

FRIDAY FOCUS... ON THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR



10.28.11

Opportunity Council's Child Care Resource & Referral Serving Island, San Juan, & Whatcom Counties

CCR&R receives important information about early care and education that we want to share! We hope you enjoy reading the "Friday Focus," in which we include events, announcements, and resources for you.

Special Session

Governor Gregoire recently announced a 30-day special session beginning on November 28th. The announcement came after the September revenue forecast revealed a \$1.4 billion drop in revenues. The Governor hopes to pass a supplemental budget during the special session and focus on policy bills during the regular session beginning in January.

Between now and the start of special session, legislators and the Governor's office will be negotiating a budget deal. This work has already begun. At the Governor's request, state agencies recently submitted proposals outlining 10% budget reductions. The Governor will consider these ideas as she builds her proposed supplemental budget, which will be presented to the legislature in October.

Please contact your legislators and urge them to take a balanced approach to the budget. Remind them that **early learning programs** are a smart investment for our children and our economic prosperity now and in the future. To find out who your legislator, [click here](#).





**TAKE IT
OUTSIDE!**

Outdoor Play Benefits

“I like to play indoors better ‘cause that’s where all the electric outlets are.”

- A 4th Grader in San Diego, quoted in *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv

Many of us remember the phrase, “Go outside and play!” from childhood, but children today spend less time playing outdoors than any previous generation (Clements, 2004; Hofferth and Curtin, 2006). Free play and discretionary time has declined more than 9 hours a week over the last 25 years. A new Nielson Company Report indicates that children ages two-five years old now spend more than 32 hours a week on average in front of a TV screen. According to the Keiser Family Foundation, the amount of screen time only increases with age, with school-aged children spending 6.5 hours a day on electronic media.

The percentage of preschool children who are overweight more than tripled between 1971 and 2009, exploding from 5.8% in 1971 to 18.4% in 2009 (Odgen et al, 2007; Anderson, 2009). Six out of ten of these preschoolers will continue to be overweight or obese at age 12 (NICHD, 2006). The situation is so severe that this generation of children’s life span is predicted to be shorter than that of their parents.

Tap into the benefits of outdoor play!

Encouraging children to get outside, get moving, and connect with the natural world are all ways to reverse childhood obesity rates. But, the benefits don’t stop there. Kids who play outside are happier, healthier, and stronger!

According to research (Fjortoft 2004; Burdette and Whitaker 2005), children who play outdoors regularly:

- Become fitter and leaner
- Develop stronger immune systems
- Have more active imaginations
- Have lower stress levels
- Play more creatively
- Have greater respect for themselves and others

Time spent outdoors is also the best way to get vitamin D. According to the journal *Pediatrics*, 70% of American kids are not getting enough vitamin D, which can lead to a host of health issues. Time spent outdoors is also shown to reduce myopia (near sightedness) in children (*Optometry and Vision Science*, 2008).

Outdoor play – it’s not just FUN, it’s good for you!



DEL, DSHS take action to help ensure accountability in subsidy program

DEL and the Department of Social and Health Services have outlined their actions to help ensure proper use of the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidy program, in response to a September 21st report from the State Auditor's Office.

WCCC helps low-income families pay for child care while they work, look for work or attend job training as required by WorkFirst. It is administered jointly by DSHS and DEL.

The audit found that lack of access to child care attendance records could result in overpayments and questionable payments to providers who participate in the WCCC.

DSHS and DEL are working to help ensure these dollars are being used wisely:

- DSHS and DEL are working to recover more than \$426,000 in overpayments from 19 providers identified in the audit. We also are reviewing at least 10 more providers for possible criminal action.
- DSHS is hiring criminal investigators and pursuing legal authority to obtain child care attendance records (currently only DEL has that authority).
- DEL is hiring new auditors to help identify fraud or misuse of funds.
- DEL and DSHS are preparing joint recommendations for moving to an electronic subsidized child care attendance system, which will be submitted to the Legislature by Dec. 31. This could reduce unintended errors and intentional fraud in subsidy billing and payment.
- DSHS will lead a joint workgroup to review existing policies and procedures for reporting; evaluating and resolving suspected fraud and improper payments to child care providers.
- DEL has creating a new webpage—with a prominent link on DEL's home page—with information about how to report suspected child care subsidy fraud.

The full report is available on the State Auditor's website:

www.sao.wa.gov/AuditReports/AuditReportFiles/ar1006484.pdf

If you suspect subsidy fraud: DEL takes fraud very seriously. If you suspect that a parent or a child care provider is misusing child care subsidy benefits, please contact the Department of Social & Health Services' Office of Fraud and Accountability (OFA).

Online: <https://fortress.wa.gov/dshs/dshsroot/fraud/index.asp>

By mail: DSHS Welfare Fraud; P.O. Box 45817; Olympia, Washington 98504-5817

Welfare Fraud Hotline: 1-800-562-6906

FAX: (360) 664-0032, Attention: HOTLINE

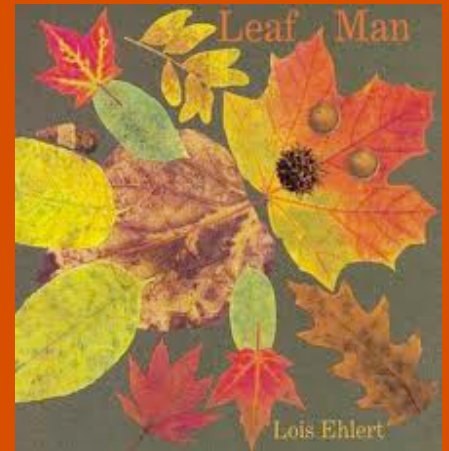
When you report possible fraud, OFA will need specific information, such as names, phone numbers and other details in order to investigate the fraud allegation. You may make your report anonymously. Learn more about the fraud investigation process online at www.dshs.wa.gov/fraud/

Books for the Season...

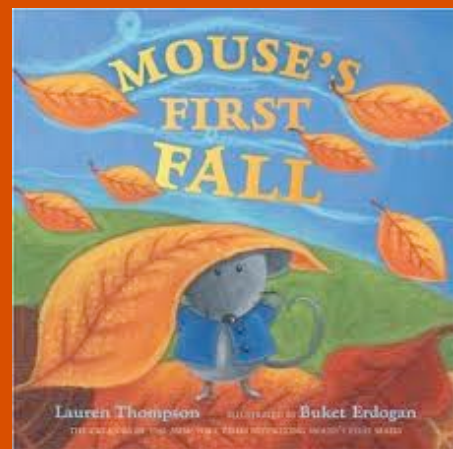
Check out these great books at your local library!

Our friends at the Whatcom County Library System have chosen a few books to highlight this month. Read the descriptions below, and find these great books at your local library! Have fun while promoting early literacy with these wonderful books that improve phonological awareness.

Leaf Man written and illustrated by Lois Ehlert. For children ages 4-8. Lois Ehlert's *Leaf Man* is beautiful to behold. Follow the title character as he blows around on a gusty, fall day. After reading this story, the children will be eager to get outside and gather a big pile of fall foliage for a grand art project creating their own leaf creatures.



Mouse's First Fall by Lauren Thomas illustrated by Buket Erdogan. For children ages 1-3. This is just one title in an excellent series for toddlers. Other titles include Mouse's First Halloween, Mouse's First Snow, etc. Each book is a perfect introduction to a concept. Mouse keeps it simple but fun with minimal text and easily relatable activities. In this story, Mouse and his sister go outside to play in the leaves—yippee!



The Friday Focus is developed by Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) to help coordinate information we receive during the month, so that we can send it out in one document to early childhood educators. You will find upcoming classes, meetings, and many other resources. It is our hope that you will share the Friday Focus with employees, site directors, and/or parents and families whenever applicable. The information, resources, and opportunities are for early childhood educators in Island, San Juan, and Whatcom counties. If you do not currently receive the Friday Focus and would like to be placed on the distribution list please contact us via email at childcare@oppco.org or by telephone at 1-888-444-1862, ext. 227. As always, we welcome your suggestions, comments, and additional information to include!