

JUST WORDS

The Stories of Working People In Our Community

Episode 23: Annette Scary

Welcome to Just Words—the stories of working people in our community.

In Maryland roughly 7500 home child care providers are paid by the state to care for the children of low-income working families and families going from welfare to work.

Some of their paychecks went missing this winter and early spring. Why?

Rolf Grafwallner is an assistant superintendent with the Maryland state department of education, the agency that oversees the childcare subsidy program.

Most recently in February the department of human resources and the department of budget management transferred over automated tracking system, a new one, that was deployed on Feb. 19th, and that new software had significant system errors there is a delay in the invoices which could result in a delay of the payment for 4 to 5 weeks.

The education department messed up—and they know it. But this story is about more than that- It's about how a two income family is still in trouble with the paycheck is late. Annette Scary got to know that anxiety very well. She says she called the department of education again and again but...

But all they could tell me was, it's been processed, it's on the way. I had a person down at MSDE tell me, Miss Scary the check is on the way! I say, I have turn off notices for gas and electric. I need it to be here NOW. She said, well you should get it Tuesday. Well Tuesday came, Wednesday came, Thursday, no check. I had to call her again. She said, it's on the way. It took the check another month to get here that was on the way. What do you want us to do? I don't understand. How am I supposed to live? I explained to her, we have to live, we have to take care of these kids. So we cant just put the kids out—what is going to happen to them if we put them out and don't watch them because you're not paying? I was thinking about closing up, really closing the day care because I cant live like that. I got to have a paycheck to live in this house. I know a couple that closed up-and if they have to close, where is the kid going to go? Nobody wants to take a voucher right now. No provider wants that because you haven't been paid for the ones you have so why would you take some new ones. I don't know what they expect for us to do. My thing is, they are just contradicting themselves. They say they want to get the people off welfare, they want them to go to work, but then when they do that, they don't pay the daycare. So then what do the parents do—back on welfare. Start the cycle over again.

And if Annette had gone unpaid for five months, instead of three?

I would have been able to keep the house but not have children here. My husband works so he would have been able to pay the mortgage but the gas and electric and all that—I don't know that we would be able to do that. I would have to get a job, close my door to daycare and go get a job.

What if this had happened to you?

Would you be able to pay your bills? Or would your family be stretched so thin that you might have to live without electricity?

How many missed paychecks stand between you—and the shelter?

More on that ...next week



a 360° view of the people and stories behind the issues

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