



## **ECEAP WAITLISTS JUMP 263 PERCENT IN 2 YEARS; MORE THAN 3,500 CHILDREN IN NEED OF SERVICES**

### **WSA URGES LEGISLATURE TO PROTECT ECEAP FUNDING**

**Kent, Washington// February 4, 2010//**

Joel Ryan, Executive Director of the Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP (WSA), called on the Washington State Legislature to protect funding for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), which serves over 8000 of Washington's poorest 3 and 4 year old children and their families.

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

"The economy has had a devastating effect on children and families in Washington, and ECEAP programs are seeing more demand every day. DEL reported last week that there are 3,540 children on ECEAP waiting lists, unable to enroll due to limited funding. In January 2008, before the economic downturn, we had just 1,346 children waiting to get into ECEAP – **this means an incredible 263% increase in just two years.** We know that the budget situation in Olympia is difficult and tough choices will need to be made, but we hope the legislature will not try to close the budget gap on the backs of low income children and their families especially in light of the staggering need."

#### **Waiting List Data from Department of Early Learning**

Waiting List December 2009:	3,540 children (1,351 4-year-olds and 2,189 3-year-olds)
Waiting List December 2008:	2,281 children
Waiting List December 2007:	1,346 children

#### **Where are things right now?**

Governor Gregoire in her "all cuts" budget proposed eliminating ECEAP services for about 1500 to 1600 children. However, in her "book 2" budget proposal which included revenue to offset some of the cuts proposed, the Governor would restore all ECEAP funding at last year's level.

The fate of ECEAP children now heads to the House and Senate Ways and Means Committee which will put together their own budget proposals in the next few weeks. While we were pleased that the Governor's latest budget proposal would not cut ECEAP, we do know that ECEAP continues to be on the chopping block due to the current dismal budget situation plaguing our state.

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#### **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. ECEAP provides an intensive combination of education, health and nutrition screening and assistance, parent

involvement, training and family support, and is considered one of the country's highest quality state pre-k programs by the National Institute for Early Education Research.

The program was established in 1985, and was modeled after the successful federal Head Start program. It is available to families who earn less than 110% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$23,320/year for a family of four). Currently, two thirds of ECEAP families are surviving on less than 80% of the federal poverty level - \$17,640 for a family of four. In 2010 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, and 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](http://www.wsaheadstarteceap.com).

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