



**WSA URGES GOVERNOR TO MAINTAIN ECEAP FUNDING IN HER BUDGET
ECONOMIC DOWNTURN TAKES TERRIBLE TOLL ON MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN
ECEAP SERVES AS MAIN SAFETY NET**

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Joel Ryan, Executive Director of the Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP, called on the Governor to continue her strong support for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) in the 2009-2011 supplemental budget in light of the economic downturn and the increased need for ECEAP services in many communities.

Joel Ryan, Executive Director of WSA, said the following:

“The economic downturn has taken a terrible toll on the most vulnerable children and families in our communities. The most recent data from the Department of Early Learning finds that **41% of the children currently enrolled in ECEAP live in families with an income of less than \$10,000 a year.** This is up dramatically from the previous year in which 32% of the children enrolled in ECEAP were living in families with an income of less than \$10,000 a year.

In addition, ECEAP programs are reporting that many more families are relying on food stamps and are in need of emergency housing assistance. More children are arriving at school without basic medical or dental care, and we’re starting to see an increase in the percentage of children who aren’t fully immunized.

Meanwhile, the budget cuts made to local social and health services has it made it even more difficult for children and families to get help. **This “double whammy” means that ECEAP programs often find themselves as the only safety net in their communities for the most vulnerable children and families.** I am hopeful that when the Governor puts together her supplemental budget she will continue to support ECEAP and maintain this important safety net and lifeline for our state’s most vulnerable kids and families.”

DEL ECEAP Statistics

The Department of Early Learning reports the following changes in some of these critical areas:

- In FY09, 32% of ECEAP children were from families with an annual income of \$10,000 or less. In FY10, 41% are at this level.
- At enrollment, 33% of families were on food stamps last year and 45% this year.
- Last year, 33% of children were not up-to-date on medical exams at enrollment. This year, it is 47%.
- Last year, 58% of children needed a dental exam. This year, 64% need these.
- The number of children who are fully immunized declined from 94% to 91%.

About ECEAP

ECEAP is a comprehensive “whole child”, family-focused preschool program designed to help low-income and at-risk children and families succeed in school and life. The program was established in 1985, and was modeled after the successful federal Head Start program. ECEAP provides an intensive combination of education, health and nutrition screening and assistance, parent involvement and family support to the neediest of Washington’s children. The program is available to families who earn less than 110% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$23,320/year for a family of four). In 2009 the Washington State Department of Early Learning contracted with 40 schools, child care centers, and community and faith-based facilities to provide ECEAP services to 8,053 children and families.

Studies have shown that at-risk children without high quality preschool were 70% more likely to commit violent crimes, have lower graduation rates and higher drug use. In a 12-year longitudinal study of ECEAP (1988-2000), researchers found that ECEAP children made significantly greater academic gains, displayed more positive behaviors, enjoyed school more, and had fewer health problems than non-ECEAP children.

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, 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.

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