

**Prisons or Prevention Programs
Governor's Budget Hurts Vulnerable Children, Families**

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Under the governor's proposed budget plan, Pontiac Correctional Facility in Pontiac, IL was again spared. But key programs that invest in young children and vulnerable families – programs that support healthy child development and are proven to help reduce the need for costly child welfare and criminal justice interventions – were dramatically and disproportionately slashed.

Key Department of Human Service prevention programs that invest in at-risk children were cut – in some cases to below FY 2008 levels. The Child Care Assistance Program, Children's Mental Health Partnership and Early Intervention programs would lose millions. Particularly troubling are proposed cuts to home visiting services, which were slashed by \$1.9 million, fully 10%. Research-based home visiting programs increase children's literacy and high school graduation rates, the amount parents read to their children, increase positive birth outcomes for children and increase the likelihood that families have a medical home – all of which yield significant long-term savings for the state.

Now – when the economy is at its worst -- is the time to invest public funds in early childhood development programs that have demonstrated success at improving education outcomes. This is the most effective way to safeguard the health of Illinois's economy and future workforce. The cost benefit analysis for such investments shows an annual rate of return of between 7 and 20 percent in the form of improved academic achievement, fewer referrals for special education, reduced crime, improved job opportunities later in life, and more.

Cutting prevention programs simply does NOT save the state money in the long run. Funding for prevention programs through DHS must be restored in the final budget. We cannot afford to make short-sighted funding cuts that will cost the state millions of dollars in avoidable and unnecessary costs in the future.

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