Cuts in State Child Care Could Put More Working Families at Risk

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : August 19, 2010 at 5:50 am

Olympia, WA - About 2,500 low-wage working families in Washington will soon be scrambling to afford their child care. They are being disqualified from receiving state child care assistance under the Working Connections program, as part of last week's budget cuts.

At places like Kids Co., a nonprofit child care provider with locations scattered around the Puget Sound area, the cuts will have a trickle-down effect, according to CEO Susan Brown. Their policy is to turn no one away because of income - but child care centers' budgets are already stretched thin caring for needy kids.

"In 2005, we gave away $80,000 in low-income scholarships. In 2010, we'll give nearly - our fiscal year ends on the 31st - and we're fast approaching $250,000. That shows you how much the need has increased."

Gov. Chris Gregoire has said the private sector, churches and charities will have to step in to compensate for the cuts. Brown says most of Kid Co's. funding already comes from private individuals.

More than one-third of the state money supports care for school-age children. Brown says finding care has been difficult for poor families, even before these cuts. Now, she predicts parents will be making some tough decisions - to leave their jobs, or leave their kids home unsupervised.

"Yes, that's what it will come down to. You know, not every program in the state accepts DSHS, for one. Many programs across the state will only accept a certain number of DSHS families, because they have to have other families who pay the full rate of tuition."

The changes begin in October and are estimated to save the state almost $15 million.