



The Children's Alliance worked on the following bills that passed and budget items that were adopted in the 2007 legislative session. This is not a comprehensive list. All dollars amounts are new state funds included in the 2007-2009 biennial budget.

Children's Health/Mental Health

SB 5093 - Health Coverage for Every Child	The legislation consolidates several health coverage programs into a single unified coverage program for children. All children will receive comprehensive coverage, regardless of income or citizenship status. Benefits are comprehensive: medical, dental, vision, and mental health. Beginning in July, 2007, all children in families with incomes up to 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) are eligible. Coverage for children is an entitlement: The state will provide funding to cover all enrolled children. Coverage for families with incomes beginning at 200% of the FPL will pay on a sliding scale for coverage. Beginning in January, 2009 SCHIP coverage is expanded to children in families making up to 300% of the FPL. Middle-class families (those above 300% FPL) will be able to buy comprehensive coverage from the state at full cost. Comprehensive outreach and system linkages will ensure that parents have access to accurate information about available children's health coverage options and the enrollment process. The application and renewal process will be streamlined through mechanisms such as online applications and retention measures. Quality improvement measures and targeted provider rate increases aim to provide coordinated regular care for children through "medical homes." Additionally, the bill declares goals for nutrition and physical activity standards in K-12 public schools and creates a legislative school health task force to ensure that Washington's schools are healthy environments for the health and development of children.
HB 1201 - Extending Health Care Coverage to Foster Kids	Ensures that youth who are exiting foster care at age 18 will continue to receive health care coverage including mental health and prescription coverage.
HB 1088 - Improving Delivery of Mental Health Services for Children	Sets the goal of creating a comprehensive, high-quality mental health system for children by the year 2012. Elements of the system will include a continuum of services from early identification and intervention through crisis intervention, equity in access to services, culturally competent services and the use of developmentally appropriate evidence-based and research-based practices.
HB 1460 - Mental Health Parity	Extends existing mental health parity requirements to individual and small group plans, ensuring that more people can access mental health services.
Child Care Consultants \$500,000	Funding was provided in the budget to create consultants that will give child care providers resources for helping children with mental health issues who are in their care.
Pediatric Rate Increase \$8.8 million	As part of the Health Coverage for Every Child initiative, this rate increase will improve access to health care by allowing providers of pediatric services to see more children who are receiving Medicaid.

<p>HB 1024 - Phasing Out the Use of PBDEs</p>	<p>Makes Washington the first state in the nation to ban these harmful chemicals. The bill bans the use of the penta and octa forms of PBDEs, with limited exceptions, by 2008, bans the use of the deca form in mattresses by 2008 and bans the use of the deca form in televisions, computers, and residential upholstered furniture by 2011, as long as a safer, reasonable, and effective alternative has been identified by the state departments of Ecology and Health and approved by fire safety officials. These efforts will keep kids safer by keeping these harmful chemicals away from children and out of our environment.</p>
---	--

Early Learning and Afterschool Care

<p>SB 5828 - Quality Rating and Improvement System</p>	<p>Creates an Early Learning Advisory Council to advise the Department of Early Learning on the creation and implementation of a Quality Rating and Improvement System for child care programs. The bill also directs the Department to provide resources to parents about the quality of care their child is receiving and support to providers to increase the quality of their care.</p>
<p>SB 5830 - Home Visiting</p>	<p>The bill renames The Washington Council on the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect to the Children’s Trust of Washington. It directs the Trust to fund evidence-based and research-based home visitation programs for parents to improve parenting skills and improve outcomes for children.</p>
<p>SB 5317 - Relating to Child Care Safety</p>	<p>Ensures the safety for children in early childhood settings by increasing safety measures such as background checks and increased access to information about the provider.</p>
<p>HB 1256 - Preventing Serious Injury and Strangulation from Window Blind Cords</p>	<p>Requires the Department of Early Learning to establish minimum licensing requirements for child day care centers prohibiting the use of window blinds with pull cords or inner cords capable of posing a risk of strangulation for young children.</p>
<p>Child Care Subsidy Funding</p>	<p>\$85 million was included in the final budget for the collective bargaining agreement between the Department of Early Learning and family child care workers, as well as tiered reimbursement, infant and non-standard hour bonuses, and health care coverage for family child care providers. Funding is also provided for comparable rate increases to child care centers.</p>
<p>ECEAP Slot Expansion and Rate Increase</p>	<p>\$34 million was included in the final budget for 2,250 new slots at \$6,500 per slot.</p>
<p>Child Care Resource and Referral</p>	<p>\$1.7 million was included in the final budget for child care resource and referral services to increase statewide support for core services, including support for child care providers.</p>
<p>Funding for Afterschool Programs</p>	<p>\$3.4 million was included in the final budget for two grant programs: First, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction will administer grants (\$400,000) to community after-school programs that partner with school districts to provide mathematics support activities. Second, funding for grants (\$3 million) is provided to after-school programs based on the 21st Century Learning Center model and focused on improving reading and mathematics proficiency for students who attend schools that have been identified as struggling under federal No Child Left Behind Act guidelines.</p>

Foster Care/Child Welfare

HB 1131 - Helping Former Foster Youth Gain Postsecondary Education	Provides resources to current foster youth who want postsecondary opportunities and gives financial support to former foster care youth who age out of the system and want to pursue postsecondary opportunities. \$2,686,000 was appropriated in the final budget for implementation of this bill.
HB 1472 - Analyzing and Remediating Racial Disproportionality	Establishes an advisory committee that will study racial disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system. The advisory committee is tasked with coming up with a plan to address these inequities. \$130,000 was appropriated in the final budget for implementation of this bill.
HB 1287 - Compliance with the Federal Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act	This bill requires foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and other care givers be provided notice of their right to be heard in court proceedings for children in out-of-home care. \$264,000 was appropriated in the final budget for implementation of this bill.
HB 1333 - Concerning Child Welfare Protections	Requires that certain standards be met by DSHS before returning a child to his or her home. Some of these include ensuring the safety of the home and conducting background checks on persons living in the home. A total of \$1,980,000 was appropriated for this bill and HB 1334 in the final budget for implementation of these bills.
HB 1334 - Child Welfare Documentation	Requiring the petitioner in a child welfare case to provide the court with relevant documentation. A total of \$1,980,000 was appropriated for this bill and HB 1333 in the final budget for implementation of these bills.
HB 1337 - Relating to the Placement of Children	This bill adds to the list of appropriate kinship placements for children to include second cousins and half-siblings, ensuring that children will have more opportunities to be placed with kin.
HB 1624 - Relating to Child Welfare	Reinstates parental rights for an adolescent who is in state care and has not been adopted and provides immunity for Department of Social and Health Services representatives. A total of \$80,000 is included in the final budget for implementation of this bill.
HB 1922 - Creating an Independent Youth Housing Program	Creates a youth housing voucher program for youth exiting out of foster care. They are eligible until the age of 23. \$1,000,000 was included in the final budget for implementation of this bill.
Funding for Improved Court Appointed Special Advocates	\$6 million was included in the final budget to increase CASA representation around the state.
Increase to the Behavioral Rehabilitation Services Rate	\$6.6 million was included in the final budget to increase the vendor rate by 10% over the biennium.
Implementation and Compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act	\$1.8 million was included in the final budget to help ensure Washington State's compliance with Federal requirements.

Anti-Hunger Investments

Funding for Elimination of Reduced Price Co-pay for School Lunch	\$3.3 million was funded in the final budget to eliminate the 40-cent co-pay for school lunch for children in kindergarten through third grade. The co-pay has applied to families making between 130% and 185% of the Federal Poverty Level.
--	---

Poverty/Low Income/Welfare

<p>SB 6016 - Relating to Good Cause Reasons for Failure to Participate in WorkFirst Program Components</p>	<p>This bill establishes that any parent with a child under the age of one year who is a TANF recipient has a “good cause” reason for the failure to participate in a Workfirst program. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) may require any recipient with a child under the age of one year whose comprehensive evaluation indicates a need for mental health, alcohol, or drug treatment; domestic violence services; or parenting education or skills to participate in those services or treatment as appropriate, up to 20 hours per week. The good cause exemption for a parent with a child under the age of one year is limited to a maximum of 12 months over the parent’s lifetime. The bill also provides that DSHS must provide information about home visitation programs to TANF clients with children under the age of one year.</p>
<p>Safety Net for Sanctioned Families</p>	<p>\$500,000 is provided in the final budget to create the WorkFirst Pathway to Engagement Program, that will support families in the community once they are no longer receiving cash assistance from the state.</p>

Child and Family Prosperity

<p>HB 1422 - Children of Incarcerated Parents</p>	<p>Requires four state agencies – The Department of Corrections (DOC), Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Department of Early Learning, and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) – to review their agency policies relating to the adequacy and availability of programs or services targeted at inmates who have children or the children and families of a person who is incarcerated in a DOC facility.</p>
<p>SB 5659 - Family and Medical Leave</p>	<p>Creates family leave insurance program so that parents can stay home and take care of a newborn or newly adopted child and receive a benefit of \$250 a week for up to five weeks.</p>
<p>Individual Development Accounts</p>	<p>\$1 million is funded in the final budget to help families reach financial security through saving money to buy their first home, start a small business or finance a higher education. This program encourages low income families to accrue savings, which then are matched by state dollars.</p>
<p>Asset Building</p>	<p>\$1.8 million is funded in the final budget to promote the Earned Income Tax Credit as well as provide credit counseling and debt reduction services, which make it possible for low-income families to keep more of the money they earn.</p>



If you're reading a printout of this End of Session Report, here are some of the links that are embedded throughout:

Main Links

Children's Alliance -
<http://childrensalliance.org>

Join the Children's Action Network -
<http://www.childrenshub.org/calliance/join.html>

News blog -
<http://childrensalliance.typepad.com/news/>

Health Coverage for Every Child

Plain language summary of Washington's Cover All Kids law -
http://childrensalliance.org/4Download/health/cover_all_children_summary.pdf

Websites, resources and articles we've bookmarked -
<http://del.icio.us/childrensalliance/health>

Media coverage of children's health in Washington -
<http://childrensalliance.newsvine.com/health>

Quality and Funding for Early Learning

Summary of early learning investments in the final state budget 2007 - 2009 -
http://childrensalliance.org/4Download/earlylearning/summary_chart.pdf

Media coverage of early learning in Washington -
<http://childrensalliance.newsvine.com/early-learning>



Pictures from our events -
<http://flickr.com/photos/childrensalliance/sets/>



Video from our events -
<http://youtube.com/childrensalliance>

Improving Foster Care for All Children

Congressional report on inequity in the child welfare system -
<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07816.pdf>

Mockingbird Society -
<http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org/>

Michigan State's Child Equity Report -
http://www.michigan.gov/documents/DHS-Child-Equity-Report_153952_7.pdf

More "Brain Fuel" for Hungry Children

Food Stamp Erosion in Washington -
http://childrensalliance.org/4Download/hunger/wa_erosion_rpt.pdf

Websites, resources and articles we've bookmarked -
<http://del.icio.us/childrensalliance/hunger>

Media coverage of hunger issues in Washington -
<http://childrensalliance.newsvine.com/hunger>



Photo by Amber Trillo