

Still Mending the Patchwork: Lowering Eligibility and Discontinuing Subsidies

Many counties no longer have sufficient funding to provide child care subsidies for families who earn less than 200% of poverty (\$39,580 for a family of 3), as New York State law allows. In order to cope, social services districts are lowering eligibility and discontinuing the subsidies of low income working families who would otherwise be eligible if sufficient funds were available.

- **More than one-third of New York's 58 Social Services Districts have lowered eligibility levels to below 200% of the federal poverty level** (\$39,580 for a family of three).
- **Greene County** only serves families at or below the poverty level (\$19,790 for a family of three), and is currently accepting no new applications.
- **Niagara County** only serves those at or below **120%** of the federal poverty level (\$23,748 for a family of three).
- **Albany, Dutchess, Ontario and Orange Counties** only serve families at or below **125%** of poverty (\$24,737.50 for a family of three). Even with lower eligibility levels, Orange County has a waiting list of 48 families.
- Although **New York City** has technically retained its eligibility levels at 200% of poverty, data show that few families over **135%** of poverty are being served.ⁱ
- Five social services districts have lowered eligibility to **150%**: **Fulton, Oneida, Saratoga, Schenectady and Suffolk**.
- **Cayuga and Livingston Counties** have lowered eligibility to **160%** of poverty.
- **Monroe County's** eligibility level is set at **165%** of poverty. Monroe's application process has been frozen though, for most of the past two years, with newly eligible families unable to access subsidies.
- In **Cattaraugus and Schoharie Counties** eligibility is at **175%** of poverty, and **Schoharie** has a wait list of 62 families.
- **Rensselaer County** is at **180%** of poverty and **Washington County** is at **185%** of poverty.
- **Nassau County**, which has traditionally maintained high income eligibility levels by supplementing federal dollars with local funds, recently lowered the eligibility level from 275% to 200%.
- **A number of counties have not lowered eligibility, but cannot serve all eligible families:** **Cortland County** has not lowered eligibility, but recently closed 108 cases based on "last opened/first closed" to address a funding shortfall; **Madison County** recently closed nearly 40% of its child care cases (50 out of 130), choosing to close those that had been open the longest. **Wayne County** has 247 children on its waiting list.

ⁱ ACS data from April 2012 shows that 82% of the families enrolled in the child care subsidy program were under 135% of poverty.