



CALIFORNIA BUDGET PROJECT

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Economic Downturn, State Budget Crisis Have Been Especially Tough on Women **New Study Highlights Higher Poverty, Lower Employment, and Fewer Supports**

SACRAMENTO – The impact of the economic downturn and California’s ongoing budget crisis has fallen especially hard on the state’s women, especially single mothers, according to a study released today by the California Budget Project (CBP) in partnership with the Women’s Foundation of California.

Falling Behind: The Impact of the Great Recession and the Budget Crisis on California’s Women and Their Families shows that recent budget shortfalls have led to deep cuts to key supports for California families as well as to programs that help women, especially low-income women, to prepare for and find employment. In recent years, state policymakers have significantly cut spending on the CalWORKs Program, child care and preschool, Medi-Cal, in-home care, and postsecondary education.

Further, the report finds that these cuts have come during an economic downturn that has taken a major toll on California’s women and their families. Single women supporting families were particularly hard-hit. This group as a whole experienced a sharp decrease in employment, higher incidence of poverty, and – among those who were employed – the largest decline in the average workweek in at least two decades.

“California’s women have faced an imperfect storm,” said Jean Ross, executive director of the California Budget Project. “On the one hand, the struggling economy means that their job prospects are discouraging, especially for single women with children. On the other hand, the state’s budget crisis has tattered the safety net that women and their families depend on and has limited pathways to opportunity.”

The report finds that:

- Budget cuts have had a deep impact on women’s participation in postsecondary education, especially in community colleges. Since 2007-08, state support for the University of California and California State University systems has been reduced by nearly one-third, and support for community colleges has dropped by almost one-fifth. Women account for more than 80 percent of the decline in community college enrollment, which dropped by 129,612 between 2007-08 and 2010-11.
- The state cut a total of more than \$3 billion from CalWORKs between 2008-09 and 2011-12. This equals about \$3,000 for each of the 1.1 million children who are CalWORKs recipients. The state also cut the lifetime limit on adults’ participation in CalWORKs – from five years to four – while reducing funding for employment services.

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- The state has cut child care and preschool funding by a total of \$1.5 billion over the past three years, eliminating services for tens of thousands of children – including 35,000 children in the current year alone.
- Employment and earnings among single mothers have dropped significantly during the economic downturn. In just three years – from 2007 to 2010 – the share of single mothers with jobs fell by more than 10 percentage points to 58.8 percent, its lowest point in almost 15 years, while the poverty rate among single-mother families jumped from 31.7 percent to 35.4 percent.

“State lawmakers have targeted cuts to the very programs that break the cycle of poverty,” said Judy Patrick, president and CEO of the Women’s Foundation of California. “This report confirms what we have learned through our partnerships with organizations that work with low-income women. For example, the cuts to state childcare and preschool programs make it almost impossible for mothers to keep their jobs or rejoin the workforce. These short-sighted measures are forcing more women into poverty and reducing the chances for women to contribute to California’s economic recovery.”

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The California Budget Project (CBP) engages in independent fiscal and policy analysis and public education with the goal of improving public policies affecting the economic and social well-being of low- and middle-income Californians. Support for the CBP comes from foundation grants, subscriptions, and individual contributions. Please visit the CBP’s website at www.cbp.org.