

Campaign for Children

A partnership of The Emergency Coalition to Save Child Care and the NYC Youth Alliance.

New York City's Diminishing Investment in NYC Children and Working Families

QUEENS IMPACT BRIEF

Introduction

Much like the rest of New York City, the economic downturn has had a profound impact on the over 2.2 million residents of Queens, and it has hit children and working families particularly hard. The borough of Queens has seen significant increases in poverty and unemployment. While the need for services and assistance has increased, the availability of child care and after-school programs in Queens has decreased significantly. **Now, under the Mayor's proposed budget, Queens faces even further cuts to these critical programs.**

- In the past three years, the number of children from low-income working families receiving child care subsidies in Queens has declined by almost **23 percent**.
- The Out of School Time (OST) after-school program is facing a **39 percent reduction in Queens**.

The Mayor has **already announced that 2 Beacon Programs in Queens** are scheduled to close – where more than 2,400 Queens residents are served each this year.

Early childhood and after-school programs are critical to Queens families. Research has proven their effectiveness in preparing children for school, improving academic performance and producing positive outcomes later in life. These programs also play an important role in the local economy.

As a result of cuts over the last couple of years, many Queens children and youth have already lost the opportunity to participate in early childhood and after-school programs, and thousands more are facing additional cuts.

A Picture of Queens

From 2008-2010, Queens' economic indicators all reveal troubling trends of increasing poverty and unemployment, and decreasing median income. According to the 2010 Census, there were 2.23 million residents in Queens, of which almost 21% (461,008) were children under age 18. **The poverty rate in 2010 was 15%, up from 12.2% in 2008, which is a 23% increase in the percent of families in Queens living below the federal poverty level during this two year**

period. Notably, 21.8% of the children in Queens were living in poverty in 2010, compared to 16.7% in 2008.

The unemployment rate in Queens has dramatically grown throughout the economic downturn. The unemployment rate started at 4.4% in 2007, grew to 4.9% in 2008, ballooned to 8.6% in 2009 and then continued this disturbing trend by climbing to 11.1% in 2010. Similarly, the median household income decreased from \$58,354 in 2008 to \$53,054 in 2010.

As parents and their children continue to face increasing economic instability in Queens, child well-being indicators have worsened. For example, only half of Queens children were reading at grade level in 2010 and only 65.5% were at grade level in math (based on whether children in grades 3-8 scored 3 or 4 on the state tests). Not surprisingly then, the high school dropout rate in Queens was 11.5% in 2010. Youth dropping out of school are struggling, as 6% of youth are not in school and not in the work force. Over 38% of youth in Queens were unemployed in 2010.

What the Cuts Mean for Queens

Families in Queens have already experienced reductions in child care and after-school programs, and now the Mayor's plans will further reduce the options available to working families.

- In the past three years, the number of children from low-income working families receiving child care subsidies in Queens has declined by almost 23 percent –decreasing from serving 8269 children in 2009 to only 6363 in 2012.¹ The citywide cut of 15,900 child care subsidies will affect all boroughs and further decrease the available of child care for low-income working families in Queens.
- The Out of School Time (OST) after school program – which has already shrunk by more than 35,000 youth citywide since 2009² – is facing a 39 percent reduction in programs in Queens, going from 83 programs to 51 programs for the entire borough.³
- The Mayor has already announced the closure of two Beacon Programs in Queens: Queens Community House at JHS 190 and Samuel Field Y at MS 158. Combined these programs served more than 2400 Queens residents this year.

These cuts will have a broad impact on Queens, but it is the children that will pay the biggest price. The loss of early childhood options will leave many children unprepared to start Kindergarten. It is well-documented that positive early childhood learning opportunities lead to

¹ ACS Child Care Snapshots, January 2009 & January 2012.

² Fiscal Year enrollment data contained in the Mayor's Management Reports.

³ DYCD Request for Proposals for the Out of School Time system.

more positive outcomes later in life. Over 75 percent of brain development happens by the age of five. Children who attend quality early childhood programs are more likely to graduate from high school, less likely to be involved in crime and less likely to become teen parents.⁴ These cuts will leave many Queens children without the opportunity to attend an early childhood program.

Youth will also lose out on the opportunity to be engaged in quality, structured programming that helps support academic success. The cuts to after-school programs, such as OST and Beacons, will leave many children and youth with nowhere to go after the school day ends. High-quality programs that provide academic support, enrichment and structure during out-of-school-time hours greatly enhance a child's success in school. These programs improve student connectedness with school and improve attendance. And, sadly, without access to after-school programming, many children and youth will be unsupervised or under-supervised after-school while their parents are still at work, potentially leading to many problems for children, parents, communities and schools.⁵ As Mayor Bloomberg said when testifying at a New York State Budget Hearing, "what happens after the final bell of the day rings is as important to students as what goes on in the classrooms."⁶

Working families will be facing difficult choices as these programs are eliminated. Most families currently accessing these services – and many more who are already unable to enroll their child as a result of previous cuts – are not able to afford child care and after-school in the private market. Working parents who lose access to child care and after-school programming will be forced to make the difficult decision between making alternative, less stable arrangements for their children and leaving the workforce. Working parents need safe, stable and supportive environments for their children while they are working – and these cuts will make it even more difficult for Queens families to access these programs.

These cuts will also hurt Queens' already fragile economy because of the direct and immediate impact that child care and after-school have on the local economy. Research has found that child care is one of the best local economic engines returning \$1.89 for every \$1 spent. As the child care and after-school programs close, staff will lose their jobs. These staff usually live in nearby communities and most are likely from Queens. In addition, if parents are unable to keep their job because they do not have an alternative option for their child or if the parent must now pay for private care, that parent will have less money to spend in their local community on other necessities such as food, clothing and transportation. Overall, the loss of

⁴ W. Steven Barnett, Ph.D., National Institute for Early Education Research, *Preschool Education and Its Lasting Effects: Research and Policy Implications*, September 2008; Richard Tremblay, Jean Gervais, and AmeliePetitclerc, *Early Learning Prevents Youth Violence*, 2008;

⁵The Afterschool Alliance, 2007: *Afterschool Programs: Keeping Kids – and Communities – Safe*
http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue_briefs/issue_CrimeIB_27.pdf

⁶ Mayor Bloomberg testimony before the State Assembly Ways and Means Committee and State Senate Finance Committee on the Governor's Executive Budget and Reform Plan, January 24, 2012.

spending by now unemployed child care and after-school staff, as well as the loss of money spent by the parents who must either stop working or spend their money to pay for care, will hit Queens hard as the borough continues to struggle to recover from the economic crisis.

Conclusion

Queens children and families deserve the opportunity to succeed. It is widely recognized that quality early childhood and after-school programming are critical to educational and economic success. Investing in these programs now will help Queens continue to move forward with its economic recovery and create a stronger New York City now and in the future.

Cutting these programs directly contradicts the Mayor's priorities for education, economic development, and juvenile justice reform. Mayor Bloomberg has made high-profile commitments to reduce racial and economic disparities in education and even invested his own money for the Young Men's Initiative, which is focused on improving the outcomes of young men of color in New York City. The significant reductions in the number of children who are able to access high-quality child care and after-school programming directly undermine these priorities because both early childhood education and after-school programs put all children on the path to success and prevent youth from engaging in risky behaviors, getting involved with the juvenile justice system and dropping out of school.

Now is the time to invest in preparing children for academic success, keeping youth engaged in school and supporting working families. Our children – our future – should not be sacrificed because of budget shortfalls. Queens' children, and all of New York City's children, must be the priority. The legacy of the Mayor and his Administration's lasting impact mark on New York City will be judged by the decisions he makes right now.