

El Dorado struggles to provide child care without state budget

By Vicki Barber

The failure by the Legislature and the governor to pass a state budget threatens child care for hundreds of local families and potentially closes down local child care businesses.

State preschool and child care providers with state contracts have not been paid since July 1 for services provided to approximately 1,100 children, creating a cash flow crisis that threatens their ability to keep the doors open and the children served. Businesses cannot continue to provide services and make payroll without getting paid.

Choices for Children, El Dorado County's local resource and referral program, makes payments for child care for low income working families and has been forced to notify providers that they will not be able to pay for child care services as of Sept. 1 until the budget is passed and the state begins to make payments.

"This is the first time ever that we will have to delay payments affecting local child care providers caring for 187 families involving 323 children. Since child care keeps El Dorado County working, this will heavily impact county unemployment and the economy. When families can't pay for child care, licensed programs are forced to close their businesses," said Tina Barna, Choices for Children director.

The current record-setting budget impasse is harming the businesses that contract with the State of California and threatens working families. Child care is an essential service

that enables parents to go to work and supports children learning. Please contact your legislators and insist that they get back to work and pass a budget that is fair to our children and families and supports quality education.

Vicki Barber is superintendent of education for El Dorado County.