

CONNECTIONS

MARCH 2010

INFANT TODDLER MENTAL HEALTH COALITION OF ARIZONA

SPECIAL EDITION ON PUBLIC POLICY CONTRIBUTED BY SUZANNE SCHUNK, LCSW

SERVICES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN THREATENED!



This week the Republicans and Governor Brewer expect to pass a budget that includes numerous extreme cuts to services for families and children. Many of them directly or indirectly impact the families with very young children. Every ITMHCA member must speak up NOW to their legislators and demand that no more cuts be made and that new revenues be approved instead.

The following are just a sample of the horrible cuts planned in this budget:

- Elimination of KidsCare Program, resulting in more than **42,000 children** losing health care coverage.
- Cuts to AHCCCS, impacting 300,000 people by lowering income eligibility. (Also is against voter-approved initiative.)
- **10,000 families** (most female-headed) with 17,000 children are proposed to lose cash assistance --- for families, already by definition very poor, driving these families into deeper poverty effective April 1, 2010 if passed by the Legislature. This is an attack on some of the poorest of the poor with nowhere else to turn. Results will be increased homeless, desperation, illness, and family dislocation.
- **11,000** on child care turn away list with many more to be turned away from child care, with child care permanently closed for the foreseeable future, stopping families from working and putting children at risk by being left alone or in unsafe situations.

- No 100% investigations of child protection or adult protection referrals and continued elimination of family support services. The system of in-home family services has already been cut severely in the 2009/2010 cuts and will now be cut even with more families losing services and their children potentially going into foster care.
- Cuts in domestic violence services reducing service to 1,600 victims of domestic violence will be turned away from shelters. (Have already had massive cuts.)
- Elimination of all-day Kindergarten.
- Elimination of state only supported services for children and adults with developmental disabilities throwing 300 children (early intervention) and 400 adults off services.

In addition, many legislators want to divert funds away from the voter-approved First Things First Early Childhood Health and Development Board and use them for other purposes that the legislators deem appropriate. This is in direct conflict with what voters wanted and approved.



Let your voice be heard in defense of the vulnerable children we serve. Write your own letter or call your legislators and demand that they use the alternatives available to them to increase revenue. They can vote to eliminate tax exemptions, expand the tax base, provide funds for staff to collect outstanding AZ taxes, as well as other alternatives.

**Children cannot speak for themselves—
we must be their voice!**

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