



WSA Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP

*Serving ECEAP, Head Start, Migrant Head Start,
Tribal Head Start and Early Head Start Programs
and Families*



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Contact: Joel Ryan, 253.486.9077

Governor Cuts Child Care Subsidies for 4,115 Families; Many Families to End Up on Welfare; WSA Calls for Lawmakers to Reverse Cuts

Governor Cuts 4,115 families off of child care subsidies

Today the Governor announced that in order to reduce the budget by \$31.6 million she would further restrict access to Working Connections Child Care subsidies for some of most at risk children and their families. The cut would mean that 4,115 will lose services on January 1st. The Governor is proposing to further restrict eligibility for the program from the current 175% of the poverty level (\$2670/month for a family of 3) to 150% of the poverty level (\$2289/month). Back in October the Governor cut more than 2,500 families off Working Connections Child Care subsidies to bring the total cut to more than 6,600 families.

Cecily's Story

Cecily Jenkins is a Tacoma single mom with three children. She recently got a great new full time job as a mentor to young women at Goodwill and is close to completing her B.A degree online. She makes \$2772 per month, about \$16 more than the new cutoff of \$2756.25 for a family of four. Child care is expensive, and difficult to afford for low income families - if Cecily had to pay for her child care expenses without any help from the Working Connections Child Care program she would owe \$1500 per month—that's more than 60 percent of her take-home income. After paying for food, rent, utilities, and transportation expenses, Cecily would be in an almost impossible situation.

Cecily said that "I am not sure what I am going to do. I want to work and am excited about my new job and the work I am doing. I was finally out on my own making a better life for myself and my kids. No family should be in a situation like this—having to decide whether to go on welfare, take a pay cut, or lose their child care for their kids. My hope is that the Governor and lawmakers hear my story and do everything they can to look out for working families like me that are struggling each and every day. I know the budget situation is dire, but hopefully this cut can be reversed so that families like mine have a chance to make it in a tough economy."

Connie Mueller, President-elect of WSA and Director of Kitsap Community Services HS/ECEAP/EHS said the following:

“We have many current and former families impacted by these cuts. In Head Start and ECEAP we work closely with families to help them further their education, improve their job prospects, and become self sufficient. This decision will take families that have made it off the welfare rolls and put them right back on. It’s going to ultimately cost the state more money than it is saving.”

Joel Ryan, Executive Director of WSA said the following:

“This cut is truly penny wise and pound foolish. These folks are the working poor - paying taxes and setting a good example for their children. They work in offices, serve our food, take care of our children, help care for our seniors, and wait on us when we go shopping at the grocery store. The decision today is incredibly short-sighted and will lead to more families ending up on welfare and kids potentially forced into unsafe or lower quality childcare situations. I am hopeful that when the legislative session starts back up in January lawmakers will stand up for people like Cecily and her children and reverse this ill-conceived decision.”

Three Reasons That Cuts to Child Care Subsidies Are Short-Sighted

1. **Cutting child care subsidies to low-wage workers will force many parents to quit their jobs and turn to TANF support.** They simply will not be able to juggle the needs of their families, their job, and also pay the full price of child care.” It doesn’t make sense to force people to make a choice between care for their kids or keeping a job, only to immediately support them with child care to look for a job through TANF. Within the emergency rule filed by the Department of Early Learning, the authors note that the reason for cutting child care subsidies is to close the funding gap within TANF (Work First). They point out that “the shortfall is the result of increased demand for the program due to the economic recession,” and that “in the last two years, the Work First caseload has grown by more than 30 percent from July 2008 to June 2010.” Cutting child care subsidies for working parents is very likely to lead to more families needing TANF, the very thing that the Governor is trying to avoid.
2. **Recent research by Dr. Mildred Warner of Cornell University finds that reductions in licensed child care have a negative, compounded effect on the economy.** She found that when a family can no longer afford child care, the child care provider loses revenue, staff are let go, and some centers and family child care providers will go out of business. As a result, at each of those levels, people have less money to purchase goods and services. Additionally, as pointed out above more families will end up on TANF—costing taxpayers more. Warner’s research concludes that a reduction in child care funding will lead to much higher costs in the long run and make the recession deeper.
3. **While Working Connections is considered a work support program, it is also an early learning program for our some of our most at-risk children.** High quality early learning ensures that kids are ready for school and can take advantage of life’s many opportunities. We know that a big part of quality is stability for a child during these

critical years of development. Cutting child care subsidies means that many families will have no choice but to remove their child from their child care situation, only to have to look for other options when they qualify for TANF and look for work. The result is a higher cost to the state and disruption for kids and families at a time when they are most in need of steady, consistent care.

About WSA

The Washington State Association of Head Start/ECEAP is a statewide organization composed of representatives from ECEAP, Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant/Seasonal Head Start, and Native American Head Start. The association has been in existence since the late 1960's, and was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1986. The organization advocates for Head Start and for ECEAP in Olympia and in Washington DC. You can visit our web site at www.wsaheadstarteceap.com.

CONTACT: Please contact Joel Ryan at (253) 486-9077 or Katy Warren at (206)291-2021 if you need additional information on the impact of these cuts or you can call Cecily directly at 253-882-6084