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Metro

# State set to cut aid to day-care center

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT MARCH 26, 2013

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The state plans to cease subsidizing a day care and early-education center at the Lemuel Shattuck Hospital campus in Jamaica Plain, and the center's board is scrambling to save the 44-year-old program.

The state recently notified the board it plans to shutter the state-owned building that houses the Shattuck Child Care Center on June 30, 2014, because the facility is deteriorating. Without that building, which has provided the center with free space, the state cannot afford to support the center, officials said.

The state also plans to end all other aid it gives to the center, including staffing, but officials said they have not decided when that will happen.

Board members are pleading for more time to create a business model that will keep the center afloat at its Morton Street location. The center offers day care and early education to 45 children. The private nonprofit is run by a board with two dozen members.

“I don’t think it’s reasonable to, after 44 years, give us a year and then kick us out with no chance to try to become an - independent, viable organization,” said board member Clare Reilly.

More than 250 hospital workers have signed a petition asking for the center to stay on campus. Employees pay significantly reduced rates to send their children to the center.

The decision to stop subsidizing the center “was not made lightly,” said Alec Loftus, spokesman for the state’s Executive Office of Health and Human Services.

The center does not pay rent, utilities, or maintenance costs.

The state spends about \$175,000 in annual salaries, not including employee benefits, to pay for the equivalent of about three of the center’s nine-person staff.

The center was established as a way to recruit workers to the hospital by providing them with reduced-rate child care, Loftus said. The intention was to have most or all slots filled by children of hospital staff.

Now only slightly more than half of the spots are filled by children of hospital employees, he said.

The remaining spots, filled by local families who do not work on the campus, pay a higher rate than hospital employees, he said.

Reilly said some hospital staff work there, in part, to get their children into the center. She said ending support for the center seems to run counter to Governor Deval Patrick’s recent push to bolster early-childhood education programs.

“This is a high-quality, highly respected child care center in the community, and it’s been known to be for years,” she said. “It’s exactly what we should be duplicating.”

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