



## News

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### **Healthy Families suffers cuts** *Three employees laid off, another transferred*

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By Brett Wallace  
[bwallace@chronicle-tribune.com](mailto:bwallace@chronicle-tribune.com)

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State budget cuts have touched Healthy Families of Grant County, which must adapt to an 18 percent reduction in funding, organizers say.

The program has been forced to lay off three full-time employees and transfer another to a different program within the agency, according to Connie Rose, executive director of Family Service Society.

The remaining dozen or so employees have received a reduction in hours, from 40 to 35 each week.

The immediate effect is the end of the program's involvement with a number of families, according to program director Lisa Cart.

"Those home visitors that were laid off, those long-term families they had, they chose not to continue with the program," she said. "They didn't want to have a new home visitor."

As a result, usage of Healthy Families in Grant County has dropped from around 150 families throughout 2009 to about 124 families now, she said, though she added that number would likely rise into the 130s sometime this year.

"We typically add five families a month," Cart said.

Healthy Families of Grant County is a home visitation program that looks at the wholeness of a child's health, including physical, mental and emotional well-being.

"We visit parents with younger children, and we give them information about child development, ideas about parenting, and tips about how their children can be as healthy as possible," Cart said. "We also promote school-readiness and address that, too."

Every county in Indiana has a similar program, according to Rose, and all were touched by the cutbacks. In fact, she said Grant County remains better off than many other communities in the face of the reductions. Several programs in smaller counties were forced to merge into larger programs in neighboring communities, she said.

"In relation to the population, we have a larger site than some communities of similar populations," Cart said. "We were one of the earlier sites (to develop a Healthy Families program). We've been able to build in that over time."

Rose said the collaborative nature of not-for-profit organizations in Grant County has also helped because there are no overlapping services directly competing with this one.

"They all have their unique aspects to them," she said of local services.

Rose and Cart say they knew a cut was coming in 2010 because of Indiana's revenue situation, but they were surprised by its size.

"But there's an understanding as to why that is," Cart said.

"This is bigger picture," Rose added. "There have been budget cuts to many institutions. It's not just about Healthy Families."

As a result, Rose said Healthy Families of Grant County must take even more care to be wise with every dollar. She expects they'll also look to other community organizations for cooperation.

"How we as a community rebound and seek solutions is we will have to be cleverer in how we share resources and work together to help one another," Rose said. "It's more important now that people step up and help in the solution."

Cart said the program's remaining staff has handled the increased workload well and that dedication to the mission is higher than ever.

She also believes that the state revenue can be restored when the economy rebounds.

"I believe at the state level there's a wonderful commitment to Healthy Families and to the mission of Healthy Families," Cart said. "They see what the different portions of Healthy Families means to families. They're very committed to that."

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