Child care threatened by budget cuts

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Six-year-old Mary was battered and abandoned by her parents. When found by the police, the often used social service agency was contacted for shelter. In 1986, the Louisiana Association of Child Care Agencies (LACCA) is concerned that agency and shelter may not be there for Mary.

LACCA is concerned that services to children are being severely threatened by proposed drastic cuts in state funding. Budget cuts will jeopardize the number of children served, the types of services and facilities available, the quality of services, and the future of child care and child treatment.

LACCA, founded in 1971, is composed of 32 non-profit agencies annually serving more than 4,500 abused/neglected, severely handicapped, emotionally disturbed and delinquent children.

The week of March 30-April 5 has been proclaimed “Special Children Need You” week in Louisiana by Gov. Edwin Edwards. A spokesman for the group believes such recognition is vital not only to the well-being of our non-profit child care facilities, but, most importantly, to the children and families they serve.

The Office of Human Development and Office of Juvenile Services planned cuts for services to children of 10 percent in January and 22 percent in July. LACCA contends child care agencies are already subsidizing services by 10-75 percent through fund raising, in-kind services, grants and other resources. No child care provider is currently receiving full cost reimbursement from the state. “No other category of private contractor or service provider is expected to subsidize services or operate at a loss to meet state responsibilities.

Fewer children are being served as a result of the budget cuts. The Office of Human Development is budgeted to serve 673 children in 1985-86, but will cut 137 placements. The Office of Juvenile Services served 1,100 last year and is budgeted for 1000 in fiscal year 1985-86.

LACCA predicts entire programs now struggling for their fiscal lives will close in the face of further budget cuts, that overtaxed community resources won’t be able to absorb the resulting demand. Courts will be forced to release more children to unsafe or inadequate conditions and the state’s civil and criminal liabilities will continue to increase.