

# EJSWN News (formerly WRN News)

ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND SOCIAL WELFARE NETWORK (EJSWN)

APRIL 2010

As is now common knowledge, New York State faces serious budget challenges in 2010. Significant deficits and an uncertain political environment have created the real possibility of massive budget cuts, most of which will have a disproportionate affect on New York's most vulnerable residents. Of particular concern to low-income people are significant cuts to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) expenditures proposed by the Governor. TANF funds dozens of critical programs, including preventive services for children, homelessness intervention, child care and jobs programs. TANF also provides the funds for direct cash assistance provided to low-income families. A long-planned increase in this grant amount will also be delayed.

In anticipation of challenges like these in New York and throughout the country, the federal government included extra TANF support for states within its stimulus bill. Unfortunately, the Governor's proposed budget defies the spirit of that bill. As a result, hundreds of millions of dollars from the federal government that are earmarked for low-income families are not being directed to them to increase employment opportunities and mitigate the impact of the recession – the very purposes of the federal stimulus legislation. Instead, they are being used to close a budget deficit.

What is even more concerning about the Governor's proposed TANF funding proposal are those programs he proposes to maintain or increase, many of which don't measure up to programs receiving cuts. For example, the Governor proposes to spend 41 million dollars on a

new program known as the "Local Family Support Fund." If the final budget includes that level of funding for this untested program, it will limit the legislature's ability to maintain even minimal support for other established programs. Even more concerning is a proposed *increase* in a program known as "Intensive Case Services," which in New York City has served as an *obstacle* to families receiving critical benefits.

On March 22nd, the Senate passed its budget resolution. Two days later, the Assembly took similar action in releasing its budget bill, which echoed concerns of the Senate but recommends different funding allocations. The Senate resolution included more restorations in funding to the various TANF Initiatives than the Assembly bill, including full funding restoration for Preventive Services, Summer Youth Employment and Wage Subsidy programs, as well as increased funding for Transitional Jobs and the Green Job Corps Program. Negotiations are now moving forward to come up with a final budget.

For several years, advocates for low-income New Yorkers have dealt with the prospect of drastic cuts. In 2010, however, the danger of landscape-changing reductions looms much closer. If the final cuts are as severe as what the Governor has proposed, they will inevitably result in the permanent elimination of critical programs across the state. To mitigate this result, advocates need to contact their elected representatives and clarify for them exactly how these cuts will affect the communities and families who depend on them.

## THE GOVERNOR'S TOP TANF CUTS

- \$18.7 million from Child Preventive Services
- \$35 million from Summer Youth Employment
- \$5 million from Supplemental Homeless Intervention Program
- \$2 million from the Green Jobs Corp
- \$11.3 million from Advantage After School Programs
- \$14 million for several child care programs
- In addition, the welfare grant increase scheduled for this year will be reduce from 10% to 5%

## CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES—TELL THEM:

- Don't spend Federal stimulus funds on the budget deficit in defiance of the spirit of the stimulus bill.
- Preserve funding for programs that support families feeling the brunt of the recession.
- Maintain the long-promised welfare grant increase.
- Don't balance the budget on the backs of poor and working class New Yorkers!

Visit [http://fpwa.convio.net/PAR\\_Action\\_Center](http://fpwa.convio.net/PAR_Action_Center) to contact your elected representatives

*Interested in writing an article for our Newsletter? Is there something you think we should cover? Let us know! Write it down and send it to Greg Richane at [grichane@fpwa.org](mailto:grichane@fpwa.org)*

## Excerpts - Report of the Child Care and Education Committee

*Recently, the New York City Administration for Child Services, (ACS) proposed the elimination of 16 ACS direct lease child care sites as of July 1, 2010. This proposal continues a trend that has resulted in substantial reductions in both enrollment and capacity of ACS contracted child care in New York City. The following is excerpted from a recent report by a cross-agency working group seeking to gain understanding about developments that led to these reductions, and to advocate against the current proposal.*

Recent ACS actions have led to a significant under-enrollment in our early learning centers, and to a reduction in the supply of center-based subsidized child care and early childhood education for children in low-income households. These actions have had a negative effect on these parents' ability to work, attend school or participate in job training and have created serious financial problems for ACS centers that threaten their survival. In addition, we believe that some of their actions regarding enrolment processes are contrary to state child care laws and regulations.

### Background

ACS recently announced they will close 16 child care direct-lease sites on July 1, 2010 (11 of these are in Brooklyn). They cited the cost and duration of the building leases, condition of some buildings, the declining need for child care in some neighborhoods, and under enrollment in some sites.

Although ACS has promised to transfer the 1,165 children in these centers to existing vacancies in nearby child care programs, there are serious question about the availability of empty slots convenient to where families live or work. ACS says that if a parent cannot find a space in an ACS center they will be given a voucher, making it very likely that parents will be forced to choose informal, unregulated care. This will sacrifice the quality educational and developmental learning experience most parents want for their child.

### Demand Is Not Down - ACS Policy Changes Have Caused Enrollment Problems for Centers

Enrolment in ACS Centers has dropped significantly in the past 3 years. We believe that this unprecedented decrease is a result of changes in ACS policy, not decreasing need. ACS has taken steps that make it harder for parents to access services. Parents continue to experience difficulty in finding clear and accurate information about eligibility, center location and information about availability.

The enrollment process itself can sometimes take up to three months, and ACS has recently shifted the responsibility for enrolling children in care to ACS centers, without providing funds for additional staff in the centers to facilitate this enrollment process. This lack of dedicated funding for management of enrollment may be contrary to state regulations.

Tightened eligibility standards are also one major factor in decreased enrollment. As of July 1, 2009, ACS eliminated eligibility for families with parents who are ill and incapacitated. Significantly, ACS also eliminated eligibility for parents who are looking for work.

### Reduced Program Offerings & Funding Questions

ACS has also recently limited or eliminated its support of key programs. Universal Pre-Kindergarten funding for ACS funded centers has been cut, creating a two-tier Universal Pre-Kindergarten system with center-based programs challenged to meet standards with diminished funding. ACS also stopped serving 5-year olds this fall, and many children who would have been served were unsuccessful in finding kindergarten care in their zoned school. More were unable to find after-school care that allows parents to continue their work after school hours.

ACS has also ceased to provide funds for the Department of Education's LYFE Program for teen parents attending school, leaving the largest single infant care program in the city to be funded solely by DOE dollars. All of the teen parents being served by the LYFE Program are eligible for subsidized childcare and would be eligible to receive it from ACS centers if such care were available.

### Upcoming Actions May Exacerbate Current Problems.

This year, a new system of reimbursement known as "Pay-For-Enrollment" is expected to be rolled out. Instead

of covering the cost to run a center as it does now, ACS plans to start paying each center only for the number of children enrolled on a month to month basis. Because ACS center enrollment fluctuates from month to month, this new funding system will make long term planning and stability extremely difficult, especially in light of changing eligibility requirements propagated by ACS.

These actions by ACS have had and will continue to have negative effects on the quality of early childhood education provided to low-income families. We understand that New York City is struggling financially. However, the experiences of children in their early years are a critical factor in determining their future success in school. We urge the city to find new revenue sources or less destructive ways to achieve savings. Children need access to quality programs where they can grow and learn to become successful, creative and lifelong learners. Parents need these services to support their capacity to earn and contribute to the growth of our great city. Our children are our most precious asset. We cannot afford to let them down.

## **Legal Aid Society Lawsuit Against NYC Housing Authority Over Revocation of 2,600 Section 8 Vouchers**

On December 17, 2009, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) announced that it would only accept Section 8 applications that were submitted before December 10, 2009. NYCHA later sent a letter to Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher holders informing them NYCHA would not accept their rental packages or provide Section 8 assistance until further notice. Section 8 vouchers are part of a federal rent subsidy program to help low-income residents obtain and remain in affordable housing. The voucher subsidy pays for two-thirds of a participant's rent in the private market while the participant pays approximately one third of their income towards the rent. Despite anticipating funding shortfalls as early as May 2009, NYCHA never stated that it would revoke vouchers, and actually continued issuing vouchers through November.

As a result, voucher holders who were issued Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers that did not expire will not be able to use the vouchers as NYCHA will not accept their rental package or move forward with the leasing process. Anyone with a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher that has yet to expire, should have received a letter from NYCHA. These people will receive priority to have their voucher restored based on the date their application was certified, should Section 8 funding become available. Any voucher holder that did not receive a letter should immediately contact their local NYCHA Leased Housing Department to verify their status. Applicants who did not yet receive a voucher will remain on the waiting list. However, those that already have Section 8 from another apartment and are trying to transfer it to a new apartment, will not be affected. In all cases, NYCHA should be informed of any changes in address or other contact information.

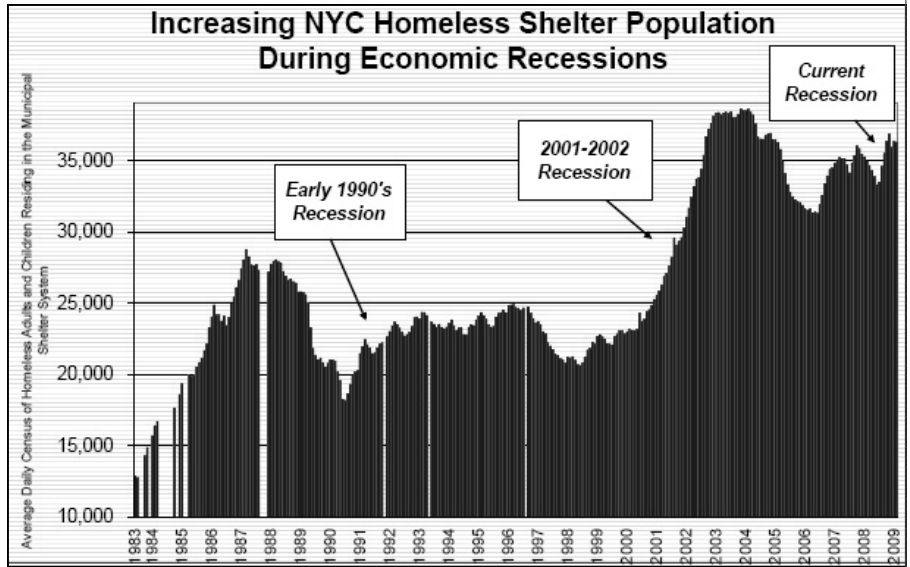
The Legal Aid Society filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York on December 23, 2009 on behalf of approximately 2,600 Section 8 voucher recipients whose vouchers were revoked just before the holidays last year. The lawsuit, Yoanson vs. New York City Housing Authority, sought injunctive and declaratory relief on behalf of the low income individuals and families who were found eligible for Section 8 vouchers but were prevented from using their vouchers after they were withdrawn by NYCHA because of federal budget cuts and the unexpectedly low attrition rate among current program participants occasioned by the current economic downturn.

The Legal Aid Society hopes that a political solution can be reached to solve this problem, which must happen quickly to avoid homelessness for these individuals and families. Thus far, federal, state, and city government have yet to present any plan to combat the peril these families face.

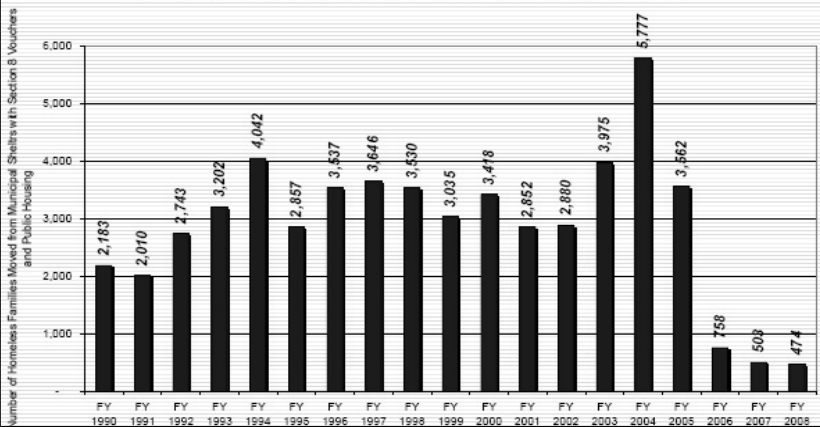
Advocates with clients who currently receive a New York City Department of Homeless Services administered Children's Advantage or Fixed Income Advantage subsidy that is near expiration should contact the Legal Aid Society at 212-577-3332 as they may be entitled to additional rental support. Please do not distribute this phone number to clients.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM JANUARY EJSWN PRESENTATION — STATE OF THE HOMELESS 2009

At the January meeting of the Economic Justice & Social Welfare Network, the group received an update from Patrick Markee of the Coalition For the Homeless. His presentation covered a number of important issues, including a common misconception that shelter usage by homeless families peaked in the eighties. In fact, shelter residency is approaching an all-time high today. He also debunked other misconceptions related to shelter tenure, program eligibility and the value of time-limited subsidies.



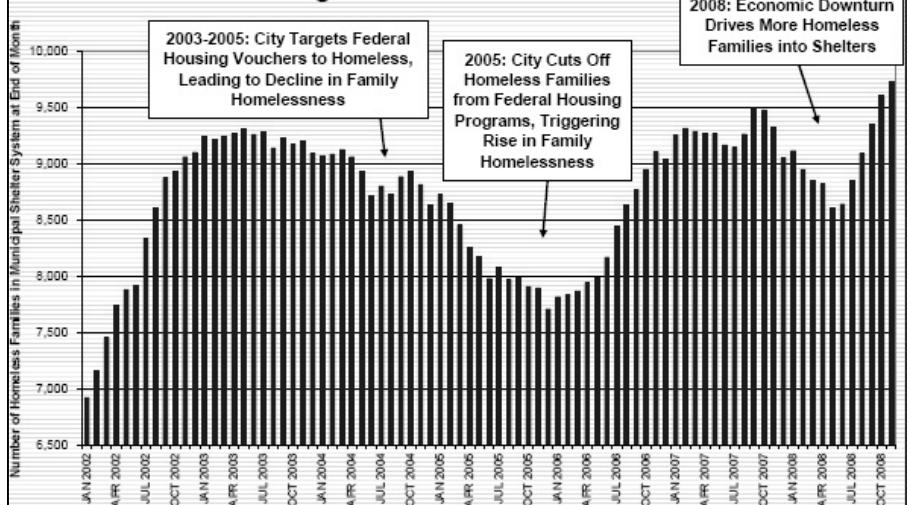
### Homeless Families Moved from NYC Shelters with Federal Housing Programs, FY 1990-FY 2008



The presentation also addressed a key shift in policy at the city level that has serious implications for homeless families. By eliminating the prioritization of homeless families and individuals for federal housing Programs like Section 8 and Public Housing, the Bloomberg administration abandoned what has been one of the most useful tools in lowering homelessness. The administration claims this policy “induced families to seek shelter,” but offers no data or evidence to support the claim.

Combined with the effects of the recession, the choice to divert homeless families from federal programs has had a significant impact. The Administration has touted the “Advantage Program” as a replacement for the prioritization policy, but many homeless families are not eligible for this program. In fact, those families first enrolled in this time-limited program will soon lose eligibility even though they may continue to need housing assistance. This may add to the unmet need and threatens to increase homelessness even further.

### Shifting Bloomberg Administration Policies on Federal Housing Aid for Homeless Families



All data courtesy of Patrick Markee, Coalition for the Homeless

## Economic Justice & Social Welfare Network Meeting Calendar

Unless otherwise noted, meetings take place at the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, 281 Park Avenue South (at 22nd St.), in Manhattan.

<p><b>General Meeting</b> May 4, 2010</p>	<p><b>Speaker: Janet Poppendieck, Author and Professor of Sociology at Hunter College</b></p> <p>Professor Poppendieck will discuss her book "Free For All: Fixing School Food In America. The book is the first "to provide a comprehensive assessment of school food in the United States," and addresses the politics, history and sustainability of school food.</p>
<p><b>General Meeting</b> June 1, 2010</p>	<p><b>Youth Panel, Speakers TBD</b></p>

### Committees & Meetings of Interest, Spring 2010

<p><b>EJSWN Child Care Committee</b> 5/13/2010 and 6/10/2010 2:00–4:00 pm at FPWA. Contacts: <i>Camilla Flemming peter-andcamilla@msn.com</i> and <i>Sandy Socolar, (212) 666-5925.</i></p>	<p><b>EJSWN Policy &amp; Advocacy Committee (PAC):</b> 4/27/2010 and 5/18/2010 3:00–5:00 pm at FPWA. Contact: <i>Liz Accles, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, (212) 801-1393 or laccles@fpwa.org</i></p>	<p><b>EJSWN Task Force on Domestic Violence &amp; Economic Justice:</b> 5/4/2010 and 6/1/2010 For location and time <i>please contact Shelly Agarwala (718)834-7430, ext 11 or sagarwala@safehorizon.org and Catherine Shugrue Dos Santos (212)349-6009, ext 283 or csdossantos@sffny.org</i></p>
<p><b>Know Your Rights &amp; Stay In School!"</b> April 28, May 26, June 23, 2010 1-4pm , Hunter College, Contact: 212-650-3592</p> <p>CUNY has lost over 21,000 students due to counter productive welfare policy. We cannot lose one more!</p> <p>Join us to learn about: Provisions of the Work Study /Internship Law, TAG Program, WEP (workfare), Fair Hearing Process</p> <p>This event is sponsored by Welfare Rights Initiative, a student activist and leadership training organization that mobilizes students to advocate for themselves and others. As college students who know welfare firsthand, we promote access to education and training for people receiving public assistance.</p>	<p><b>EJSWN Education and Training Committee:</b> Call committee contact for information. Contact: <i>Maureen Lane, mlane@hunter.cuny.edu</i></p> <p><b>Queer Economic Justice Network:</b> Contact: <i>Kenyon Farrow, (212) 564-3608.</i> Call committee contact for information.</p>	<p><b>Unemployment Insurance Benefits Training</b> Monday, April 19, 2010, 10:00am - 11:30 pm Queens Borough Public Library (Flushing Library) 41-17 Main Street, Flushing, NY 11355 Public Transportation: 7 train or LIRR to Main Street RSVP By 4/14 to Grace Cho at(718) 460-5600 or gracecho@minkwon.org</p> <p>Sponsored by: The New York Unemployment Insurance Coalition</p> <p>Who Should Attend: Community leaders, organizers, service providers at CBOs</p>

**About EJSWN.** EJSWN, the Economic Justice and Social Welfare Network, is a coalition of organizations and individuals that advocates for humane income security policies. EJSWN is sponsored by the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA). All meetings are open to the public. For more information about EJSWN or if you would like to contribute an article, please contact Greg Richane at grichane@fpwa.org or by phone at (212)-801-1316.

The EJSWN News is edited by Greg Richane