

**1. Protect ERDC funding and ensure efficacy of waitlist system (outcomes: 1-3 in table):**

This proved to be a very difficult legislative session for children and families in Oregon. While Democrats maintained a small majority in the legislature, the House of Representatives was evenly split 30-30 for the first time in state history. This often resulted in a political stalemate when trying to resolve the state's \$3.5 billion shortfall. In an effort to protect funding for other programs, some legislators discussed limiting Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) for just 6,000 families – 4,000 lower than the previous limit. This would have left 7,200 children previously served by ERDC without access to safe, reliable care.

Throughout the session we worked closely with our coalition partners in the Save ERDC campaign to educate legislators about the importance of ERDC for children, working families and for Oregon's economy. In the final days of the legislative session, we saw some movement around our efforts when an additional \$6.5 million in funding was directed toward ERDC. The agreement was to fund ERDC for 9,000 families for the remainder of the year and to slowly ramp up to 10,000 families by the end of the 2011-13 biennium; however, the 10,000 family cap is dependent upon the release of \$5.7 million in reserve funds in the 2012 short legislative session.

In the interim, we are working closely with the Department of Human Services (DHS) as they develop a plan for implementing the slightly lower cap, which will require the use of a waitlist system. While DHS has agreed not to pull services from families currently over the 9,000 limit, families who lose their eligibility (for reasons from loss of employment to temporary earning anything over 185% FPL) will find themselves on a wait list should they reapply for the program (as many often do). We are working with DHS to ensure that the waitlist program runs efficiently and that parents are able to access ERDC as soon as spots become available. With both DHS staff and our child care provider partners, we want to ensure that families understand the waitlist process and do not become overly discouraged. We are also working with legislators to develop a policy that would allow families already on ERDC to earn up to 250% FPL before losing their eligibility; this would allow parents to work overtime or accept promotions and raises without the fear that a small increase in income would cost them their ability to afford child care.

**2. Develop shared messaging and attract earned media (outcomes 4-6 in table):**

We continue to lead the Save ERDC campaign in developing an advocacy strategy and talking points for use with legislators as well as the public and press. Throughout the legislative session, we met on a bi-weekly basis with our partners and will continue to meet periodically in the interim. Using the language and messaging agreed upon by the coalition members, Children First has maintained the Save ERDC website and email list serve, providing our supporters with updates on the legislative session urging them to contact their legislators in support of ERDC

funding; 248 emails were sent to legislators through the Save ERDC website and 217 emails through the Children First website. The Save ERDC website is also used to collect personal stories from providers and parents who utilize ERDC. At the latest count, we have 84 stories in our story bank.

These personal stories and our outreach efforts with our partners helped us to gain media coverage of ERDC, with nine news articles written about ERDC. It should be noted that we chose to keep our news coverage in moderation as we did not want families to be afraid of losing the program (when letters about potential cuts were sent to participants by DHS in late 2010 it had a profoundly negative impact on ERDC usage); thus we limited our media outreach during the legislative session to one opinion editorial and one press release.

### **3. Legislative Outreach and Education (outcomes 7-10 in table):**

Despite seeing a lowered limit for ERDC in the most recent legislative session, we managed to protect the program from the most devastating of cuts. Much of this success was due to the support for ERDC we were able to build on both sides of the aisle. Children First's policy staff met with members of the Human Services and Ways and Means committees throughout the session to discuss the social and economic importance of ERDC. Through our online advocacy campaign asking supporters to email their legislators, we made contact with 82 legislative members through a total of 465 emails.

In addition to our one-on-one advocacy, we supported two separate volunteer-based advocacy days at the Capitol. Early in the legislative session, we joined with parents as well as child care providers in a rally on the Capitol steps in support of ERDC. The event totaled 100 people and garnered multiple television and print media stories. We also video-taped the rally and sent legislators and supporters highlights from the event. Later, we helped organize a "Child Care Day at the Capitol" with a temporary classroom set up in the lobby of the state capitol with local providers bringing in their kids throughout the day to have legislators read to them. The classroom showed legislators the importance of funding ERDC and quality child care for early childhood education.