

## CALIFORNIA'S FISCAL CRISIS: HOW CDD IS BEING IMPACTED

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These tough economic times demand equally difficult decisions to maintain and sustain our early care and education programs. That is why the actions that I am taking are not easy ones and could even potentially compromise the quality of services. Immediately and until further notice I have directed our Program Specialists to discontinue all travel to our preschools, family child care homes, and school age child care locations. As a result the program will no longer need to reimburse staff for their monthly mileage expenses. Though the savings are not truly substantial relative to the size of our total budget, given the status of the state fiscal crisis including a huge projected shortfall of available funding, every effort, even small ones, must be considered in order to reduce program spending. I understand that this means that no one will be monitoring our classrooms to ensure that quality services are being delivered and that safe, sanitary, and appropriate practices are being followed. However, even though all on site classroom and outdoor play environment reviews have been cancelled, I know my staff, as well as the family child care providers we contract with, and I trust that they are all doing their best and that the programs would all receive high ratings. After all, our teachers and family child care providers are all professionals and really shouldn't require constant oversight from outside. In addition, all on site reviews of our accounting department's enrollment, attendance, and fiscal reports, as well as, our record-keeping systems and procedures have been put on hold. But in order to satisfy our auditors we have agreed to have our accounting department periodically e-mail or fax copies of these reports to them. Finally, I will be issuing furloughs to all employees that are not front line staff. Non-essential program support staff, including custodians, office staff, and specialists, will be furloughed for two days each month on the first and third Fridays. On days when support staff are furloughed and not available, teacher and child care providers have been directed to report any concerns or incidents via e-mail or voicemail. Support staff will respond to any concerns or incidents when they return to work on the following Monday.

I know some of you may say that this is an absolutely absurd and dangerous solution to a fiscal problem, especially when we are talking about the health, safety, care, and education of young children. ***That is why I actually will not be implementing any of the actions described above in my program.*** However, what would you say if you knew that these were the exact actions that the State of California and its Department of Education are forcing the Child Development Division (CDD) to take? Until further notice, Program Consultants in CDD, have been told that travel to visit their programs for any reason will not be allowed. CDD Consultants are responsible for monitoring the quality of services being delivered by the programs they are assigned to. Any visits to local programs for the purpose of providing targeted and necessary training and technical assistance have been cancelled. All mandated comprehensive triennial reviews of programs have been postponed until further notice. All contractors, including school districts and private non-profit agencies that operate State Preschool, Full-Day Child Care, Family Child Care Home Education Network programs, will not be reviewed by

CDD for the remainder of the winter and all of the spring. This should not give programs cause for celebration.

On the contrary, this should raise grave concerns about our state's priorities even during a serious fiscal crisis. We in the field should not feel relieved that we don't have to prepare for a triennial review. Instead we need to realize that California does not consider the health, safety, and quality of the child development programs it subsidizes as essential services that need to be monitored and supported through on site visits and reviews. And while there has been talk about CDD Program and Fiscal Consultants conducting "desk reviews" of their programs, that is a far cry from comprehensive on site reviews. Such desk reviews might require programs to submit to CDD, by fax or e-mail, requested records and documents so that at least some level of record-keeping and reporting monitoring could occur. But even desk reviews would not provide CDD Consultants with a true picture and understanding of the efficacy of an agency's record-keeping and reporting systems. An on site visit, in addition to basic document review, provides CDD Consultants with the opportunity to interview program clerks, specialists, and other support staff to accurately determine whether all of the procedures being implemented effectively support the services being provided to the children and families.

The Governor's actual proposal for most state employees to be furloughed on the first and third Fridays of the month is severely flawed if he believes that contractors with child development programs do not need to have daily access to CDD consultants and support staff available to them. The idea that programs serving children from birth to twelve-years old should be able to wait until the following Monday to speak to a Consultant about an issue or concern that occurs on one of the "furlough Fridays" is foolish, if not risky. The Governor and California need to take care of their youngest children and the programs that serve them first even during these tough economic times. The Governor, Assembly, and Senate should signal that child development programs are a priority in California by ensuring that the state staff who support these programs and the services that they provide are not cut back. Travel by CDD Consultants to monitor and review their programs, as well as, to provide local training and technical assistance to the field should be reinstated immediately. Lastly, Child Development Division staff should be exempted from the Governor's proposed furloughs.