

## Child Care Assistance Program

The Child Care Assistance Program has experienced changes in policy in the past few months that have allowed our program to assist more families during these tough economic times. We spent months advocating to save social service programs, and also putting forth great effort to reach legislators urging them to pass a budget that would not cut the child care assistance program. The passage of the maintenance budget for our program allowed for 74 million federal dollars to be added to the program through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). These funds have allowed for changes in the policy in two areas.

Any parent currently receiving assistance through our program who loses their job can now keep their child care assistance payments for one 90 day job search within a 12 month period if the change is reported within 10 days. The previous policy only allowed for a 30 day job search. The job search for families in a Head Start/ Child Care Collaboration program is extended from 90 days previously, to the end of the program year. We have had several parents already utilizing this option in order to find employment.

The other change made with the ARRA funds was a 15% copayment reduction for all families on the Child Care Assistance Program. For example, a family who paid a monthly copayment of \$108.33 to their child care provider now pays \$92.08 per month. Both changes took effect on

November 1, 2009. The AARA funds are temporary and the State will have to find revenue to continue to allow for the extended job search and reduction of copayment.

Another change in the program, unrelated to the ARRA funds, was an increase in income guidelines effective October 1, 2009. The income limits are set at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level as required by State law. The previous gross income level since April 1, 2008 for a family size of 2 was \$2,334 per month. The new gross income level for a family size of 2 is \$2,429 per month.

The months ahead will include advocating on behalf of the families and children we serve and continuing to educate parents and providers on the importance of contacting their elected officials to urge passing a responsible budget that generates revenue to keep programs that serve children and families alive.

