

Child care services reeling from state budget cuts

By Tina Barna

On Oct. 8, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in his completion of the 2010-11 budget eliminated child care services for low income working families in Stage 3. This single act destroys California's 15-year investment in moving families from welfare to work and places thousands of California families on the unemployment and welfare rolls and leaves 122 El Dorado County children without access to safe quality child care.

The immediate impacts of these cuts will include:

- Placing 64 current families and – 26 more families throughout the rest of the fiscal year – who are currently working, paying taxes and contributing to the region's struggling economy to make difficult decisions between caring for their children or maintaining their employment;
- 42 percent of providers, including licensed family child care homes and child care centers throughout the state, losing payment for services, which places their businesses, already hard hit by El Dorado's struggling economy, at risk of closure;
- \$1.5 million of economic input will be lost to El Dorado County.

The massive elimination of child care services will result not only in lost employment for low income working parents and their child care teachers and providers, but also in endangered child safety and lost learning opportunities for the 169 young children who will be terminated from their child care assistance programs beginning Nov. 1.

Child care providers are already struggling with high vacancy rates due to the high unemployment rate in El Dorado County. The loss of an additional 169 children from these programs will place many licensed child care programs in difficult financial positions and potential closure.

Further, these cuts will have a ripple effect of employers losing employees who are no longer able to come to work, closure of already struggling child care businesses which will impact all working families who depend upon child care services to go to work.

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