

Agudath Israel of America
Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York
Sephardic Community Federation
United Jewish Organizations of Williamsburg

Position Paper

*New York City
Administration for Children's Services (ACS)*

*Priority 7 Child Care Voucher
Budget Line Full Restoration*

by

David Rubel, Consultant
www.davidrubelconsultant.com

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Summary

As Jewish members of the New York City Committee of Religious Schools, **Agudath Israel of America, the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York, Sephardic Community Federation and United Jewish Organizations of Williamsburg** work together on ensuring that Jewish children attending the nonpublic schools receive all of the government services they are entitled to under the law. The New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Priority 7 Voucher Program helps low income needy families by covering the cost of child care including school-based preschool based programs and school-based after school programs. A family with a child up to the age of 12 can receive a voucher. An ACS voucher can be used for preschool (ages 3 to 5) and after school programs (ages 6 to 12). We are very grateful to Mayor Bloomberg for his decision last June to fully restore the Priority 7 Voucher program for the first six months of Fiscal Year 2011. This decision is consistent with ACS's own published research and policy statements. We now ask the Mayor and ACS Commissioner John Mattingly to fully restore the Priority 7 Voucher Program for the full 12 months of FY 2011 and continue the Priority 7 Voucher program as a budget line item for future years.

Cuts to the Priority 7 program hurt families in our community and the school based child care providers our four organizations represent. If Priority 7 Voucher program is not fully restored, the budget cut will fall disproportionately on the Orthodox and Hasidic communities of Brooklyn. This is because many of the children whose care is funded under Priority 7 come from large two-parent families where the father is working and the mother is home with two or three pre-school age children making it virtually impossible for her to cope without child care benefits. There is no demographic group in New York City that fits that profile more than the Orthodox/Hasidic communities – and indeed statistics bear out that the majority of Priority 7 vouchers have been distributed within the heavily Orthodox/Hasidic neighborhoods of Brooklyn.

Not only will the elimination of the Priority 7 Voucher program hurt these communities, the decision is also contrary to the ACS's own policy research and recommendations. The Position Paper shows how ACS official policies and research put the Boro Park and Williamsburg neighborhoods at the very top for neighborhoods needing more publicly funded child care. It also explains why the proposed Budget FY 2011 will have a devastating impact on families and school based programs in our communities if changes are not made.

We applaud ACS for undertaking a needs assessment of New York City's neighborhoods to determine how well existing publicly funded child care slots resources match up to documented need. ACS undertook two citywide need assessment studies in 2005 and 2008. New York City Administration for Children's Services ACS. *“Charting the Course for Child Care and Head Start: Community Needs Analysis of Early Care and Education in New York City”* Summary Report August, 2008. and *“Rethinking Child Care An Integrated Plan for Early Child Development in New York City”* (October 2005). These publications are very useful planning tools for helping to make sure that resources are allocated to families and neighborhoods in greatest need. We respectfully request that budget decisions reflect the important findings in these ACS official community planning publications.

Position Paper

1. **Priority 7 vouchers must not only be restored for the full the Fiscal Year 2011, but it should also return to being a budget line item for future years:**

When the Mayor's Proposed Executive Budget was first presented last January, the Priority 7 Program \$16.2 million budget line had been eliminated (covering the cost of 2,200 child care vouchers). During the budget negotiations last May and June, Mayor Bloomberg agreed to restore the Priority 7 program for the first six months of Fiscal Year 2011. We are very grateful for this decision by the Mayor. Now as the end of the six month period gets closer, we ask the Mayor to fully restore the Program. If the Priority 7 Voucher program is not funded for the last six months of the Fiscal Year, it will mean that many low income families in Boro Park, Williamsburg, Crown Heights and Flatbush will be forced to pay for child care out of pocket (which they will not be able to do). We ask the Mayor and Commissioner to simply base the decision on the research and recommendations in ACS's own Needs Assessment report that was issued in June of 2008 (and revised in August of 2008).

2. **According to ACS's own research, Boro Park and Williamsburg are ranked at the top for unmet need for publicly funded child care:**

NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) most recent report "*Charting the Course for Child Care and Head Start: Community Needs Analysis of Early Care and Education in New York City*" Summary Report August, 2008 (referred hereafter to as *the 2008 ACS Report*). shows that *Borough Park* and Williamsburg are two of the most underserved neighborhoods in New York City. Here are three quotes from the ACS 2008 Report regarding the serious unmet need in Borough Park (Community District 12):

- "First, there are communities like Borough Park which is distinguished with the highest number of children who are eligible for ACS early care and education services. And, it ranks quite low for ACS services and moderately low for DOE/DOHMH services. These facts show a community in need."
- "In contrast, 73% of children in nearby Borough Park are from low-income families yet only 12% of eligible children are served with ACS services and 99% of slots are filled. DOE and private services are available for just 12% of children under age 6 in that neighborhood. In Borough Park there is a need for more early care and education programs".

- "To understand the variability within each borough, CCHS examined the data at the aggregated neighborhood level. In neighborhoods with a low-income rate of 60% or higher, the service-to-need ratio ranges from 12% in the Borough Park area of Brooklyn to 65% in the Union Square/Lower East Side area of Manhattan."

Using the same ACS methodology for determining need, there is also significant unmet need in Williamsburg

- The Williamsburg Chassidic Jewish community falls under the two zip codes that make up the Greenpoint Williamsburg area (11211 and 11222). However, since Chassidic Jews can only use child care providers that are sensitive to their customs, to be an accurate assessment of community need, the ACS methodology for a need to service analysis has to be modified to cover *only the number of Chassidic children and ACS funded child care slots available to the Chassidic community*. In Williamsburg, there are an estimated 5,600 Chassidic children between the ages of 0 to 6 that would be eligible to participate in publicly funded child care (based on 80% of families with incomes below 200% of the poverty level). However, according to the available data on publicly funded group child care, Head Start and UPK programs, there are only 901 slots. Consequently, only 16% of the eligible Chassidic Williamsburg children participate in publicly funded child care.
- A 2009 ACS Community Needs Assessment Report on the Head Start program shows that zip code 11211, which covers the South Williamsburg area, has the highest number of children estimated by ACS to be eligible for child care (1,966 children ages 3 and 4).

3. **ACS should follow its own policy recommendations for ensuring that funding meets need:**

The ACS decision to eliminate the Priority 7 voucher program also appears to be totally inconsistent with ACS's own leading recommendation from its *2008 ACS Report*. *Here is the leading recommendation from the ACS 2008 Report:*

"Align services to better match community needs

This analysis *clearly indicates that some communities' needs are not met by the current distribution of ECE services*. By realigning services according to the community need, Children's Services can achieve full utilization of services while serving the greatest number of children most in need of subsidized care. To identify high-needs communities, we will consider *numerous* key conditions at the neighborhood and individual zip code level, including:

- _ *Number of low-income eligible children*
- _ *Child Care, Head Start, Voucher, DOE UPK, and private ECE capacity*
- _ *Concentration of children from low-income families (low-income rate and the federal poverty rate)*

- _ *Service-to-need ratios*
- _ *Current and historic utilization rate."*

If ACS's own research shows how underserved the Williamsburg and Boro Park communities are for child care, how is it possible that ACS is recommending that one of the only sources of publicly funded child care for these two communities be eliminated? With long waiting lists, these two communities are struggling to provide publicly funded child care to ACS priority families right now; we cannot begin to imagine how families will carry on if the Budget is not changed with a full restoration of funds.

4. **Orthodox Jewish families generate at least \$10 million in Federal and State Child Care dollars for New York City.**

New York City receives Federal and State Child Care dollars, based on a Federal allocation formula, that includes dollars generated by Orthodox Jewish families. Each year, at least \$10 million child care dollars comes to New York City due to dollars generated by the families whose children attend yeshivas. If these families did not live here, New York City would not receive these dollars.

According to the US Health and Human Services (HHS)-Administration for Children and Families (ACF), New York State receives around \$300 million in year from discretionary and matching Child Care Block Grant funds as part of Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program. These dollars are distributed across the 50 states according to formulas that are based on general population and low income population (Free School Lunch program participation). Children attending New York City yeshivas make up 3% of the total New York State student population and 4% of the Free School Lunch population. When a factor of 3.5% is applied to the \$300 million NYS receives in these funds the amount generated by children attending yeshivas is \$10 million. This estimate of \$10million does not include two other sources of Federal child care funds (Mandatory and TANF transfer funds). NYS receives \$500 million in these funds each year. While precise figures are not possible, a small portion of these funds are also due to Orthodox families that participated in these programs. A very conservative estimate shows that children attending NYC yeshivas generate at least \$10 million in child care funds.

If Priority 7 is eliminated, then Orthodox Jewish families will lose their child care subsidies at the same time as the City is benefiting from the dollars that these families generate.

source: Child Care Block Grant law. NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS)- CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT FUND PLAN FOR: NEW YORK STATE FFY 2010-2011. US Health and Human Services (HHS)-Administration for Children and Families (ACF) FY 2009 Child Care Development Fund Allocations.

5. **Existing ACS contracted group child care slots in Boro Park, Crown Heights and Williamsburg will also be affected.**

Currently, ACS has seven contracts for group child care services in Brooklyn that are used by Orthodox families; two in Williamsburg, three in Boro Park and two in Crown Heights. Many of the families that use these center based programs have a Priority 7 eligibility. All of these

families have received a termination of services letter from ACS that will go into effect on December 31, 2010. If Priority 7 is eliminated, hundreds of families that rely on these center based programs will have to find an alternative place or keep their child at home.

6. **Another critical issue is City Budget fairness. The Priority 7 Voucher is the only ACS child care program that is still vulnerable to being completely eliminated in the current budget.**

When the Preliminary Executive Budget was presented last Spring, the Priority 7 Voucher Program was one of three ACS child care programs that was being cut. The other two programs were restored by the New York City Council and will continue to receive the bulk of funding for the full 12 months of the Fiscal Year 2011 (eight center group child care programs will remain open for one year, 5 have three month extensions and one will be closed and 72 classrooms for kindergarten age children will continue to operate). *ACS is currently providing publicly funded child care to 120,000 children between the ages of 6 weeks to 12 years. However, if the Priority 7 Voucher program isn't fully restored in the FY 2011 Budget, the only high need families that will have no place to turn to for available slots of publicly funded child care next fall are from the Orthodox Jewish communities of Brooklyn.*

7. **If the cuts go through, how will ACS serve these high need families?**

While ACS says that families losing their vouchers will be offered slots in contracted care, there are only a tiny handful of contracted care providers serving the Yiddish speaking families in Williamsburg and Boro Park. This proposed solution by ACS has no basis in reality. There are already long waiting lists for the contracted providers. It would take years to build sufficient capacity to serve the families that are losing their vouchers.

8. **ACS is ignoring underlying neighborhood social and economic conditions:**

In neighborhoods such as Williamsburg and Boro Park, there must be greater attention to the underlying causes of why families are at risk for ACS preventive services. In addition to most of the families being working poor, 28% of all households in South Williamsburg are living in housing defined as overcrowded by the United States Census. This is twice the percentage number for the City as a whole (14%). In the Boro Park area the number of overcrowded households is 24%. Overcrowded housing can cause serious strain on a family that is already struggling with economic stability. These various stress factors are a contributing factor causing families to seek professional counseling and guidance. A child care voucher can also make a big and positive difference by giving a child an opportunity for a high quality care program (outside the home).

For more information, please contact David Rubel at 718-768-2675.

Sources used in the Position Paper:

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5. New York State Education Department student enrollment data 2007-08 school year. The student enrollment data was used to estimate the total number of Chassidic Jewish children ages 0 to 6 in Williamsburg.
6. 2000 Census
7. New York City Department of Youth and Community Development Out of School Youth Programs database.
8. New York City Council Finance Division Report for the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) budget hearings 2010
9. New York Times June 12, 2009. "Families Urge Bloomberg to Save After-School Vouchers" by Julie Bosman.
10. United Neighborhood Houses Summary of FY 2011 New York City Preliminary Budget. UNH FY 2011 Adopted Budget Summary.
11. Citizens Committee for Children of New York Fiscal Year 2011 Executive Budget For New York City Report
12. New York City Mayor's Management Report FY 2011 Administration For Children's Services Section.
13. Child Care Block Grant law. NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS)- CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT FUND PLAN FOR: NEW YORK STATE FFY 2010-2011. US Health and Human Services (HHS)-Administration for Children and Families (ACF) FY 2009 Child Care Allocations.