

# BUDGET BRINGS CHANGES, CHALLENGES

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## MAKING WAY FOR A NEW SOLANO CARES

The Solano CARES (Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards) Initiative is gearing up for its fifth program year. Over the course of the past four years over 1,372 stipends have been issued to 646 members, or over twenty-five percent, of the licensed child care and development workforce, totaling over \$1,858,000. The stipends provide an incentive to child care providers to increase their educational levels and remain in the field, improving the quality of child care and development services available to children and families throughout the County.

First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission, the major funder of the Initiative, recently brought together a variety of key experts and stakeholders to recommend funding priorities for the child care dollars that would be spent over the next two years. This group overwhelmingly supported continued funding for Solano CARES to address the training needs of the workforce. While the Commissioners approved this recommendation in May, 2005, they had fewer dollars available for services in the child care arena due to their decision to spread funding out over a longer period of time. With the matching funds from First 5 California and the funds from the California Department of Education, the funding available for Solano CARES in the current fiscal year is approximately twenty-five percent less than the in fiscal year 2004-2005.

In addition, First 5 California has been more prescriptive with the

program design as they move towards their goal of Preschool for All. They have included a list of required program supports that will be offered to participants including: tutoring assistance, translation services, assistance with applying for a Child Development Permit, developing professional growth plans, links to financial aid and scholarships, more accessible training/education, and others. In an effort to inform the field of these changes and other components of the new CARES program, Children's Network staff have been holding informational sessions throughout the County.

**Program Changes and Highlights**

- License exempt/unlicensed providers who meet the requirements are now eligible for a stipend.
- The stipend award for participants in the Entry Track (less than 6 units of Early Childhood Education) will be significantly increased to attract a greater number of providers interested in pursuing additional training/education.
- A stipend will be paid for participants on the Professional Track who serve as Professional Growth Advisors.
- There will be one application round (instead of four) a year. Those that plan to apply should submit a Letter of Intent (available July 1, 2005).

Contact Becky Billing, CARES Program Coordinator, for more information or visit the Children's Network's website, [www.childnet.org](http://www.childnet.org).

**Upcoming Events:****September 7**

*Solano Children's Alliance*  
12:00 p.m. General Meeting  
Joseph Nelson Community  
Center, Suisun

**September 19**

*Child Abuse Prevention Council*  
12:00 p.m. General Meeting  
Solano County Office of  
Education, Suisun

**September 20**

Strategies Workshop:  
*"Bridges Out Of Poverty"*  
8:30 a.m.— 3:15 p.m.  
Hilton Garden Inn, Fairfield  
This event is co-sponsored  
by the Children's Network.

**September 24**

*19th Annual ECE Conference:*  
*"How Do Our Children Grow?"*  
8:00 a.m. — 5:00 p.m.  
Solano Community College,  
Fairfield

**September 26**

*Child Care Planning Council*  
1:00 p.m. General Meeting  
Children's Network Office,  
Fairfield

**September 30**

*Constructing Connections*  
10:00 a.m. General Meeting  
Solano Family & Children's  
Services Office, Fairfield

**October 3—5**

*Nurturing Parent Program*  
*Facilitator Training*  
9:00 a.m.— 4:00 p.m.  
Youth and Family Services  
Office, Vallejo

## PARENTING PARTNERSHIP REPORTS DECREASE IN PROGRAMS

After a rapid increase in the number of parenting programs available in Solano County over the last 4 years, we're now seeing an even more rapid decrease due to budget cuts at the state, federal and local levels.

Most parenting programs in Solano County receive at least some funding from First 5 Solano, and they continue to play an important role in supporting implementation of parenting programs in our community. This year's reduction in grant-making by First 5 Solano, combined with budget cuts at the state and federal level, has resulted in many parenting programs losing funding for the new fiscal year. While child-serving agencies search for supplemental funding to maintain their services, and some are still unsure which parenting programs will be maintained, the emerging picture is sobering.

Approximately one-half of on-going parenting programs in Solano County will be discontinued or cut back in the new fiscal year. Programs which have seen reductions in services include Child Haven's Parent-Child Interaction Therapy and groups in Spanish and English, Matrix Parent Network which serves parents of children with special needs, Solano Parent Network which serves parents of children with severe emotional disorders, Youth & Family

Services' Project Aurora which has had reductions in their substance abusing parents and Jail-Based Outreach Programs. Discontinued programs include PAPA Program's Teen Fathers and Teen Parent Resource Center. Fortunately, Youth and Family Services was able to retain our two Nurturing Parenting Program Trainer/Consultants, who are crucial to the maintenance of our county's parenting infrastructure.

The Solano Parenting Partnership is also impacted by the budget cuts, with staffing reduced to .3 fte (12 hours/week) as of July 1, elimination of funding for the Computer Specialist and service restricted to families of children ages 0-5 in the four "School Readiness Catchment Areas." Children's Network will use its reserves to restore Program Coordinator staffing to .5 fte (20 hours/week) as of September 1, 2005 and will absorb the cost of basic maintenance to the Solano Parenting Partnership Database. We continue to seek funding to serve families of children ages 0-5 outside the school readiness catchment areas, to serve families of children age 6 and above, and to restore computer support.

*The Solano Parenting Partnership is made possible by a grant from First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission. For more information, contact Nicole Bandy at (707) 421-7229 x102; nicole@childnet.org.*

***"Approximately one-half of on-going parenting programs...will be discontinued or cut back in the new fiscal year."***

## NEW STATE BUDGET IMPACTS CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

On Monday, July 11, 2005, the Governor signed the 2005-06 California Budget into law. The following provides a brief overview of major budgetary highlights with a direct impact on children and families in Solano County. The budget agreement:

### K-12 Education

- Funds Proposition 98 K-14 education at the same dollar level contained in the 2004-05 Budget Act. The budget agreement also uses the 2004-05 Budget Act as the basis for the 2005-06 Proposition 98 funding level. The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) has estimated that, over the two-year period this will result in \$3.1 billion fewer dollars to the schools than Proposition 98 provides for. However, the budget does provide one-time funding of \$49.5 million for incentives for low performing schools, \$18.2 million for schools to include fruits and vegetables as part of an effort to provide students healthier breakfasts, and \$183.5 million for school facility emergency repairs pursuant to the Williams settlement agreement.
- Funds some enrollment growth and a 4.23 percent cost-of-living adjustment.
- Suspends the annual state cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for CalWORKs grants for two years, freezing the maximum grant for a family of three in high-cost counties at \$723 per month. This suspension will result in estimated General Fund and federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant "savings" of \$409.8 million over the two-year period.
- Reflects the Legislature's rejection of most of the Governor's proposed changes to the state's subsidized child care system, including reducing reimbursement rates for license-exempt child care providers and imposing a time limit on CalWORKs Stage 3 child care.
- Requires the establishment of "centralized eligibility lists" in each county to track the number of families waiting for subsidized child care, and clarifies the circumstances under which 11- and 12-year-olds may receive subsidized child care.

### Health

The budget agreement:

- Reflects the Legislature's rejection of most of the Governor's multi-pronged proposal to restructure the Medi-Cal Program. However, the safety-net

hospital financing waiver negotiated between California and the federal government, announced on June 22, makes \$360 million in federal Medicaid funds contingent on adoption of the Governor's managed care proposal. That proposal would move more than half a million seniors and people with disabilities into Medi-Cal managed care plans. Enrollment would begin in January, 2007, under the waiver agreement, which has not yet been finalized.

- Includes the Governor's proposal to obtain additional federal funds for prenatal care services in the Medi-Cal Program and the Access for Infants and Mothers (AIM) Program for state savings of \$253.6 million.

### Housing

The budget agreement:

- Provides \$125,000 General Fund for a new governor's Council to Address Chronic Homelessness. The Budget also directs \$750,000 in Proposition 63 funds and \$35 million in Proposition 46 funds for this purpose.
- Resources \$0.9 million to the Emergency Housing and Assistance program, rejecting the Governor's proposal to reduce the program by this amount.

### The Governor's Vetoes

The Governor vetoed \$190 million in spending contained in the budget bill. Notable vetoes include:

- \$20.0 million for the purchase of supplemental materials for English language learners.
- \$57.1 million (state and federal funds) for county administration of social services programs, including CalWORKs and the Food Stamp Program.
- \$1.4 million the Legislature added for the state's Community Care Licensing Division, which conducts periodic visits to licensed facilities to ensure they comply with required health and safety regulations.

Low income families, struggling to make ends meet in an environment of rapidly rising housing and fuel costs, clearly bore the brunt of the budget cuts this year. The Network's "Investing in Families" program, funded through the S.H. Cowell Foundation, is hard at work developing increased community capacity to identify other resources to assist these families as they continue to strive toward greater economic self-reliance. Look for updates on this work, accomplished in partnership with Family Resource Centers in every Solano city, in upcoming Newsletter editions.

# Children's Network

*A united voice for the children of Solano County*

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All of us at the Children's Network would like to thank the following individuals, organizations, businesses, and corporations for their generous donations in Fiscal Year 2004-2005. In partnership, we are a united voice for Solano County children.

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If you are interested in making a donation to the Children's Network, please visit us at [www.childnet.org](http://www.childnet.org) or call 707-421-7229.