

Governor's office: Prepare for budget cuts 📺

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By LEE MCGUIRE / KVUE News

Gov. Rick Perry's budget office is directing state agencies to prepare 2007/2008 budgets that spend 10 percent less money than they did in the 2006/2007 budget cycle.

In a letter sent June 2, agencies were ordered to submit "baseline" budget requests at the 90 percent spending level. The letter was co-signed by John O'Brien, Deputy Director of the state's Legislative Budget Board, and Mike Morrissey, director of the Governor's Office of Budget, Planning and Policy.

"It forces them to decide what's really important and decide what's best for taxpayers," says Byron Schlomach of the Texas Public Policy Foundation. "It puts all the members of the Legislature in the mindset that we're getting really serious here in making sure that all of our practices are disciplined."

But Eva DeLuna of the Center for Public Policy Priorities says the cuts, which would total about \$3 billion if implemented, would shave money off of a system that's already been cut nearly to the bone.

"Agencies have to fight just to keep their current inadequate amount of funding," she said. "Waiting lists will get longer. Honestly, some people will die before they ever get the services that they signed up for five years ago."

As of February 28, 29,504 Texans were waiting for community-based health care services. Many of them are in state-funded hospitals, and would be able to live in the community if state-funded nurses and counselors were available. Last session lawmakers declined to budget an extra \$100 million to reduce the waiting list.

Perry's directive excludes public education and federally-mandated health programs, such as Medicaid, from the proposed cuts. Kathy Walt, a Perry spokesperson, says the 90 percent funding level will be used as a baseline level to begin budget negotiations when lawmakers return to Austin in January.



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Perry's office has told state agencies to prepare for budget cuts.

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