



# CHILD CARE LAW CENTER

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## **MAJOR COURT SETTLEMENT RESTORES CHILD CARE FOR THOUSANDS OF WORKING FAMILIES**

*Chaos Wrought by Gov. Schwarzenegger's Last-Minute Veto  
Finally Resolved; Parties Plan for Alternate State Budget Outcomes*

OAKLAND, CA – Ending a six-month court case sparked by former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's elimination of vital child care funding, the State of California agreed this week to ensure that working families will continue to have assistance, despite ongoing budget uncertainties in Sacramento. The ground-breaking settlement preserves child care services for parents who have successfully transitioned off welfare but whose wages are still too low to cover child care. The settlement affects the families of more than 56,000 California children who had been told they would lose their child care last October.

The settlement is all the more significant in that the state legislature has still not passed a budget for Fiscal Year 2011-2012 and no one knows at what level funds for child care assistance, known as CalWORKs Stage 3 child care, will be restored. The budgets Governor Brown and the legislature put forth earlier this year included funding for the program. The settlement agreement, signed by Alameda County Superior Court Judge Wynne Carvill, provides an opportunity for parents who lost Stage 3 child care to come back onto the program now.

“This settlement gives California working families everything they sought in court,” said Patti Prunhuber, an attorney at the Public Interest Law Project, the lead counsel for Parent Voices Oakland, the group that filed the case. “We are grateful that the havoc unleashed by Gov. Schwarzenegger's veto can finally be corrected with fairness and consistency.”

On October 29, 2010, the Alameda County Superior Court issued an emergency injunction temporarily halting the veto, but that did not end the controversy. The uncertainty already caused by written state notices telling parents that their funding would soon end destabilized the child care system. “Thousands of families were left confused as to whether they would still have affordable care for their children,” said Melissa Rodgers, an attorney with the Child Care Law Center, a co-counsel in the case. “We know for a fact that many families who lost their Stage 3 child care have never come back. We want them to know that they have the right to come back to Stage 3 now.”

The Dept. of Education and child care agencies are now required to conduct meaningful outreach efforts to find and restore child care services to former Stage 3 families who fell out of the system. Families who have already moved to other child care programs will be able to choose whether or not to come back to Stage 3. If families are already receiving such alternate funding, then that assistance cannot be cut off.

“We have achieved success in saving thousands of jobs for working parents and child care providers, but most importantly, we have assured that our number one priority, child care for children, has been upheld,” said Corean Todd, a member of Parent Voices Oakland. “We hope that our efforts help parents nationwide to understand how important, integral, and powerful their voices are to the planning and implementation of change. This court case not only helped our Parent Voices Oakland chapter but all parents on a state wide level. Child care keeps children learning and parents earning!”

The suit was brought by the Public Interest Law Project, the Child Care Law Center, the Western Center on Law & Poverty, Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County, Public Counsel Law Center, and Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles.

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The Public Interest Law Project provides crucial litigation and advocacy support to local legal services and public interest law programs throughout California. (<http://www.pilpca.org>)

The Child Care Law Center is a national nonprofit legal services organization that works to make affordable, good child care available to families and communities. (<http://www.childcarelaw.org>)

The Western Center on Law & Poverty, Inc. fights for justice and system-wide change to secure housing, healthcare and a strong safety net for low-income Californians. (<http://www.wclp.org>)

Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County provides free legal services to low-income residents throughout Los Angeles County. (<http://www.nls-la.org>)

Public Counsel Law Center is the nation’s largest public interest law firm specializing in delivering *pro bono* legal services to low-income communities. (<http://www.publiccounsel.org>)

The Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA) is the frontline law firm for low-income people in Los Angeles. (<http://www.lafla.org>)