 years."

### Less money than before

But even if the local Planned Parenthood gets longer-term funding, the amount will be significantly less than before, she said.

Statewide, family planning money was cut by two-thirds during last

year's legislative session, from nearly \$112 million for the biennium to \$37.9 million.

That cut resulted in the state awarding funding to only 41 providers, versus 71 last year. But it also means the amount of money each gets is less.

For the local Planned Parenthood, state funding is already only half of what it was before, Goodman said.

That money equals about 25 percent of the overall budget for the clinic that serves low-income women. It does not perform abortions.

If the local affiliate get longer-term funding, the money likely would cover only 10 percent of the clinic's budget, Goodman said.

"It's a huge, huge cut even if we get the funding," Goodman said.

But no matter what, Planned Parenthood is committed to staying in Waco, Goodman said. Even if it were to receive no-state funding for family planning, it would continue to see as many women as possible using private donations, she said.

In 2010, the clinic served about 8,000 women.