

TUESDAY, MAY 28, 1991

Medics take issue
with EMS agency
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Local family planning service won't be affected, director says

Mike Sullivan, executive director of Merced Family Health Centers, said the Supreme Court decision regarding federally funded family planning services will not affect the Patterson Medical Clinic.

"As far as we are concerned it will be business as usual," Sullivan said. "I don't think it affects us because we do not receive the specific Title 10 funds, even though we do receive other federal funds and we do provide family planning services."

The Supreme Court ruling upheld regulations governing the Title 10 program, which

funds about 4000 clinics nationwide for helping low-income women with family planning.

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In a 5-4 decision, the court said the government may prohibit the clinics from giving

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Family planning

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abortion counseling.

Merced Family Health Centers, with health clinics in Patterson, Modesto, Merced, Los Banos and Planada, gets federal support for dispensing general medical care to migrants and indigents. Family planning represents about 10 percent of the services.

"My gut sense is that it does not affect us," Sullivan said. "But I'm sure there are people who would say that, if you receive any federal funds, you are affected."

At the local facility on North Third Street, clients may receive information on different types of contraceptives and the option of abortion.

"I think abstinence is part of the picture," Sullivan acknowi-

edged. "We try to give the full breadth of the contraceptive picture."

The clinics get additional funding from the state. This fiscal year, Merced Family Health Centers Inc. got a \$76,000 base grant from the state Office of Family Planning.

Governor Pete Wilson wants to boost the funding statewide by \$10 million and allocate another \$15 million to fight teenage pregnancy and substance abuse among pregnant women.

If the state legislature fulfills Wilson's request, Sullivan will apply for some of the money because the clinics see a lot of these cases.

"There is going to be a negative outcome if the child is going to be abused during the pregnancy (when the mother takes drugs)," Sullivan said. "I don't know how exactly we will (design the program.) We may work with the schools or we may just beef up (the educational level) of our staff."

While pro-life groups praised the Supreme Court, Sullivan thought the decision a poor way to deal with a highly sensitive moral and ethical issue.

"It was an extremely poor decision," he said. "It seems that any time you restrict knowledge it will work against you in the long haul. It really hurts the most vulnerable group in the country."