



March 17, 2010

Dear ARISE Coalition Supporters,

Please see the important action alert below from Advocates for Children.

Maggie

Coordinator of the ARISE Coalition

www.arisecoalition.org

151 West 30th Street, 5th Floor

New York, NY 10001

(212) 822-9523

Advocates for Children of New York

Action Alert: Oppose Harmful Changes to Early Intervention

Please see below for 4 easy action steps you can take!

Background:

Brain research demonstrates that the stimulation and interaction a child receives during the first 5 years of life are critical to permanent brain development. Early intervention services can reverse a trajectory of poor development and help prepare children to succeed in school and life, ultimately saving taxpayers money.

Parent Fees: New York's Early Intervention (EI) program provides free services to 0-3-year-old children who have developmental delays or disabilities. However, Governor Paterson's 2010-2011 state budget proposal would require families to pay for EI, jeopardizing children's access to needed services. Families earning more than 250% of the federal poverty level (\$46,000 for a family of three) would have to make quarterly payments for each eligible child. If a family missed even one payment, the child would lose EI services and become ineligible for EI. Families who are unable to provide proof of income would have to pay the highest amount with no exceptions, impeding the eligibility of children in foster care, children whose families are homeless, and children of undocumented immigrants.

This proposal would burden families, increase bureaucracy, and force many children to lose services that help them develop during the important early years. The New York State Legislature has begun to negotiate budget proposals, including the proposed EI parent fees.

Reduction in Home-Based Services: The New York State Department of Health has proposed decreasing the reimbursement rate for home-based Early Intervention services by 10% beginning on April 1, 2010. This change would make it more difficult for children to get the services they need, especially in neighborhoods where there is already a shortage of providers.

Take Action:

1. E-MAIL your state legislators through the InterAgency Council's Web site and urge them to oppose the proposed EI parent fees. An e-mail for parents of children receiving Early Intervention services and an e-mail for staff are both available at <http://capwiz.com/iacny/state/main/?state=NY> You can edit these letters to explain why you oppose EI parent fees.
2. E-MAIL your state legislators and ask them to call on Governor Paterson to postpone the 10% reduction in reimbursement rates for home-based EI services and determine new rates. You can send an e-mail through the Citizens' Committee for Children's Web site at <https://secure3.convio.net/voices/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=1991>
3. CALL your state legislators and urge them to oppose Governor Paterson's budget proposal to require parents to pay for Early Intervention, included in the Health and Mental Hygiene budget legislation (S. 6608/ A. 9708), because it would burden families, increase bureaucracy, and force children to lose EI services. To find your NY State Senator, go to <http://www.senate.state.ny.us/senatehomepage.nsf/senators?OpenForm> and to find your NY Assembly Member, go to <http://www.assembly.state.ny.us/mem/>
4. FORWARD this e-mail to others who may be interested in taking action.

For more information, contact Randi Levine at Advocates for Children of New York at (212) 822-9532 or rlevine@advocatesforchildren.org.