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Crucial Program to be Suspended for At-Risk Youth on Chicago's South Side
Budget impasse imposes grave impact on children and families, with more cutbacks looming

CHICAGO, Jan 25, 2016 – The mounting toll from the Illinois budget impasse is now reaching vital programs that effectively keep youth out of the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. On Feb. 15, Children's Home + Aid will suspend crisis intervention services for runaways and youth at risk of delinquency in Englewood and West Englewood. The services are delivered through the state-mandated Comprehensive Community-Based Youth Services (CCBYS) program, which has been operating without payment since July 1. Children's Home + Aid was on track to serve an estimated 70 youth this year through the CCBYS program on the South Side of Chicago. The suspension follows months of CCBYS program reductions by providers across the state, a direct result of the budget impasse.

"This is the first of many program suspensions we are forecasting around the state," said Andrea Durbin, CEO of Illinois Collaboration on Youth, a statewide network of organizations delivering programs, services and advocacy for at-risk youth and families. "Providers tell us they are expecting to make significant cuts in services and staff in February and March. These are the same providers who have been working in good faith since July 1 to meet the needs of kids and families in crisis in every county in Illinois. But without a budget or the possibility of payment any time soon, we will see more and more of these program suspensions and eventually every CCBYS program will close."

The consequences of the suspension of the CCBYS program in Englewood and West Englewood – communities in Chicago marked by unemployment and violence – are significant and sharply undercut commitments from Gov. Rauner and the General Assembly to increase community-based services. Youth will be turned away from successful, low-cost community programs, and increase the pressure on already strained and expensive systems such as the justice system, schools and child welfare.

CCBYS provides crisis intervention and family reunification services for almost 7,000 youth, aged 10-17, statewide, roughly 3,000 of whom are runaways, locked out of their homes, or otherwise at-risk. These mandated services are provided through CCBYS at an average cost of \$1,883 per youth, per year, far less than foster care. As programs suspend operations due to lack of funding, those youth served by CCBYS will be referred directly to DCFS, and many will be pulled into the foster care system.

"DCFS only has about 2,350 youth, aged 10-17, in out-of-home care now," said Durbin. "The child welfare system is simply not equipped with enough hotline workers, investigators, case managers, or

foster homes to respond to an influx of adolescents coming from the CCBYS program. The lives and safety of children and youth will be at risk.”

The fallout from the budget impasse is growing, according to an ICOY survey of CCBYS and Homeless Youth providers across the state carried out at the beginning of January. Forty percent of those CCBYS providers responding have reduced staff and decreased or restricted services since July 1. Among Homeless Youth providers responding, 50% have cut staff and 36% have decreased or restricted services; one program has closed. Based on the survey, ICOY projects significantly more cutbacks, including closings, as soon as February and March.

The likely damage to the most vulnerable youth and families, while actually increasing long-term financial costs to the state and local communities, comes as Gov. Rauner has pledged to reduce the Illinois prison population by 12,000 men and women over the next decade, focusing on rehabilitation programs rather than incarceration.

The budget stalemate also threatens new legislation that went into effect Jan. 1 designed to support at-risk youth with services that can keep them out of the juvenile justice system. Under P.A. 99-254, alleged delinquent minors under 13 are meant to be provided CCBYS services, rather than be held in a detention center. Another new law, P.A. 99-456, calls on community providers to assist schools with interventions to minimize student suspensions and expulsions. Now, with resources squeezed, there are questions about whether the legislation can be effectively implemented.

“The Governor and the General Assembly have had some great ideas about shifting youth from high-end care to community-based services,” said Durbin. “But the lack of a state budget is placing children and youth at risk, starving community-based providers, and haphazardly forcing program closures and suspensions. It’s difficult to see how we make progress as a state under these circumstances,” she added.

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About Children’s Home + Aid

Children’s Home + Aid is a leading child and family service agency in Illinois. The organization helps children recover their health, their hope, and their faith in the people around them. We link children to a network of opportunity and care, to extended family, teachers, mentors, and the resources of the neighborhood and community. For 133 years, the organization has gone wherever children and families need them, and where that work has been proven to be most effective: at home, in the classroom, in the neighborhood, in the course of daily life. The organization has offices located across Illinois and serves more than 40,000 children and families in over 60 counties each year. For more information about Children’s Home + Aid, visit childrenshomeandaid.org.

About Illinois Collaboration on Youth (ICOY)

At the crossroads of policy and practice, ICOY serves as a positive force and collective voice for young people, their families and communities, and the providers who serve them. Founded in 1972, we work to build the capacity of the statewide system of programs and services for youth at risk, and to advocate for legislation and policies that keep children and youth safe, healthy, and on the path to a positive adulthood.