



## 'It's a really bad situation'

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After learning May 2 the state had run out of money for the rest of the fiscal year, child care centers are hoping a bill passes to avert a break in the Child Care Assistance Program's funding.

"If they don't do this appropriation, only people that have the money and resources or access to a line of credit can survive for three months," said Dave McClure, director of the Youth Service Bureau of the Illinois Valley. "The day cares that use this kind of money tend to be small organizations, not financially strong. That really will probably cause a lot of people to close their doors."

The state notified about 40,000 providers that payments for most of April and May and June won't arrive until the new fiscal year begins July 1. The program is open to low-income, working families who are required to cost-share on a sliding scale based on family size, income and number of children in care.

To prevent day care closures and thus leaving parents with nowhere to bring their children while at work or school, state Rep. Sara Feigenholtz, D-Chicago, introduced House Bill 6164 to fill the \$73.6 million shortfall for fiscal 2012 with unspent general revenue funds.

Funding for the program ran out early because enrollment in the federally-mandated Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program has risen. The state is required to make timely payments to families receiving TANF funds, but without a supplemental appropriation to increase funding in FY 2012, the state's only source of funds for TANF is the money previously designated for child care assistance.

In La Salle County, Child Care Connection, of Peoria, estimated 134 child care programs are accepting the Child Care Assistance Program, which would average about 1,000 children in the county.

Easter Seals of La Salle and Bureau Counties received \$11,000 a month in subsidies. About 25 percent of the families they serve receive financial assistance from the program.

To get through the next few months, Easter Seals will borrow money from a line of credit or use donations or funding for special events, said Kelly Rick, director of development at Easter Seals.

"We're going to do everything we can to help these families and we plan to continue to accept child care subsidies," she said.

The Kids' Place in La Salle, which is operated by YSB, receives 70 percent of its income from this program. McClure said, if necessary, YSB will find the money to get through the next few months.

If the bill doesn't pass and money for fiscal 2012 is taken from the next budget, he wonders if this will create an even bigger problem next year.

"It's a really bad situation," he said.