



**CHILDREN'S
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ALLIANCE**

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STATE BUDGET SHORTFALL TURNS CHILDREN AWAY

PHOENIX (September 1, 2004) -- The State Department of Economic Security announced that beginning today once again working families will be denied child care subsidies. Any family earning above poverty wages will be turned away with little chance of getting any help until next summer when the next state budget year begins. A single mom with one child earning \$6.05 per hour, for example, will be turned away for earning too much money, even though child care costs could consume a third of her entire earnings.

Child care subsidies are vouchers that give low-income working families access to safe, consistent child care. This type of child care gets young children on the road to quality early education that helps prepare them to start school ready to succeed. It also plays a large role in helping businesses maintain a strong workforce.

"Without child care assistance, many parents face the impossible choice of turning to welfare or leaving their children in unsafe situations. And it's bad for business when employees must quit or reduce hours because they can't afford child care," said Carol Kamin, President/CEO of Children's Action Alliance.

In March of 2003, for the first time in the 30-year history of the child care program, Arizona began turning away eligible working families because of state funding shortfalls. The waiting list reached a peak of almost 9,400 children by March 2004.

Children's Action Alliance conducted a survey of parents on the child care waiting list last year. The survey results show that waiting for a child care subsidy disrupts Arizona businesses and lowers family income. One in four families reported that they had to cut their work hours. One in eleven families admitted that they left their children home alone when they couldn't get a subsidy. Other parents had to leave children in the care of people they didn't trust – simply because they had no other choice.

State lawmakers added funds to the child care budget this year to reduce the waiting list, but they knew the amount fell far short of what was needed as Arizona continues to have the fastest growing young child population in the nation.

Child care costs anywhere from \$4,000 to \$8,000 per child, per year in Arizona -- more than the cost of tuition at our state universities and more than many working parents can afford.

"When we are trying to improve Arizona's educational performance, fuel our economic recovery and keep parents working, it makes no moral or economic sense to push responsible parents out of the workforce or leave children out in the cold," said Kamin. "Voters should ask every candidate running for the state legislature what he or she will do to give families access to good child care."

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Children's Action Alliance (CAA) is a non-profit, non-partisan research, education and advocacy organization. Through research, publications, media campaigns and advocacy, CAA works to promote the well-being of all of Arizona's children and families. For more information, visit <http://www.azchildren.org>.