

Mississippi early childhood policy and program leaders have made monumental strides in the past five years to plan for the future of children in the state. From the current initiatives, such as Quality Rating and Improvement System, Child Care Resource and Referral Network, Nurturing Homes, Partners for Quality Child Care, Project Prepare, Child Care Director's Credentialing program, Child Development Associate, Mississippi Building Blocks, and Excel by 5, to upcoming planned initiatives such as continued council administration, work process service study, a data system, quality improvements for family child care home providers, implementation of the T.E.A.C.H. program, and a more efficient health care provider system. Mississippi is in the forefront of increasing the quality of life for its children and families.

Throughout the years, Mississippi has had a team of champions committed to young children. These champions have served on numerous boards and committees. The most recent group, appointed by the Governor to the State Early Childhood Advisory Council that was established through the Head Start Reauthorization Act, has worked together well and diligently for two years to comprise a plan and recommendations to the Governor in December 2008. Through further development, the Council has put a plan into action to make these recommendations a reality.

(a) Objectives:

The objectives the State Early Childhood Advisory Council (SECAC) is committed to:

1. Maintaining the current presence within the Governor's Office to support the continued development of early care and education system as outlined in this proposal and influence policy decisions related to early care and education within the administrative branch of government;

2. Developing a data sharing system that is inclusive of core data elements from the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH), Mississippi Department of Mental Health (MDMH), Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS), Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), State Board for Community and Junior Colleges (SBCJC), and Head Start Collaboration Office for the purpose of improving existing service delivery systems and planning for new ones that will more effectively deliver services to the children birth through age 4 years with special attention paid to those in critical need areas of the state by the conclusion of year 3 of the grant;
3. Sponsoring a work process study for MDHS, MSDH, and MDE in order to determine a model for optimizing early childhood education, health and well-being services that will be piloted in four communities in year one with additional communities involved in years 2-3;
4. Developing and implementing a voluntary registration process for family child care providers in year one with development of a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) to be completed at the end of year three for family child care providers;
5. Developing and implementing a career ladder for early care and education teachers with a method of providing compensation for career advancements by year 3 of the program; in addition, investigating and implementing a wage and compensation program to create stability within the field by year 3;
6. Developing a review of state health resources and practices for children 0-4 years of age for the dual purposes of making current practices more efficient and quantifying

the need for health service providers in areas of the state identified as being in critical need.

Description of State Early Learning Standards

The early learning standards for three and four year-old children were developed by the Mississippi Department of Education in the late 1990's. The Mississippi Department of Education convened a group of early childhood teacher educators, teachers and directors of early childhood programs and developed standards in the following areas: language, vocabulary and literacy development; mathematical concepts development; scientific investigation; social/emotional development; and, physical development. The guidelines have undergone two revisions and are currently aligned with the guidelines for kindergarten. The guidelines and an accompanying curriculum have been provided to all licensed child care centers. In 2008 a group of infant and toddler early care and education teacher educators, infant/toddler teachers, state agency staff and program directors was convened by the Head Start Collaboration Office to develop early learning standards for infants and toddlers in the following areas: language, vocabulary and literacy development; mathematical development; scientific development; social-emotional development; physical development; and self-help development. They have been aligned with the Head Start performance standards and three year old state standards. They are available on-line and have been disseminated to licensed child care programs in the state with an accompanying curriculum.

State Goals for Increasing the Number of Children Entering Kindergarten Ready to Learn.

Currently one of the state goals set by the Mississippi Department of Education is that every child will exit third grade as a fluent reader. A sample of over 20,000 students was screened at

the beginning of kindergarten in 2009 and 51.4% of students were performing Below Expectation in at least one early literacy concept. Mississippi plans to screen all entering kindergarten students beginning with the 2010-2011 school year. Over the next three years it is anticipated that the state goals for kindergarten entry will be:

By 2012, 65% of the children entering kindergarten will meet state standards for kindergarten entrance.

By 2014, 75% of the children entering kindergarten will meet state standards for kindergarten entrance.

By 2016, 85% of the children entering kindergarten will meet state standards for kindergarten entrance.

The proposed objectives and activities are designed to support the criterion for high quality as outlined in the Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System. In strengthening the quality of early care and education in licensed and unlicensed programs in the state, the enhanced quality of the educational experience will lead to improving school readiness in children birth to five years of age.

(a) Need for Assistance. Mississippi's need for assistance is outlined below.

Concentrated Poverty. Many children in Mississippi are born into troubled circumstances. In 2007, Mississippi ranked 50th in the nation for children living in poverty (families with incomes less than the federal level, defined as \$21,027 for a family of two adults and two children in 2007). Using this definition of poverty, 29% (220,000) of Mississippi's children were living in poverty in 2007. This was higher than the nation as a whole (18%), other Southern states, and significantly higher than Mississippi's percentage in 2000 (26%).¹ With this national rating it should be no surprise that Mississippi also leads the nation for the highest percentage of children living in homes where no parent has full-

time, year round employment (approximately 43% or 327,000 children).ⁱⁱ The data on child and family poverty is important as it affects the planning and delivery system of the objectives and activities proposed. The educational level of parents and early care and education teachers, as well as the wages earned in many parts of the state by early care and education teachers not employed by Head Start or public schools/state agencies, negatively impacts staff retention, parent education programs, teacher training, community engagement and access to high quality services. The map of Mississippi that illustrates the counties where concentrated poverty is prevalent also graphically displays that the contiguous counties primarily constitute a region-the Mississippi Delta. It should be noted that other counties with high poverty also exist in the eastern portion of the state close to the Alabama border (Appendix A). Education is considered by many researchers and policy makers the primary way to raise opportunities for citizens to gain a living wage and as a means to recruit business (jobs) to a state. Currently the development of Mississippi's early childhood system of care and education is moving forward, but with starts and stops, challenges and disappointments and successes. The system of care could be rated as an A+ in effort and a C- in progress. The specific opportunities described and afforded the state through the funding of this proposal will greatly aid the Council and its partners in moving the construction of the system forward and providing additional momentum to efforts currently underway. The extent of child poverty in Mississippi, particularly in the Mississippi Delta, is a challenge to executing the activities outlined in this plan, but the high poverty also compels us to be creative in the ways we deliver services so children statewide will have an opportunity to start school ready to learn despite the level of poverty into which they may be born.

Physical. Mississippi is a rural state and has the associated challenges regarding citizen access to services. Even with improvements in internet access, there are still communities that have poor coverage and the fee for accessing providers makes it challenging for some to depend on the internet for information sharing. Public libraries have been significantly upgraded in their hardware and software and have been more deliberate in marketing the computer labs for patrons. Again the challenge facing the access to the computers is that many local libraries cannot afford to stay open on weekends or past 6:00 PM during the week. Most communities in Mississippi do not have public transportation. The only metropolitan areas offering dependable, consistent public transit are in Hinds County (the city of Jackson), and the MS Gulf Coast Region. The lack of public transportation and inconsistent internet access permeates the strategies related to the delivery of activities/services outlined in this proposal. The activities described promote the strengths found in existing state-wide or regional systems such as the Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Network, the Mississippi Community College System and Institutions of Higher Learning, and Head Start grantees. These statewide systems are administrated directly through state agencies, business sponsored programs, and centers/institutes are funded through private funding or a combination of private and public resources.

Economic. The overall economic condition of children in the state has been stated on page 4. Poverty during the early childhood years can be more damaging than poverty experienced at later stages in children's lives, especially with regard to educational advancement and success.ⁱⁱⁱ Though many may assume that poverty is merely a physical circumstance, the ramifications are far-reaching. Disparities in child outcomes at nine and

twenty-four months have been observed across cognitive, social, behavioral, and health domains based on low income and low maternal educational levels.^{iv} Data on children in Mississippi under 6 years of age reveals that 26% live in poverty.^v In 2007, Mississippi ranked 50th in having the highest percentage of children in the country living in a single parent family (44% or 305,000 children) which is a definite contributor to family economic conditions as well as the statewide economic picture.^{vi} In the planning process undertaken by the Council, attention was paid to agency capacity for the delivery of services since so many children are by circumstances of poverty at risk of developmental delays and possible health conditions that will compromise their later cognitive and physical development. This is an area that the proposal attempts to address in terms of service delivery and the comprehensive nature that is needed by families.

Health. Many babies born in Mississippi are often at risk of health and cognitive delays at the moment of birth-if they survive. Mississippi's 5 year average (2004-08) infant mortality rate was 10.3 per 1,000 live births or more than double the 2010 national health goal of 4.5 per 1,000 live births.^{vii} Upon further examination of the data, racial disparities are revealed with the five-year mortality rate for white children at 6.8, in contrast to the nonwhite rate of 14.5 per 1,000 live births.^{viii} In 2008, Mississippi's premature birth rate was 230% higher than the national objective, 17.7% vs. 7.6%.^{ix} Of the 44,904 live births in Mississippi in 2008, 54.4% were to single mothers and when combining the number born to teens and single mothers, 14.3% of all babies born in 2008 were to single teen mothers (9.5% for Whites and 20% for Nonwhites).^x The data speak to the critical situation facing the Mississippi State Department of Health as well as other health providers and parent educators. Again, the proposal attempts to outline plans to begin to

address this devastating situation, mindful of the capacity issue within the state and service provider community and the ages of the mothers that will be a primary target audience.

Institutional. The services for children and families in Mississippi are organized and administered as a result of funding silos. MDHS is responsible for federal child care subsidies and the granting of those quality enhancement monies through the Office for Children and Youth (OCY). The grantees include the Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System and the Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Network. The MDHS Office for Children and Youth also receives state funding for those entities. There are several other programs that deliver training and technical assistance to early care and education providers that are funded through the 4% quality enhancement dollars. Another bureau in MDHS is responsible for the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program and another for support services to families through the family preservation office which funds Family Resource Centers across the state. The Mississippi State Department of Health is responsible for all child and maternal health programs which includes the Part C, First Steps program for the identification of children under the age of three who require special services to meet developmental milestones. The Child Care and Youth Camp office in the health department is responsible for the licensing and inspection of all licensed child care centers in the state. The staff in this office is primarily funded through a transfer of quality funds from MDHS under a memorandum of understanding and licensing fees from providers. Mental health and intellectual/developmental disability services which target young children are provided by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health. Day treatment programs for young children are funded through a

partnership with the Health Department Early Intervention Program. The Mississippi Department of Education provides guidance to school districts that serve young children that meet the eligibility requirements for developmentally delayed classes. Mississippi currently provides no state funding for pre-kindergarten programs, but 57 local school districts utilize Title I funds and/or private funding for pre-school programs (this number does not include programs that have special education only pre-k programs). While this brief description outlines the major contributions state agencies provide to the service delivery of programs to young children and their families, Head Start in Mississippi serves over 26,000 three, four and five year old children. This is done through grants awarded to 21 agencies statewide from the federal government to applicants meeting all requirements. Through the Early Head Start recent expansion, over 900 children are being served. The division of program funding, regulations and delivery system speaks to the need to begin to assess and implement methods and strategies that will result in the more efficient and economical delivery of high quality services to the children and families in most need. While child care services and education programs for tribal children are administered through the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians per agreements with the pertinent federal agencies, there is a representative from the tribe on the Council who represents the interest of tribal children.

Planning/Needs Assessments. In 2004, the team of Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan and Dr. Richard Brandon released a report, “Financing Access to High Quality Care and Education for All of Mississippi’s Children” (Appendix B).^{xi} The report was the result of an 18 month process involving a broad group of state early care and education advocates, teachers, providers, child care owners, agency staff, economists and policy makers with a

comprehensive needs assessment component. The results of a statewide telephone survey of approximately 1000 parents conducted by the Evans School of Public Affairs were factored in the data gathering process and were reflected in the final recommendations. Given the political and economic climate since the report was released, early childhood advocates and state leaders have attempted to implement components of the plan as feasible. Among the recommendations that are currently being implemented and/or in planning stages that will be greatly enhanced by the funding of this proposal are:

- Implement a system where the requirements for staff qualifications and compensation is gradually increased in early care and education centers,
- Access to high quality early care and education can be achieved through public (state-local) and private spending equivalent to about an 8-10 percent increase in total public education spending, phased in over a number of years,
- Determine if a variety of approaches should be phased in to increase access of children to higher and more comprehensive early care and education.

Following the Brandon and Kagan report, Mississippi participated in the Policy Matters policy audit conducted by Dr. Kagan. The report revealed that Mississippi had a disjointed set of policies around the education and care of young children. The strongest indicator was noted in the provision of state funded kindergarten. Mississippi rates high nationally in that the state has long provided full-day kindergarten, but only with a voluntary attendance policy.^{xii} In addition, Mississippi ranks in the middle of states in the country with regard to the quality of regulations,

primarily because the state requires a background check for early care and education staff in all licensed early care and education centers.^{xiii}

Immediately following the landfall of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the Early Childhood Institute at Mississippi State University (MSU) conducted an extensive damage assessment of the early care and education licensed centers in the coastal counties and the MSU Extension Service surveyed family child care homes that are not licensed and legally operating. The reports were combined which provided information to business leaders and national relief agencies to aid in the rebuilding of the child care business sector on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. After three years of work and over a \$16 million investment, over 280 licensed centers and unlicensed family homes were operating in better condition than prior to the storm.^{xiv}

Currently, the Insight Center for Community Economic Development is completing a state-wide facilities study of early care and education programs in the state. An executive summary of the findings is found in Appendix C. The report highlights financing strategies that the state and communities can undertake to examine ways for funding improvements in facilities.

In 2008 in preparation for the State Early Childhood Council's first report to the Governor, a program inventory was conducted by surveying state agencies. The information provided (Appendix D) reflects the programs and approximate allocation for each during that budget year. Since the economic downturn, some programs are no longer funded at the level reported and some may be no longer funded at any level.

The second year report was delivered to the Governor in December 2009 that provided an update of Council activities (Appendix E).

Quality Rating System. The Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System (MCCQSS) was developed under the guidance of the Office for Children and Youth in the Mississippi Department of Human Services. Stakeholders representing the early care and education centers, early childhood teacher preparation, state agencies with interest in early care and education, child care licensing staff, and child advocates developed the criteria. Under competitive bid, the responsibility for developing support materials and implementing the system was awarded to the Early Childhood Institute at MSU. The program was implemented gradually by regions. In 2009, the voluntary system was implemented state-wide. Information about the system can be found at www.qualitystep.msstate.edu. Support materials were developed to assist center directors/owners in their completion of requirements. Of the approximately 1,700 licensed early care and education centers, 400 are participating in 2009-2010. Monetary incentives are awarded based on the star rating the center received per enrolled child who receives a child care subsidy. Currently a quality rating system is being piloted for pre-k programs in public schools. Because the governance of the pre-k programs is significantly different from that of licensed child care centers, the need presented itself to bring pre-k school based program staff together to develop another set of criteria to measure high quality. The work of the Council in this area over the next three years is to develop regulations for family childcare homes that will lead to a quality rating system for these programs. Currently there are no reliable statewide data available to identify the number of home-based programs serving children. The child

care licensing law allows for 5 children not related within the third degree to the provider to be served without a license. The provider can also serve an unlimited number of children related to them in addition to the 5 unrelated children.

Early Care and Teacher Quality. As required by the Head Start Reauthorization Act, a workforce subcommittee of the State Early Childhood Advisory Council conducted a survey to determine the capacity and effectiveness of Mississippi's 2 and 4 year public institutions of higher learning in the area of early childhood teacher preparation. This assessment completed in 2008, was conducted primarily via e-mail and examined the presence and utilization of institutional articulation agreements, professional development and career advancement plans and opportunities for practice teaching or internships for students in preschool settings. The major findings of the survey are found in Appendix F. The findings served to shape the work of the subcommittee in their decisions related to the proposed activities found in this proposal.

In addition to the survey results, the implementation of the QRIS in 400 licensed early care and education centers has resulted in an increase in individuals working in non-Head Start Centers seeking to obtain a CDA credential since it is an identified criterion in the MCCQSS for a program moving up the system. The interest in two and four year degrees in early care and education has also increased as a result of MCCQSS and more interest in implementing federally funded pre-kindergarten classes in public schools. The interest in additional education has resulted in an interest in career ladder development and a new interest in compensation based on educational credentials. As a natural progression in the professional elevation of early care and education teachers in the state, the Council hopes to work with the

appropriate entity to implement the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) model. According to the Council for Professional Development, Mississippi has 5,676 individuals with a current CDA credential.

Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Network. The Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Network began as a regional series of sites funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission and administered by the MSU Extension Service and Early Childhood Institute. In 2006, the Mississippi Legislature passed into law provisions for the quality rating system and a child care resource and referral network that enable state funds to be used in funding the systems. The Office for Children and Youth (OCY) at the Mississippi Department of Human Services issued bids for proposals and the contract was awarded to the MSU Extension Service. Currently 13 sites exist statewide as noted on the map (Appendix G). From 2008 to present 1,431 training sessions were provided to 46,498 early care and education staff. The MCCQSS criterion requires training of staff in specific topics that are pertinent to the age of the child they teach as well as topics required by all staff. Information to parents is also a service provided by the sites. A library of educational materials and books are located at each site for parents and teachers to check-out for use in teaching their child skills specific to school readiness.

Programs Supporting Quality Early Care and Education. In addition to the systems described, other programs are providing staff development/ on-site technical assistance to selected early care and education centers and family homes for the overall purpose of improving the quality of the educational environment and instruction.

- Excel By 5 is an innovative early childhood community certification process focusing on a community's young children from birth to age 5. Initiated by Chevron and administered by the Mississippi State University Early Childhood Institute, Excel by 5 sets forth a variety of standards related to parent training, community involvement, health, and early care and education. Excel by 5 Community Coalitions plan and implement work across a comprehensive spectrum of identified community early childhood issues. Currently, over 25 Mississippi communities have achieved, or are working toward certification as an early childhood community with 12 additional interested communities.
- SPARK-MS seeks to create a seamless transition into school for vulnerable children ages 3 to 8. Standing for “Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids,” SPARK supports partnerships of selected communities, schools, state agencies, and families to ensure that they work together effectively for a child’s early learning. With the initiative serving as a catalyst or “spark”, the goal is to ensure that vulnerable children are ready for school and schools are ready for children. Over the past seven years, SPARK has impacted the lives of over 800 children and their families through the use of multiple strategies.
- Nurturing Homes Initiative is a program funded by OCY to the MSU Extension Service to provide intensive technical assistance to family child care homes statewide on a voluntary basis for the purpose of improving the quality of the program offered to the children enrolled. Since 2000, there have been 1,105 family child care homes served through this initiative.

- Partners for Quality Child Care is a voluntary program funded by OCY to the Early Childhood Institute at MSU to provide limited and intense technical assistance to licensed child care centers statewide for the purpose of improving the quality of early care and education programs across the state. Over 443 centers have been served since 2000.
- PREPARE is a program funded by OCY to the Institute of Disabilities Studies at the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) to provide technical assistance to licensed centers for the purpose of improving educational services provided with attention to children with special learning needs. As of 2008, 265 unduplicated centers have participated in this voluntary technical assistance program provided by USM.
- The Child Care Director Credential Training Program is a statewide program funded by OCY to the Mississippi Forum on Children and Families to provide a nine module training program for directors which, when successfully completed, will provide them with a credential recognized by OCY. As of 2008, 451 individuals have received a credential.
- The Child Development Associate (CDA) credential scholarship program is funded by OCY to the Early Childhood Institute that provides scholarship opportunities to individuals seeking a CDA credential. There are approximately 220 individuals are participating in the scholarship program.
- Mississippi Building Blocks is a program funded by the business sector. In its first year, the program serves 35-40 centers (100 classrooms) providing

intensive technical assistance to infant and toddler classroom teachers and educational materials for a high quality classroom environment. Direct support is provided to directors in the management aspect of the business. Business advisors providing information and technical assistance to directors/owners regarding the financial management of the business is provided. In addition, the program provides a stipend to interested staff to obtain a CDA credential and upon completion of the training program they receive a \$2,000 stipend. Parent education is also provided through small group sessions and individualized parent meetings. The program is conducting research on the effectiveness of this approach and will follow the children as they move into classrooms serving the same children as they age upward. Again, technical assistance for the pre-school classrooms will occur as well as the provision of age appropriate educational materials.

All programs outlined relating to licensed early care and education centers contribute to the requirements put forth in the MSCCQSS for staff development and improvement in rating scores measured by the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) and the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R).

As chronicled, discussions have been driven by data and a well-developed plan has emerged that will be enhanced and expanded as a result of the requested funding.

Part A: Specific Needs to Be Addressed through the Grant Funding

The needs identified by the Advisory Council that will be directly addressed through the funding of this proposal are as follows:

1. **NEED: Continued Council Administration.** Council staff is needed to manage all council business related to the overall success of the proposed activities outlined in this proposal. Staff will facilitate the work of the council in all administrative functions and in serving as the liaison to the Office of the Governor.
2. **NEED: A data system that is inclusive of core data elements regarding young children.** This system will improve service delivery for existing programs and help with planning for new services to meet the needs of the children and families of Mississippi.
3. **NEED: A work process service study of major agencies serving young children.** A contractor is needed for conducting a work process service study with main state agencies that provide early care and education services to young children and to provide a written report with the suggested model to utilize in pilot form in four sites in year one with training of the site participants in the model in years two - three.
4. **NEED: Quality improvements for family child care home providers.** In year one, a staff person is needed that would be charged with the responsibility for developing and implementing, with stakeholders, a Quality Rating Improvement System for family child care providers. Also, in conjunction with the state licensing agency, staff would assist to create and pass legislation that will allow for an official voluntary registry for family home providers. In addition, the staff would provide technical assistance to implement the QRIS

with the family child care providers in conjunction with the Nurturing Homes Initiative program described on page 15 by year three of this funded request.

5. **NEED: Implementation of the Teacher Education and Compensation Help (T.E.A.C.H.) program and a companion compensation system.** In order to stabilize the employment of the early care and education teacher population currently employed in licensed and non–licensed early care and education programs, a career ladder and compensation plan must be developed and implemented. By year 3 of this funded request a system will be piloted in several regions in the state with a viable compensation plan for teachers who successfully complete the career steps.

6. **NEED: More efficient health care provider system** components for providing health services to young children in critical need areas of the state with the outcome being more children served in a more efficient manner. Proposals for funding additional health providers and parent education home visitor programs will be an outcome of the proposed system review that will be completed in year 1 of this program request. State budget considerations and recommendations will also be impacted by the information in years 2-3.

Part B: Approach

A detailed explanation of how the proposed work will be accomplished is presented on pages 22-41. The listing of members of the Council and their affiliation is found in Appendix H. The membership designation exceeds the required representation per The Head Start Act, Section 642B (b)(1)(C). The Mississippi Department of Human Services, Office for Children and Youth

in partnership with the Governor's Office will administer the program and be responsible for the successful completion of the activities outlined. The program administrator will communicate with the ACF project officer to determine if OMB clearance is required for collection of data and /or information needed in order to complete the activities described.

Circumstances that could affect the execution of the plan are as follows:

- Current economic conditions of the state have resulted in a volatile situation that makes planning and dedicating funds for any activity difficult but to date, back-up planning has minimized the decline in services and projected work as outlined.
- Data sharing between state agencies will be challenging until the state receives further guidance from the federal agencies which govern the state agencies and Head Start grantees related to HIPAA and FERPA. The first year of the activity related to data sharing will be spent in developing research questions that data will be gathered to answer in year two. This is being done to allow for federal guidance to be developed and communicated to the states.
- The Governor has one more year in office and will not be eligible for re-election. The change in the office could have significant ramifications for the council membership and other staff in state agencies. The council members are proceeding with the planning and execution with the belief that the work will continue regardless of the election of a new Governor.

1. Maintaining the current presence within the Governor’s Office to support the continued development of early care and education system as outlined in this proposal and influence policy decisions related to early care and education within the administrative branch of government.

Year	Activity	Responsible Sub-Committee/Person/Agency	Stakeholders/Partners	Number Served	Outcomes	Extraordinary Circumstances
Year 1	Employ Executive Director of Council within 2 months of grant award	MDHS/Governor’s Office/Committee Chair		20-25 Council Members	Council work will be monitored and facilitated by an employed person responsible for progress. Executive Director will be issued job description and be required to plan council meetings and update the council on issues relevant to the progress made on goals.	Former Executive Director was terminated due to budget cuts.
Year 2	Continue Employment of Director	MDHS/Governor’s Office		20-25 Council Members		
Year 3	Continue Employment of Director	MDHS/Governor’s Office		20-25 Council Members		

The job tasks that will be the responsibility of the Executive Director are found in the job description in Appendix I. The individual will be directly supervised by the Governor’s Chief of Staff and the Director of the Office for Children and Youth at the Department of Human Services. An annual performance review is performed on all state employees based on the job responsibilities listed. The individual employed will be housed in the Governor’s Office and work closely with the Director of the Head Start Collaboration Office as well as the Governor’s staff.

2. Developing a data sharing system that is inclusive of core data elements from the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH), Mississippi Department of Human Services (DHS), Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), State Board for Community and Junior Colleges (SBCJC), and Head Start Collaboration Office for the purpose of improving existing service delivery systems and planning for new ones that will more effectively deliver services to the children birth through age four years with special attention paid to those in critical need areas of the state by the conclusion of the year three.

Year	Activity	Responsible Sub-Committee/Person/Agency	Stakeholders Partners	Number Served	Outcomes	Extraordinary Circumstances
Year 1	a. Appoint a subcommittee	Data, Executive	Governor	At the	a. Ten	Some agency’s

	<p>of Council members and data experts from state agencies to develop policy/ research questions related to early care and education services two months after grant award</p> <p>b. Development of process to study the current delivery systems and their efficiency and effectiveness which includes a common definition of terms three months after grant award</p> <p>c. Use process for studying current reporting systems with the intent of determining what questions should be posed to gather pertinent information about service delivery across state agencies five – eight months after grant award</p> <p>d. Develop the research/policy questions</p>	<p>Director, MDHS, Council Chair</p>	<p>MDHS Legislature MSDH MDOM ITS nSpark</p>	<p>completion of this activity approximately 160,000 children would benefit annually with approximately 30-45% benefitting directly as they live in critical need counties</p>	<p>members will be identified</p> <p>b. Process will be documented and list of common terms will be documented in minutes</p> <p>c. List of questions will be documented in minutes</p> <p>d. Research questions will be documented in minutes</p>	<p>data systems are not currently compatible within the agency nor with other agencies;</p> <p>Different data elements are being collected and referenced to different regional locations due to different geographical boundaries for service delivery per agency;</p> <p>Until federal guidance is provided concerning data sharing between agencies (HIPPA and FERPA)</p>
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	based on the process used in studying direct service data across agencies eight to twelve months after grant award					reluctance between agencies will continue to be a barrier throughout the 3 year period
Year 2	<p>a. Utilize the services of the National Child Care Information Center staff in working with the subcommittee to develop core data elements that will be needed in order to answer research/ policy questions twelve to eighteen months after the grant is awarded</p> <p>b. Pilot the core data elements retrieval and reporting and adjust as needed eighteen to twenty-four months after the grant is awarded</p>			At the completion of this activity approximately 160,000 children would benefit with approximately 30-45% benefitting directly as they live in critical need counties	<p>a. NCCIC will be contacted and utilized to document core data elements in minutes</p> <p>b. Results of the pilot retrieval and reporting will be documented</p>	Securing MOU's from participating agencies for data sharing may require assistance from ACY
Year 3	a. Implement the data collection system twenty			At the completion of	a. The data system will	

	<p>four to thirty six months after grant is awarded and determine answers to the research questions posed in year 1</p> <p>b. Develop and pilot training procedure for individuals who would be utilizing the data system for planning twenty four to thirty –six months after grant is awarded</p> <p>c. Obtaining MOU’s from participating agencies that guarantee the process is sustained and used for planning purposes thirty – six months after grant is awarded</p>			<p>this activity approximately 160,000 children would benefit with approximately 30-45% benefitting directly as they live in critical need counties</p>	<p>be evidence by reports included in minutes.</p> <p>b. Training documents will be included in minutes</p> <p>c. MOU’s will be included in minutes. .</p>	
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The continuous progress in meeting this objective will be assessed through quarterly reports filed with the Executive Director of the Council and the Office of Children and Youth (OCY) at DHS. Should work appear to be slowed or at a standstill, the Executive Director will meet additionally with the subcommittee chair to determine how to address the issues so that the deadlines set will be met.

3. Sponsoring a work process study for MDHS, MSDH, and MDE in order to determine a model for optimizing early childhood education, health and well-being services that will be piloted in four communities in year two with additional communities involved in year three.

Year	Activity	Responsible Sub-Committee/Person/Agency	Stakeholders/ Partners	Number Served	Outcomes	Extraordinary Circumstances
Year 1	<p>a. List and describe all early childhood state and federal agency services currently available (reports of progress given to the council quarterly).</p> <p>b. List and describe all early childhood NGO (non-govt. organizations) services currently available (reports of progress given to the council</p>	MDHS, Council Chair and Exec. Director responsible for convening a subcommittee that is responsible for implementation	Governor Legislature MDHS MSDH MDOM Family and children advocacy organizations Cities, towns and communities within MS		<p>a. A list will be created and documented in minutes</p> <p>b. A list will be created and documented in minutes</p> <p>c. A list and descriptions will be documented in minutes</p> <p>d. Gather and document in minutes innovations from key leaders and</p>	<p>Coordinated state early childhood services would greatly benefit communities that are making early care and education a priority. For example, eleven Excel by 5 communities (www.excelby5.com) and the Kellogg Foundation's work in funding SPARK in the Mississippi Delta</p> <p>http://www.wkkf.org/knowledge-center/resources/2007/08/SPARK-Brochure.aspx</p>

	<p>quarterly).</p> <p>c. List and describe innovative and successful coordinated service models currently used in Mississippi communities and other noted models outside the State (reports of progress given to the council quarterly).</p> <p>d. Interview key leaders and frontline service providers to gather ideas about</p>				<p>service providers</p> <p>e. Three service models will be identified to choose from to implement.</p>	<p>Input will be sought from community focus groups regarding service access needs/ challenges.</p>
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	<p>coordinated services models (reports of progress given to the council quarterly).</p> <p>e. Develop three service models that meet objective. Each model will describe the roles, responsibilities and work processes of federal and state agencies, NGOs and communities (reports of progress given to the council quarterly).</p>					
Year 2	a. Develop an implementation plan that includes				a. Key stakeholders will be	

	<p>building buy-in of key stakeholders (reports of progress given to the council quarterly).</p> <p>b. Implement pilot program in four Mississippi communities (reports of progress given to the council quarterly).</p> <p>c. Evaluate pilot program success and make needed modifications (reports of progress given to the council quarterly).</p>				<p>documented in minutes as a participating entity</p> <p>b. Four communities will be chosen to implement the pilot program that will be documented in the minutes.</p> <p>c. Progress will be documented to follow program success by participants involved and utilizing services offered.</p>	
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Year 3	a. Implement statewide (reports of progress given to the council quarterly).				a. Program will be implemented statewide and evidence within council minutes	
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The continuous progress in meeting this objective will be assessed through quarterly reports filed with the Executive Director of the Council and the Office for Children and Youth (OCY) at MDHS. Should work appear to be slowed or at a standstill, the Executive Director will meet additionally with the subcommittee chair to determine how to address the issues so that the deadlines set will be met.

4. Developing and implementing a voluntary registration process for family child care providers in year one with development of a quality rating and improvement system to be completed at the end of year three for family child care providers;

Year	Activities	Responsible Sub-Committee/Person/Agency	Stakeholders/Partners	Number Served	Outcomes	Extraordinary Circumstance
Year 1	<p>a. Mail letters to advertise the Nurturing Homes program and ask providers to register.</p> <p>(b) Identify barriers that would prevent in home providers to register.</p> <p>(c) Gather and enter information into the NACCRRRA database.</p> <p>(d) Begin offering certification to providers in the program (through Nurturing Homes Initiative) who wish to eventually become certified.</p>	<p>MDHS, Council Chair and Exec. Director responsible for convening Family Providers subcommittee that is responsible for implementation</p>	<p>Governor Barbour</p> <p>Miss. Legislature</p> <p>MS State Department of Health</p> <p>MSU Extension Service</p> <p>MS Department of Human Services</p> <p>SECAC</p>		<p>a. Produce a more comprehensive list of in-home providers caring for children.</p> <p>SECAC accepts final registry list of current in-home providers and certification levels.</p> <p>b. Methods identified to interest in home providers to register.</p> <p>c. The NACCRRRA database will increase in size of in home provider programs.</p> <p>d. Family child care home providers applying to be certified.</p>	<p>Mississippi is one of the few states without a registry of family child care homes.</p> <p>In order to possibly obtain more federal funding and also to be able to locate children in a disaster, a registry needs to be implemented.</p> <p>Also, there is a need for a certification process that is created around quality of care offered.</p>

						At this time, there is no quality rating improvement system in place.
Year 2	<p>a. Develop draft of QRIS scale.</p> <p>b. Convene committee members to approve scale.</p> <p>c. Enroll family child care home providers in QRIS that want to also become certified.</p>				<p>a. The family child care home provider QRIS will be developed within the first three months of the project.</p> <p>b. Family child care home committee members will approve scale within the first three months of the project.</p> <p>c. Increase quality of in-home providers as measured by the FCCERS-R. Family child care providers</p>	

					will become enrolled in the program and QRIS.	
Year 3	a. Utilizing the data from the program and the QRIS, interested agencies will attempt to change the law from the MS Dept of Health housing the registry/ certification of the in-home providers to the MS Department of Human Services to deliver through the Nurturing Homes Initiative program.				<p>a. Family child care home providers will be more willing to register their in-home program.</p> <p>SECAC supports wording of proposed legislation.</p> <p>SECAC recommends that the Governor support the wording of the proposed legislation.</p>	

The continuous progress in meeting this objective will be assessed through quarterly reports filed with the Executive Director of the Council and the Office for Children and Youth (OCY) at MDHS. Should work appear to be slowed or at a standstill, the Executive Director will meet additionally with the subcommittee chair to determine how to address the issues so that the deadlines set will be met.

5. Developing and implementing a career ladder for early care and education teachers with a method of providing compensation for career advancements

Year	Activity	Responsible Sub-Committee/Person/Agency	Stakeholders/ Partners	Number Served	Outcomes	Extraordinary Circumstances
Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop a financial feasibility study on benefits and compensation levels for ECE teachers b. Investigate possibilities of obtaining the TEACH license or another product such as MBB is using. Will occur 	MDHS, Council Chair and Exec. Director responsible for convening the Workforce subcommittee that is responsible for implementation	Post-secondary education Community & junior colleges 4 year institutions/ individual departments or programs MDE MS Center for Innovative Partnerships		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Publication and distribution of feasibility study with clear recommendations on appropriate benefits and compensation levels for ECE teachers Feedback on feasibility study report from peers will be 	The subcommittee along with the stakeholder focus groups focusing on the development of the career ladder will utilize technology to video conferencing and/or distance learning to keep cost low.

	within first 3 months of grant period		MSDH MDHS		documented.	
Year 1-2	<p>a. Build the career ladder with compensation tied to degrees and levels for ECE teachers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Credential 2. CDA 3. AA –Child Development 4. B.S.-Child Development 5. Masters 6. ETC... <p>b. A multi-county area will be selected to evaluate the effectiveness of the TEACH program (or similar). Will begin within the first year of grant.</p>				<p>a. 70 randomly selected ECE individuals will be selected</p> <p>b. Career ladder with benefits and compensation for ECE teachers will result in higher quality and retention of ECE teachers. Retention rate of ECE providers will be improved by 25%. 50% of the ECE individuals will complete the CDA program</p>	

Year 1	<p>a. Infant/Toddler Credential and Pre-K credential will have 40 hours each of approved age-specific training.</p> <p>b. Committee will review and approve courses developed by the MSCCR&R</p>				<p>a. The credential courses will be completed and implemented by 2011</p> <p>b. Each course will have pre/post tests for measurement w/75% pass rate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre/Post Environmental rating scales with success scores of 4.0 or above 	
Year 1	<p>a. Align the 4 year university degree curriculum with the 2 year community college technical degree curriculum</p> <p>b. Create a committee that will work on curricula alignment within first 3 months</p>				<p>a. Publication and distribution of a report showing the committee's recommendations for facilitating curriculum alignment</p> <p>b. Complete alignment of 4 year university degree curriculum with the 2 year</p>	

					community college technical degree curriculum	
Year 1	<p>a. Optimize articulation between the 2 year technical degree programs and 4 year degree programs through increased communication among the groups</p> <p>b. Identify the most effective method of increasing meaningful communication among 2 year technical degree programs and 4 yr degree programs within the first 6 months.</p>				<p>a. Articulation agreements between departments/ institutions offering 2 yr and 4 yr ECE programs by end of 2012</p> <p>b. Implementation of the identified method of increasing communication within 1st year of grant</p>	

The continuous progress in meeting this objective will be assessed through quarterly reports filed with the Executive Director of the Council and the Office for Children and Youth (OCY) at MDHS. Should work appear to be slowed or at a standstill, the Executive Director will meet additionally with the subcommittee chair to determine how to address the issues so that the deadlines set will be met.

6. Developing a review of state health resources and practices for children 0-4 years of age for the purpose of streamlining and making current practices more efficient and for the purpose of justifying the need for health service providers in areas of the state identified as in a critical need shortage of the state by the completion of year 3

Year	Activity	Responsible Sub-Committee/Person /Agency	Stakeholders/ Partners	Number Served	Outcomes	Extraordinary Circumstances
Year 1	a. Eliminate barriers and/or administrative burden to families of	MDHS, Council Chair and Exec. Director responsible for convening the Workforce subcommittee that	Governor Legislature MS Div. of Medicaid Medicaid Director MSDH HHS	Potential number of children served: 160,000 – at a minimum 45% of the	a. More eligible pregnant women and children with health care coverage. Reduction of the	SECAC may contract with a local health care consultant to analyze and monitor potential cost

	<p>eligible children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review administrative policies and procedures. • Review existing state and national research and reports regarding administrative procedures. • Determine feasibility and cost effectiveness. • Recommend administrative policy changes/revisions. 	is responsible for implementation	<p>Other state Medicaid programs MS Health Advocacy Programs MS Human Services Coalition MSCEI CDF_SRO UMC Delta Health Alliance Academy of Pediatrics MS Hospital Association</p>	children will benefit because they live in a critical need county	<p>state's uninsured rate.</p> <p>Track enrollment of Medicaid, SCHIP, and other health care providers for families with young children by income level to determine level of uninsured.</p> <p>Track records associated with specific barriers.</p> <p>SECAC makes recommendation to the Governor/Legislature for action and barriers removed.</p>	savings/cost benefits.
Year 2	a. Increase the number of health care providers in order to ensure accessibility for pregnant women and				a. More health care providers in underserved areas of the state. Decrease in mortality rates. Decrease in the number of	

	<p>children- especially in Medical professional shortage areas of the state.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore innovative options (use of telemedicine, mobile units, patient navigators, etc.) • Explore increasing reimbursement rates/local or state level incentives for providers to serve in shortage areas. • Develop and train more health care professionals by using economic development funds (training can also be 				<p>uninsured.</p> <p>Improvement in overall state health and well being indexes.</p> <p>Improved health indices for pregnant women and children</p> <p>Track number of health care professionals statewide- specifically in underserved areas</p>	
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	viewed as a service component) Ensure pediatric dental services and mental health issues are addressed.					
Year 3	<p>a. Support a proposed change in legislation to finalize an effective official voluntary registry for in home providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a system of health care that ensures proper referral and follow-up (when a health problem is identified, it 				<p>a. Insure that not only health problems are identified, but are resolved at an early age.</p> <p>Decrease number of children in special education.</p> <p>Reduce dropout rates.</p> <p>Increase in overall child well-being.</p> <p>SECAC supports wording of proposed legislation.</p> <p>SECAC</p>	<p>Should be no cost or low cost</p> <p>Requires only reallocation of funding to ensure maximum results.</p>

	<p>should be rectified).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and promote the true concept of “medical home (point of capture)” i.e. connecting to vaccinations, WIC EPSDT, and other programs to the establishment of a medical home. Encourage and promote preventive health care. 				<p>recommends that the Governor support the wording of the proposed legislation.</p> <p>Improved health indices for pregnant women and children.</p> <p>Reduction in ER usage.</p> <p>Reduction in overall healthcare cost.</p>	
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The continuous progress in meeting this objective will be assessed through quarterly reports filed with the Executive Director of the Council and the Office for Children and Youth (OCY) at MDHS. Should work appear to be slowed or at a standstill, the Executive Director will meet additionally with the subcommittee chair to determine how to address the issues so that the deadlines set will be met.

Updating Status of Progress and Public Input

The Council's plan for continued updating and determination of needs so that they can make better informed decisions concerning the work of the Council and to gain input from the public is as follows:

Opportunity for Public Comment Prior to Submission of Plan-

- Posting of plan and notice of public comment per public notice process followed by governmental agencies in Mississippi with instructions on how to submit written comments within six days of the posting
- Public meeting scheduled for July 12, 2010 in Jackson Mississippi at State Early Childhood Advisory Council Meeting
- Public Comments close six days following the posting of the plan
- Adjustments made in plan per public comments completed and plan posted on Department of Human services web site and Council web site

Reporting of Ongoing Process:

The Council will make an annual report to the Governor and the general public regarding the progress being made on accomplishing the objectives stated in the plan. The report and notice of a public meeting will be posted on the Council web site and communicated to stakeholders through a statewide mailing. The public meeting will be scheduled during the first month of the year to provide opportunities for interested parties to review and provide input to the Council and subcommittee non-Council members.

As certain components of the plan are implemented, focus groups of stakeholders specific to the activities will be given an opportunity to meet to discuss the components of activities that have direct impact on them as described in the specific activity plans on pages 21-41.

The Council meetings are currently open to the public and meeting dates are posted on the Council web site with a process for receiving public comment. This process will continue as meetings continue on a quarterly basis or, more often if there is business needing the Council's attention.

Sustainability of the Plan

The activities proposed in the plan are designed to be institutionalized in existing systems and/or policies. Given the codification of the quality rating system in SB 2602 the plan was designed with sustainability in mind. Several activities to strengthen the MCCQSS and teacher quality, which is a significant component of the quality system, are described in the plan. Currently the Office for Children and Youth at the Mississippi Department of Human Services is utilizing 4% Quality funds to support the MCCQSS and related support programs to improve the quality of licensed early care and education programs. Until this budget year, the office was also utilizing state funds designated for the child care resource and referral network and MCCQSS. It is planned for the state contribution to return as economic conditions improve.

Building a data system that addresses specific service delivery questions involves state agencies and the flexibility they exercise to revise and /or develop new reporting systems. Of the three major state agencies that affect the education and health of young children, two are governed by appointed boards and one directly reports to the Governor. The focus of the project is to conduct activities that will lead to its sustainability. Our main strategy will be to leverage the current

social, cultural, and political environment of promote and maintain a general orientation toward performance-based management. The State Early Childhood Advisory Council will develop sustainable partnerships with the statewide integrated education and workforce performance management system.

Since 2004, Mississippi has made considerable investment in and progress toward the development and establishment of a statewide integrated education and workforce performance management system for the purposes of improving education and workforce outcomes. The system initially linked workforce and post-secondary data. The state is now engaged in building the link to K-12 data with the support of a Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Extension of this system to early childhood data systems is the next logical step. The state also understands the value of the system and also understands that, moving forward, such a system will continue to need support. The Governor is committed to bring together the legislature to allocate the resources to sustain the system over time. This is evidenced by the Governor's executive order which supported development of a longitudinal data system. Similar commitment has been expressed by all the other partners in the data system that include all the education and workforce sectors in the state.

The State Workforce Investment Board, along with its partners, functions as the main body for the governance and oversight of data usage across multiple systems. As part of the state's commitment to establishing a longitudinal data system, the governor issued an executive order to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations and lay the groundwork for institutionalization of the system. Education and workforce entities have also shown their commitment to establishing the system by sharing their data as prescribed by memorandums of understanding (MOUs). These MOUs allow each partner to retain ownership and oversight of its

shared data. To date, MOUs for data sharing are in place for the Mississippi Department of Education, State Board of Community Colleges (and its fifteen members), Institutions of Higher Learning (and its eight members), Mississippi Department of Employment Security, Mississippi Department of Human Services, Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services, and Mississippi Department of Corrections.

In collaboration with education and workforce partners, the State Workforce Investment Board developed a management plan to overcome technical differences and ensure data security. The general strategy was to adopt the data warehouse model to accommodate differences in management information systems. This model was also used to facilitate development of common standards, data structure, and data format. Because the system is cooperative, it belongs to all partners and resides in a neutral location managed by the National Strategic Planning & Analysis Research Center (nSPARC) at Mississippi State University. nSPARC's infrastructure and technical expertise in data management and analysis, technology, and software development ensures data security and integrity of the system.

At the end of the project period, the State Early Childhood Advisory Council will be formally part of the current state integrated education and workforce performance management system. In doing so, activities conducted by the Council will be part of a larger statewide effort to maintain and support performance-based management. Like other partners, the Council will share their data with the system under the general governance of appropriate MOUs. This will allow the Council to retain ownership and stewardship of their data while enjoying sustainability over time through the larger statewide system.

(C) Staff and Position Data

Objective 1: Maintaining the current presence within the Governor’s Office

Executive Director Position (Appendix I)

Objective 2: Developing a data sharing system

Subcontractor (Appendix J)

Objective 3: Sponsoring a work process study

Project Management Position (Appendix K)

Objective 4: Developing and implementing a registration process for family child care providers

Nurturing Homes Technical Assistance Position (Appendix L)

Objective 5: Developing and implementing a career ladder

Objective 6: Developing a review of state health resources and practices

Subcontractor Scope of Services (Appendix M)

ⁱ Social Sciences Research Center, Mississippi State University (2009). Mississippi Kids Count Data Book.pg. 52.

ⁱⁱ Ibid. pg. 51.

ⁱⁱⁱ Shonkoff

^{iv} CLASP

^v Census?

^{vi} Social Sciences Research Center, Mississippi State University. 2009. Mississippi Kids Count Data Book, pg. 53.

^{vii} Ibid. pg. 104.

^{viii} Ibid. pg. 106.

^{ix} Ibid. pg. 111.

^x Ibid. pg. 115.

^{xi} Brandon, R., Mahar, E.,Guanghai, L. and Joesch, J.M. (2004). Human Services Policy Center, Evans School of Public Affairs, University of Washington. www.hspsc.org

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- xii Policy Matters report in internet
 - xiii NACCRA REPORT
 - xiv Early Childhood Institute Report-web site for date and name-YEAR 1 Katrina report