



Summer 2009

Improving the lives of families through child care services, research and advocacy since 1980

Keeping the issues of child care, early care, education and working families up front and in focus

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California State Budget Crisis

California has been in the news these past few months and not for positive reasons. The state started 2009 with a hemorrhaging deficit and has struggled to find lasting ways to contain its growth. A number of issues are in play—propositions, automatic funding triggers, antiquated tax system, etc.—that have an impact on the volatile nature of the budget. However, this year, California has been saddled with the loss of billions in revenue, a stalled economy and rising unemployment. As a result, the Governor proposed a number of violent cuts that would devastate families and the working poor.

Drastic Cuts

The Governor proposed the elimination of CalWORKs, a safety net program designed to help seniors, the disabled, the poor and working families. Most of the families receiving services from Crystal Stairs are part of the CalWORKs program. These families are either transitioning off welfare or getting their footing after leaving the system. Eliminating the CalWORKs program could trigger their return to the system.

The Governor proposed eliminating the Healthy Families Program (see page 2). This would mean 240,000 children in Los Angeles County and 930,000 children across the state would lose access to healthcare.

The Governor proposed increasing family fees on parents, up to 10% of their income. Many families that pay family fees earn on average \$19,300 annually. A



10% increase would cause a financial hardship for them.

The Governor proposed retooling the Community Care Licensing (CCL) Division, a state office that is responsible for monitoring the health and safety of child care facilities. Currently, the state makes visits once every five years. The new proposal would eliminate unannounced visits (unless a violation was noted), allow child care providers to self-

certify compliance, and move us from 48th in the nation in licensing to dead last.

Active Involvement

Crystal Stairs has been actively involved in the budget process. Over 3,000 parents and providers signed oversized vouchers protesting the Governor's budget proposal and declaration to pay contractors with IOU's. Over 1,000 calls to the Legislature, the Speaker and the Governor were made during the months of May and June in protest of the proposed cuts.

However, it takes more than calls and petitions from our families and providers to address the inequities in these recurring state budget proposals. It takes a collective of child care advocates and supporters of early childhood education to stand up against vicious proposals that put children and families' lives at risk.



Healthcare Under Siege in California



By Marilyn Lawrence-Eubanks

The safety net for our children and families in the state has eroded to such a level that the lives of our children and families are in jeopardy. The draconian cuts have hit all levels of health and human services.

Healthy Families

The Healthy Families Program which is the largest enrolled health insurance

coverage in the state has faced outright closure and was set to go on a waitlist starting July 17. It is seeking assistance from already strapped philanthropic organizations, donations or other sources to make up the deficit so California can obtain its full allotment of federal funds to support this program.

This program's shortfall threatens to cut approximately 462,000 children and deny them access to the critical healthcare coverage they

need. The waitlist will shut children out of the program and undermine a decade of the communities' investments in Healthy Families outreach and enrollment.

The cuts to healthcare alone could cause nearly 2 million Californians—mainly children—to lose access to cost-effective healthcare. Additional cuts to CalWORKS; IHSS and SSI benefits for seniors, the blind and disabled; and food assistance programs for legal immigrants would make an already undermined situation for families even worse.

Coverage Expansion

The role of the safety net has been debated in various proposals for healthcare reform in the United States. According to Michael Cousineau in a paper describing how the expansion of health coverage affects the use of safety net services, he notes the following:

In Los Angeles 40,000 mostly immigrant children ineligible for State Children's Health Insurance Program or Medicaid, were enrolled in an insurance program called Healthy Kids. Coverage expansion was associated with a decrease in the utilization

of pediatric services in two county-funded programs for the uninsured. Coverage expansion may have saved more than \$37 million in compensated care for children.

For public hospitals and other safety net clinics, the data suggests that a state or jointly-funded insurance expansion will help offset the growing burden of uncompensated care among safety net providers while improving utilization and health status among children. A growing body of evidence shows that health insurance has a positive impact on healthcare for children.

Net Endangered

Yet, as I write these words the safety net is less likely to be there to cover the growing number of families who find themselves newly unemployed (many for the first time) and still not eligible for programs or potentially wait-listed for the programs that do currently exist.

The services are being cut along with the potential eligibility. These families are the most vulnerable and we must fight to give them a healthy today as well as a healthy tomorrow.

Thank You Recent Donors!

You make our eyes light up with joy. Your contributions allow us to do the critical work that is necessary to keep our families connected to child care. You understand that child care can be the lynchpin to a family's success. Thank you again! Your names have been added to our Giving Tree. You are the seeds of life to child care.

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Crystal Stairs Goes to Washington

In March, a Crystal Stairs delegation went to Washington, D.C. for the annual National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies Conference. Staff met with the offices

Henderson Gets County Accolade

Long-time board member Jamesina Henderson was recently honored for her commitment to the County of Los Angeles by 2nd District County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas. Henderson will head the largest health foundation in Connecticut. She leaves great friendships, and a legacy of work in the city and county. She will stay on the Crystal Stairs board for one more year.



of Congresswomen Diane Watson, Maxine Waters, Laura Richardson and Congressman Xavier Becerra.

It was an exciting time to be in the nation's capital and everyone was enthusiastic about the important work ahead.



CV Rallies in Sacramento

Over 100 Community Voices members traveled to Sacramento on May 6 to participate in the Annual Stand For Children Rally and Advocacy Day. The group stood in solidarity with others from across the state to speak out against the budget proposal, especially the cuts that threaten child care.

After the rally, CV hosted a two-hour town hall. Senate Health and Human Services Budget Committee Consultant Jack Hailey, Assemblymember Mike Davis, Senator Roderick Wright, and representatives from Assemblymember Ted Lieu's and the Speaker of the Assembly's office participated in the town hall.

CV is funded by a grant from the James Irvine Foundation. Funding for this important work ends Dec. 31, 2009.



Fun with 'Cotton Child'

Author and Crystal Stairs parent, Tracy Brooks read from her new book, *Cotton Child* at Crystal Stairs in Leimert Park on April 4. Tracy spoke about her experiences as an author, parent and advocate of child care quality and early literacy. She also facilitated a children's activity. Part of the book proceeds went to benefit Crystal Stairs' Lending Library.

SAGE Turns 15 This Year

Crystal Stairs' SAGE Center celebrates its 15th anniversary this year. Opened in 1994, it provides high-quality child care for children 3 to 12 who live in the Nickerson Gardens Housing Development, the largest housing development west of the Mississippi.

The Crystal Stairs 2008-09 annual report, to be released in November, will feature SAGE.

Three-Hour CV Workshop Explains State of Budget

Community Voices in partnership with Crystal Stairs presented an informative three-hour workshop on the current state of the California budget and what it means for the community on May 16. Concerns about proposed



Community Voices Protests Cuts

Community Voices staged a press conference in protest of the proposed budget cuts to child care on June 1. The conference was held at the Hoover Intergenerational Center and was timed to coincide with Budget Committee hearings in Sacramento. Parents, child care providers and advocates attended the press conference and spoke to the critical importance of child care in our communities.

federal and state level budget cuts as they relate to child care funding, how the federal stimulus will help California and what role the county plays in child care were among the issues addressed.

Attendees were able to sign up to meet local legislators in their district offices.



Congresswoman Laura Richardson Comes to SAGE

Crystal Stairs' Nickerson Gardens SAGE Child Care Center was privileged to receive Congresswoman Laura Richardson on July 29. SAGE is in the Congresswoman's district and this was the first time her schedule allowed her to tour the center. She played basketball, read from the book *Where the Wild Things Are*, and had a chance to see and hear about the various needs of the center. She vowed to come back for another visit.

Crystal Stairs Turns 30

Depending on who you talk to, it seems like only yesterday that the doors of a small Resource and Referral agency opened. But it has been almost 30 years. Crystal Stairs is not planning to let 2010 pass without some acknowledgement of our triumphs, but we did want to give our readers an early heads-up. We have been helping families improve their lives for almost 30 years, tirelessly working to encourage quality child development, to support child care providers as they move up the early childhood educator ladder and to make sure that children in our service area have an equal chance at success. Happy Birthday, Crystal Stairs. You are approaching middle age, but you still look good.

Degnan Moves to Wateridge

Way back in 1998, Crystal Stairs, Inc. opened its very first satellite office in Gardena. Now over ten years later we will be closing our last satellite office on Degnan Blvd. in Leimert Park Village.

Staff from Degnan's Resource & Referral department, the Children's Health & Wellness department and the Provider Resource Library all will be moving to our Wateridge office.

Degnan's last official business day will be November 13.



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