



CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

A Voice for Washington's Children, Youth & Families

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CONTACTS: Jon Gould, Deputy Director, (206) 324-0340 ext. 19, cell: (206) 683-2674
Adam Hyla, Communications Director, (206) 324-0340 ext. 18, cell: (206) 326-9964**

THOUSANDS LOSE INCOME ASSISTANCE TODAY *State's cut will send 100K+ kids deeper into poverty*

(Feb. 1, 2011) — Today the Department of Social and Health Services stops the payment of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to more than 5,000 families raising approximately 10,000 children across the state.

“Today is a sad day for the state of Washington,” says Children’s Alliance Deputy Director Jon Gould. “The recession has already pushed 40,000 of Washington’s children into poverty. Now, one of the public structures that helps families survive hard times is being dismantled when it is needed most.”

The parents who are forced off assistance today have been meeting the state’s requirements for job search, community service or training, but haven’t yet found a job that will pull their families out of poverty. Despite their efforts, they have surpassed the five-year lifetime limit imposed on the state’s programs after federal welfare reform.

“These families have been playing by the rules of our welfare-to-work system,” says Gould, “Yet they haven’t found work – understandably, in this economy.”

Washington’s unemployment rate remains above 9 percent. Without work or jobless benefits, households use TANF to cover rent, utilities, food, clothing, school supplies and other basic needs. The number of households relying on TANF each month has increased by 30 percent, to 67,000, over the past two years.

In another blow to Washington’s low-income families, as of today those households still using TANF will see their monthly cash benefits reduced by 15 percent, leaving a single parent with two children with a maximum of \$478 per month. That amount leaves a King County family of three with \$962 worth of unmet expenses, even when the family is using food stamps, public health coverage, and child care assistance, according to the Washington State Budget & Policy Center.

“Families who don’t have enough resources to get by on can’t raise their children to be healthy and safe,” says Gould. “These measures will send an estimated 122,000 Washington kids into even deeper desperation – including homelessness.”

Nearly 9 out of 10 families with TANF live in market-rate housing – meaning that their monthly cash assistance pays the rent. Therefore, those who are losing their assistance are highly likely to face homelessness, says Gould.

“The faith community is very much concerned about what’s going to happen to these households who already struggle to make ends meet,” said Rev. Paul Benz, Director of Washington’s Lutheran Public Policy Office, which advocates in Olympia to preserve the safety net.

“The churches have been asked by the Governor and other elected officials to step up their contribution. With all due respect to the Governor, we’ve been doing that, and we’re stretched to our capacity. We need the government to recognize that its ability to serve these families is far greater than ours.”

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The Children’s Alliance is a statewide public policy advocacy organization that works at the state and federal level to ensure that all children have what they need to thrive. To learn more about the Children’s Alliance, go to www.childrensalliance.org.

For more information:

“[Value of Work Supports at Historical Low](#),” Budget & Policy Center, Jan. 24, 2011

“[Decrease in Work Supports Makes it Harder to Meet Basic Needs](#),” Budget & Policy Center, Jan. 25, 2011