

Federal budget cuts mean program cutbacks

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Your Alaska Native Health Board has, with other tribal organizations, been watching closely the changes and proposed changes in health delivery that have affected the direct care of our people as a result of the President's policy to reduce federal spending.

During this month the Congress will decide if the Community Health Representative functions will be continued during the next fiscal year *beginning Oct. 1, 1982).

Congress must also decide if the federal government will continue to fund Alcohol Programs past that date. Neither the CHR nor Alcohol Programs were included in the President's budget to Congress. To continue, specific line-item appropriations will have to be written into the fiscal plan

passed by both the Senate and House and receive the President's signature.

We already have experienced the crunch resulting from restrictions of travel of health professionals (doctors, dentists, etc.) to villages for routine screening and/or treatment. Villages must now provide funds to bring these people into the village if these clinics are to continue.

Patients and their families or the villages must pay for travel to hospitals, clinics or other specialized facilities, except in emergency or in some cases only life critical situations.

Every tribal organization has been notified to expect its 1983 budget to be no more than its 1982 figures or less (no inflationary factors to be considered by the IHS contrac-

tor).

The "normal" negotiations process for contracts is being virtually put aside this year. It is unlikely that the budget will be finalized until well into next year.

Last year it was late in December that the '82 budget was signed and several more months before contractors knew what their current operating figures actually were. FY83 will probably be even slower with confusion resulting in more uncertainty and more restrictions.

The State Legislature appropriated \$20 million to help bridge gaps left in the system by the federal reductions. The Governor has reserved half of that for later; use of these monies is still uncertain as priorities of these gap-fill-ins

are examined.

Food stamps, aid to dependent children, Medicare and sanitation programs all face changes as more is shifted to the State from the federal.

It is, therefore, most appropriate that the theme for this year's Statewide Native Health Conference (Oct. 18 and 19) be "Who Is Going To Provide Health Care To Alaska Natives?"

The workshops are being set up to give maximum information on how preventive, educational and the village level of treatment can be built up and improved without new funds.

The most comprehensive health fair ever held for Alaska Natives will provide actual screening for acute and chronic conditions with the informa-

tion available to assist with future treatment.

Each regional health tribal organization is being asked to name one person in their health system to receive the honor of recognition at the Conference's Awards Banquet Tuesday night. Make suggestions to your regional board members.

Plan now to attend this most important AFN Convention October 20-22. Important decisions on health care, subsistence, housing, clean water, safety, etc. will be likely items for discussion. Plan, too, on coming in a couple of days earlier (October 18-19) to attend the Statewide Native Health Conference. See you at the Sheraton Anchorage Hotel for both.