



WSA State Advocacy Goals for 2010

1. Maintain investments in the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)

WSA opposes any effort to further cut funding for ECEAP programs. Despite the increase in the number of eligible families due to the economic downturn, 173 children were dropped from the program this year due to the state budget crisis. We believe that ECEAP serves as an important safety net for low income families and has built a strong track record of getting low income children ready for school. In a 12-year longitudinal study of ECEAP 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.

2. Reform components of the existing child care subsidies program so that low-income parents can give their children the continuity of care they need.

WSA supports piloting several changes to the child care subsidies system including a) extending the authorization period for families from the current 6 months to 12 months; and b) capping family co-payments to 10 percent of income.

3. Voluntary universal preschool for three- and four-year-olds should be included in an expanded definition of basic education. The program should be phased-in, beginning with targeted interventions and expanded to ensure that all children are *school ready*.

By including early learning in the definition of basic education the state is making a strong and clear commitment to fund preschool services for all young children so they can enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

4. Design an early learning system that provides opportunities for all children pre-natal to age 8, their families, and early learning caregivers and educators.

WSA supports the recent initiative being worked on by State Superintendent Randy Dorn and Director Bette Hyde. We would like to suggest several key principles in guiding this important work. We believe a well designed system will:

- a. Establish greater intensity of services for greater need families;
- b. Build on the existing mixed delivery system;
- c. Be administered by the Department of Early Learning;
- d. Encourage strong parental involvement and engagement;
- e. Support the professional development and compensation needs of early learning caregivers and providers;
- f. Better align Head Start and ECEAP services for at risk families; and
- g. Establish a comprehensive pre-natal to age 3 component.

WSA Federal Advocacy Goals 2010

- 1. Increase funding for Head Start and Early Head Start so that programs can maintain the number of children being served.** Current research on Head Start shows that children enrolled in the program are less likely to be involved in crime, less likely to need special educational services, and are more likely to graduate high school and college. WSA is delighted that President Obama and Congress have demonstrated their support for Head Start children and families through the increases in funding contained in the economic recovery package. It has meant that nationally thousands of additional children from birth to age 5 are receiving services and many jobs created. However, this additional funding will expire at the end of 2010. We are hopeful that President Obama and Congress will provide Head Start with an increase in fiscal year 2011 so that programs can maintain the number of children and families currently enrolled.
- 2. Reform the Child Care Development Block Grant.** WSA supports two specific reforms to the Child Care Development Block Grant we would like to see considered as part of the reauthorization process: a) extending the authorization period for families from the current 6 months to 12 months; and b) capping family co-payments to 10 percent of income. Both of these changes would allow parents to give their children the continuity of care they need.
- 3. Support federal funding for evidence based home visiting programs.** Research shows that evidence-based, intensive home visiting programs support at-risk parents as their children's first and best teachers, improve health outcomes for parent and child, dramatically reduce child abuse and neglect, and help assure that children enter kindergarten ready to learn. The Washington Home Visiting Coalition estimates that 50% of families under 185% of federal poverty level with children ages birth to five (a total of 25,000 families annually) would be eligible for – and voluntarily participate in - an evidence-based home visiting program. Only 2 percent of eligible families in Washington State are enrolled due to extremely limited capacity. We believe many more families should be able to benefit from intensive home visiting programs and thus we support federal legislation that increases funding for evidence-based home visiting programs.
- 4. Provide more flexibility for Head Start programs to meet the in-kind match.** Head Start programs currently must come up with a 20 percent local match. This has become increasingly more challenging as the economy has dried up donations from individuals and businesses and led to state and local funding cutbacks. Furthermore, the Office of Head Start has made it more difficult for already overburdened programs to meet the requirement. WSA is proposing that the Office of Head Start issue a policy clarification and/or guidance that would allow programs more flexibility in what can count towards the match. One starting point would be to once again allow parent transportation to and from the program.

For more information, please contact:

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