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Planned Parenthood Restructures / Seeks to add services, compete with HMOs

David Tuller, Chronicle Staff Writer | December 27, 1995

Facing stiff competition from other health care providers, three Bay Area affiliates of Planned Parenthood will merge services on the first of the year.

A spokesman for the new regional entity, Planned Parenthood/Golden Gate, said it will continue to operate all 16 community clinics now run by the organization's San Mateo, Alameda/San Francisco, and Marin/Sonoma/Mendocino affiliates. The clinics handle an estimated 160,000 patient visits a year.

The spokesman, [David Landis](#), said the merged affiliate will be able to eliminate some administrative costs without cutting back on patient services, including abortions. The group hopes to add primary health care to its existing reproductive health care programs -- a change that will enable it to compete directly with health maintenance organizations, said Landis.

"We are not going to shut down clinics or services," he said. "But the reality of the '90s is that you have to be able to attract managed care health plans in order to stay competitive."

The change comes as Planned Parenthood is facing serious challenges on both the national and state levels. Conservatives in Congress have expressed a desire to cut federal support for family- planning programs, including [Planned Parenthood Federation of America](#).

Last summer, the federation's president, [Pamela Maraldo](#), resigned amid opposition to her efforts to reposition the group as a broad health organization that could compete more effectively in the current health care marketplace. Many both inside and outside the organization feared that such a change would reduce Planned Parenthood's role in both the battle over abortion rights and the delivery of health care to low-income women.

In California, Governor Wilson's overhaul of [Medi-Cal](#), which provides health care to the poor, has forced Planned Parenthood to shift strategies. With the state pressing Medi-Cal recipients to sign up for health maintenance organizations, Planned Parenthood is in danger of losing a significant number of patients unless it expands its offerings and competes directly with other health care providers.

Landis said the Golden Gate affiliate will be the largest in California and, after New York, the second-largest in the country. In the initial stages of the merger, he said, primary care services will be offered at Planned Parenthood clinics in Menlo Park and San Mateo.

[Dian Harrison](#), who is now executive director of the San Mateo affiliate, has been named to head the new regional organization.

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