

What if human services axed?

By LINDA CHARLES
News Editor

Child abuse and domestic violence. Those are among the predicted consequences if the county is no longer able to provide human services.

Story County supervisors are thinking a lot about human services these days, waiting to see whether voters next Tuesday approve the 1-cent local option sales tax. If approved, the tax could provide the county up to \$641,682. Forty percent of that, about \$256,673, would be earmarked for human services, says supervisor Fred Mathison.

But that is a long way from the \$450,000-\$500,000 the county has received in the past from federal revenue sharing, which is no longer in force. While most human services agencies in Story County will continue to operate at some level even if the local option tax fails, a county report shows the consequences if these services are no longer provided.

According to a report prepared by Irene Howard, human resources/general relief director, the county's poor would no longer be able to heat

their homes, the mentally ill would have to be institutionalized and the elderly would have to go to nursing homes.

The report shows the Story County Sexual Assault and Battered Women's Center received \$73,875 during fiscal year 1985 from several funding sources. If those funds were unavailable, "Law enforcement and the court system would need to become more involved in domestic violence situations," the report states. "Without a shelter women would have to leave the county and change their children to another school."

If Youth and Shelter Services were no more, the "counties would have to place juveniles at the state juvenile home in Toledo. Many youth would have to go elsewhere in the state at a much larger cost to the county."

If the Story County Care Facility, which received \$915,926 during fiscal 1985 were to close, 50 residents would have to be relocated outside the county or in institutional settings, the report says.

SERVICES see page 12

Services/Board to set priorities

CONTINUED from page 1

If the Childsafe program, funded at \$10,500, were discontinued, persons who sexually abuse their children would go untreated. While the county attorney's office could pick up some of the slack if the Legal Aid Society lost its \$50,956 funding, it could not begin to meet the needs of low-income persons. Indigent persons would be without an attorney for matters such as child

support collection, marriage dissolution and tenant-landlord problems.

Without the Story County Council on Aging's \$441,446 funding, many of the elderly would have to go to nursing homes. Others would be homebound and dependent on their families.

Mathison says one concern is that as other governmental bodies cut back or eliminate services, people will look to the county for help. "We

can always handle more responsibility," Mathison said, "but there comes a point beyond which we cannot give efficient service and programs suffer."

Once the election is over the supervisors "plan on sitting down and taking a hard look at where we are in services," he added. That will include setting priorities for services. The county's first priorities will be the indigent and children in jeopardy, Mathison said.

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