



**Annual Report of Activities
to Governor Haley Barbour**

**Keeping the Course:
Mapping the Journey to High Quality for Mississippi's Early Care and Education System**

December 2010



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Keeping the Course:
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INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Advisory Councils (SECACs) are charged with developing recommendations for increasing access to high quality state and federal early childhood care and education programs for all children—including those in underrepresented and special populations – and conducting a periodic state needs assessment of the quality and availability of programs. The Councils also address recommendations for the development of a comprehensive early childhood data system, a statewide professional development system, and research-based early learning standards. (National Governor's Association, Center for Best Practices, 2010.)

The State Early Childhood Advisory Council of Mississippi issued its second report to the Governor in December 2009. The report summarized the progress made during the year in establishing recommendations and suggested strategies that would result in the successful completion of those recommendations in 2010. The 2010 report will outline the progress the Council has made in meeting the 2009-2010 goals and describe the next set of objectives and goals that are specific to 2011. The 2011 work of the Council is focused on the continued creation and implementation of a system of high quality early care and education and the components that constitute such a system.

This third annual report describes the work accomplished by the Council and its member agencies that directly impact the ability of the Council to accomplish and exceed its goals for the year. Also included are continued appropriation requests and future recommendations to be implemented in the coming years.

BACKGROUND

The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 (Public Law 110-134), {42 USC 9801 et seq.}, requires the Governor of each state to designate or establish a council to serve as the State Early Childhood Advisory Council on early childhood education and care for children from birth to school entry, and to designate an individual to coordinate activities of the Council. The purpose of a State Early Childhood Advisory Council is to bring together administrators, policy advisors, and other key stakeholders to advise on the development of a comprehensive system of coordinated services for young children in the state. Governor Haley Barbour filed an Executive Order in 2009 (#1028) with the Secretary of State's office to formally designate the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council. (Appendix A)

In April 2008, Governor Barbour appointed Dr. Cathy Grace, Executive Director of the Mississippi State University—Early Childhood Institute, to serve as the Chair of the State Early Childhood Advisory Council of Mississippi (SECAC-MS). The Governor appointed additional

Council members from the Department of Human Services, the Mississippi Department of Education, the Institutions of Higher Learning, the Mississippi State Department of Health, the Department of Mental Health, and representatives of Head Start, local education agencies, and local providers of early childhood education and development services as well as leaders from the business community and child advocacy, as described in the Head Start Act. A copy of the membership roster is found in Appendix B.

In 2009, Governor Haley Barbour appointed additional representatives to the SECAC-MS to replace leaving/retiring members and to expand the representation of important early childhood services as described in *the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act 2007 (Public Law 110-134)*. In addition to the members appointed in 2008, the following members were added:

- Stacy Callender, Executive Director of SECAC-MS, Office of the Governor
- Catherine Cliburn, Part C Coordinator, Mississippi State Department of Health
- Jill Dent, Office for Children & Youth, Mississippi Department of Human Services
- Fiona Qualls, State Board for Community and Junior Colleges
- Festus Simkins, Office of Licensure, Mississippi State Department of Health
- Holly Spivey, State Head Start Collaboration Director, Office of the Governor
- Tanya Tullos, Director of Early Childhood Education, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians

In July, Dr. Grace began a leave of absence from her position at Mississippi State University and requested a leave from the Council as well. Nadine Coleman served as interim chair.

In 2010, changes to the Council membership occurred again. Ms. Callender left the Council to pursue other interests, and Dr. Grace returned to the Council's membership in the fall. Dr. Kris Kaase resigned from Council duties when he left his position at the Mississippi Department of Education and was replaced by Dr. Lynn House, Deputy State Superintendent. Catherine Cliburn resigned from the Council when she left her position at the Department of Health and was replaced by Susan Boone, Deputy Bureau Director of the First Steps Early Intervention Program.

SECAC-MS VISION

The State Early Childhood Advisory Council of Mississippi (SECAC-MS) is committed to the vision of one coordinated system of quality care and education for Mississippi's children birth to five. Mississippi's young children and their families deserve a comprehensive system that provides equal access to quality care and education and quality services and supports needed for school success and lifelong learning. Through interagency collaboration, the State Early Childhood Advisory Council is committed to developing a stronger early childhood infrastructure built on existing early care and education systems and components to ensure coordinated service delivery at the community and state level for all of Mississippi's young children.

IMPACT OF FEDERAL INITIATIVES ON COUNCIL WORK:

The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007(Public Law 110-134), {42 USC 9801 et seq.} not only requires the Governor of each state to designate or establish a council to serve as the State Early Childhood Advisory Council on early childhood education and care for children from birth to school entry, but designates a non-competitive grant opportunity to each state to utilize in establishing a means to turn recommendations into reality. During 2010, the council focused on writing the grant proposal and secured \$1,521,067 for use over the next three years. With the funding in hand, the Council will implement the recommendations appearing in the proposal through agency directives, memoranda of understanding and formation of new partnerships.

MEASURING THE SECAC-MS ACTIVITIES FOR 2010

The work completed by the Council in 2010 was done through small working groups proven to be the most efficient given the time allocated to each task. The entire Council approved any actions or further recommendations to the Governor based on work group reports. Table 1 provides a review of the proposed activities and the status of each as of December 2010.



Table 1.

Accomplishments of the Council in Meeting Recommendations from 2009

2009-2010 Recommendations	Completed-YES/NO	Documentation	Projected Completion Date
Created communication system to encourage general public to review the Council's work and establish an accessible means for the public to communicate with the Council on issues of importance.	Yes	Web site and blog developed	N/A
Appoint an Executive Director for the Council	Yes	Stacy Callender appointed and resigned after serving a year; currently seeking a replacement.	The position is posted and candidates are being interviewed with a proposed deadline as December 2, 2010 for naming of person
Improved access to educational opportunities for teachers of infants and toddlers through implementing training on early learning guidelines and corresponding curriculum	Yes	Curriculum developed to assist teachers in the teaching of activities that address the development of infants and toddlers per guideline's infant /toddler guideline/curriculum training conducted statewide through R&R network	N/A
A unified data collection system for comprehensive public early childhood education and development programs throughout Mississippi	Partial	The data on children receiving child care subsidies, teacher training provided through the R&R network and the rating of participating child care programs in the MS Quality Step System was included in a discussion of the P-20 data system at the Council meeting in December, 2010	The Council applied for and received a grant from the Children's Defense Fund to develop a plan to obtain data from other state agencies such as Department of Education, Medicaid, Departments of Health and Mental Health which will continue in 2011
A career advancement lattice for early childhood educators in Mississippi	No	A Council work group has made a recommendation for full Council approval on piloting the T.E.A.C.H. program in the state and a career ladder in conjunction with the Dept of Human Services	Using funds from the grant awarded to the Council by HHS, a pilot career ladder and T.E.A.C.H. program will be implemented in 2011 pending full Council approval

The Impact of Federal and Private Funding on Council Activities

The application for federal funds over the next three years was a major focus of the Council's work during 2010. The work proved to be successful and the Council will strive to meet the identified milestones over the next three years that will improve early care and education programs and the system which supports those programs. In order for the state to receive the funds a state match was required. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation provided the match that allowed the state to receive additional grant funds with the original match provided by the Mississippi Center for Education Innovation, Children's Defense Fund- Southern Regional Office, and the Chevron Corporation.

The following goals are outlined in the grant application for completion in 2011. These goals will also serve as the objectives of the Council over the next 12 months.

- Employ an executive director for the Council;
- Develop a data sharing system that is inclusive of core data elements from the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), Mississippi State Department of Health (MDH), Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS), Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), State Board for Community Colleges (SBCJC) and the Head Start Collaboration Office and others to be named;
- Sponsoring a work process study for MDHS, MSDH, and MDE for the purpose of determining a model for optimizing early childhood health, early childhood education, and well-being services that will be piloted in four communities in year two of the grant;
- Develop a voluntary registration process for family child care providers for communication purposes around training and emergency preparedness planning;
- Develop and implement a career ladder for early care and education teachers with a method of providing compensation for career/educational advancements;
- Develop a review of state health practices for children 0-4 years of age for the purpose of streamlining current processes more efficient, starting with the removal of administrative barriers to families to enroll their eligible children.

In September 2010 Mississippi Department of Human Services and the Mississippi Department of Health submitted the application for home-based parent education that was funded through the new Federal health care reform. The program is scheduled to be implemented in summer 2011 and involves a combination of parent engagement/education models.

In addition to the goals outlined in the grant application, the Council will continue to work on issues that have not been resolved from 2010 such as reduction of barriers that prevent eligible children from gaining access to health insurance.

APPROPRIATION REQUESTS FY2012

- The Council requests that the Mississippi Department of Human Services current budgetary allocation for the Mississippi Child Care Quality Rating System and Child Care Resource and Referral System remain intact.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BEYOND FY2011

The recommendations for consideration beyond 2011 build on those presented in this report and are critical to the overall and on-going improvement regarding the health and education of Mississippi's young children.

- Provision of resources annually to early care and education programs so they will meet Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System standards at a minimum of a step three of the five step rating system.
- Further increase opportunities for children birth to three years of age of low-income families to participate in high quality community based in-home early childhood education programs.
- Align the early learning standards (0-4 years) and core state standards for kindergarten–grade 12 by 2012.
- Increase funding to *Nurturing Homes*, a program funded by the Mississippi Department of Human Services, to provide registration services and technical assistance to teachers in non-licensed family child care homes for the purpose of improving the educational quality of the program offered to children in those settings by December 2011.
- Develop and implement a plan by 2015 that would eventually require all licensed early care and education centers to participate in the Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System that includes a financial plan for implementation and maintenance.
- Develop a plan for dissemination of a parent information packet that would be made available to all parents upon the birth of their baby for the purpose of providing them with developmental milestones, identification of parent resources, and other information and how to access it that would be helpful to them as their child's first teacher by 2012.
- Develop an implementation plan by 2014 to address access to health services for young children to include reduction in redundancies in paperwork and conflicting regulations for eligibility across multiple programs, review of the feasibility and cost effectiveness of adjusting state policies and practices to meet national standards and/or to reduce redundancy and conflicting requirements, service gaps in remote areas of the state and use of alternate measures such as telemedicine, mobile units or patient navigators.
- Develop and implement training modules to enhance the knowledge of health care professionals about specific needs and concerns for young children and their families by 2012.

- Conduct a review of existing preventative health services by 2013, including the state vaccination program, medical home model and EPSDT, to identify barriers to participation and to suggest strategies to encourage and promote the accessibility and use of preventive health care.
- Support readiness assessment of 4 year old children that encompasses all developmental domains.

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: KINDERGARTEN AND ELEMENTARY GRADES (K-3):

As young children enter public school their school lives are just beginning and for that reason the Council makes the following recommendations in the context of supporting the child's movement toward school success and as a step in preventing school drop outs.

- Increase evidence-based training for school administrators in early childhood education, especially elementary principals
- Re-evaluation of the transition practices and systems alignment followed when children enter kindergarten from early childhood education programs or from the child's home to ensure a seamless transfer for the child that will not interrupt or interfere with learning
- Implementation of an age appropriate assessment of children in kindergarten through grade three across the state by 2012 to determine the progress children are making in reading and math skill acquisition
- Development of a consistent state-wide skill-based progress report form for parents of children in grades pre-k through grade 3 by 2013

CONCLUSION

The State Early Childhood Advisory Council has succinctly crafted a plan by which early care and education services are anchored at the local level and connected community by community through the statewide systems that focus on young children and their families. This plan is mapped out and defined so that the individuals and agencies charged to bring life to the words are not left with questions. With talk of dropout prevention programs, work force development and economic uncertainty this report has even greater meaning and urgency. Regardless of the current financial situation, now is the time for the efficient and effective use of Mississippi intelligence and spirit to move the early childhood agenda forward. With the implementation of the recommendations submitted in this report, the quality of life for current and future generations of preschool children and their families will be greatly improved. It is not just the right and smart thing to do it is the **only** thing that will ensure we leave our children the legacy they deserve.

EXECUTIVE ORDER #1028

Relating to the Designation of the Governor’s State Early Childhood Advisory Council

WHEREAS, compelling research supports the lifelong importance of early childhood development; and

WHEREAS, sound economic evidence indicates that smart investments in early childhood education yield long term gains by improving the quality of the future workforce and creating significant cost savings for society; and

WHEREAS, the early development and education of young children is of critical importance to Mississippi’s families and communities; and

WHEREAS, the State of Mississippi recognizes the importance of early childhood education and development programs and services for children from birth to school entry; and

WHEREAS, Mississippi has a need for coordination and collaboration among Federal, State, and local child care and early childhood education programs and initiatives to maximize resources; and

WHEREAS, Mississippi’s families and children need a coordinated system of quality care and education with comprehensive supports to enable school success and lifelong learning; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Government, in the reauthorization of Head Start in Public Law 110-134 (Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007), has required states to have Advisory Councils dedicated to early education and care issues;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Haley Barbour, Governor of the State of Mississippi, by the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of this State do hereby:

- (A) Designate the existing State Early Childhood Advisory Council of Mississippi (herein referred to as the "Council") as the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care for children from birth to school entry*
- (B) Locate the Council in the Office of the Governor to ensure access to the Governor and other key policy makers*
- (C) Designate leadership to coordinate the activities of the Council as described in PL110-134;*
- (D) Appoint members to the Council in accordance with Public Law 110-134. Members of the Council shall include, to the maximum extent possible—*
 - (i) a representative of the Mississippi Department of Human Services;*
 - (ii) a representative of the Mississippi Department of Education;*
 - (iii) a representative of local educational agencies;*
 - (iv) a representative of Mississippi Institutions of Higher Education;*

- (v) *a representative of local providers of early childhood education and care services;*
 - (vi) *a representative from Head Start agencies located in the State, including Indian Head Start programs and migrant and seasonal Head Start programs as available;*
 - (vii) *the State Director of Head Start Collaboration;*
 - (viii) *the Part C Coordinator and/or the Section 619 Coordinator of programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.);*
 - (ix) *a representative of the Mississippi Department of Health*
 - (x) *a representative of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health; and*
 - (xi) *representatives of other entities deemed relevant by the Governor.*
- (E) *Direct the Council to build on the existing early care and education system and to develop a strong infrastructure supporting collaboration, coordination, and equitable access to quality services and supports.*
- (F) *Direct the Council to carry out the duties and functions specified in Public Law 110-134, including:*
- (i) *periodically conducting a statewide needs assessment concerning the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs and services for children from birth to school entry, including assessing the availability of high-quality pre-kindergarten services for low-income children in Mississippi;*
 - (ii) *identifying opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among Federally-funded and State-funded child development, child care, and early childhood education programs and services, including collaboration and coordination among State agencies responsible for administering such programs;*
 - (iii) *developing recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in existing Federal, State, and local child care and early childhood education programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations;*
 - (iv) *developing recommendations regarding the establishment of a unified data collection system for early childhood education and development programs and services throughout Mississippi;*
 - (v) *developing recommendations regarding statewide professional development and career advancement plans for early childhood educators in Mississippi;*
 - (vi) *assess the capacity and effectiveness of 2- and 4-year public and private institutions of higher education in Mississippi toward supporting the development of early childhood educators, including the extent to which such institutions have in place articulation agreements, professional development and career advancement plans, and practice or internships for students to spend time in a Head Start or prekindergarten program; and*
 - (vii) *make recommendations for improvements in the State Early Learning Guidelines and undertake efforts to develop high quality comprehensive early learning standards, as appropriate.*

- (G) Direct the Council to hold public hearings and/or provide opportunities for public comment on the activities described above in accordance with Public Law 110-134; and
- (H) Direct the Council to submit a statewide strategic report addressing Council activities to the State Director of Head Start Collaboration and the Governor, in accordance with Public Law 110-134; and
- (I) Direct the Council to meet periodically to review the implementation of recommendations contained in the statewide strategic report and to address any changes in State and local needs, in accordance with Public Law 110-134.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Mississippi to be affixed. Done at the Capitol in the City of Jackson this ____ day of ____, in the year two thousand ____.

Haley Barbour, Governor

Delbert Hosemann, Secretary of State

APPENDIX B

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APPENDIX C

REFERENCES

Demma, R. (2010). A governor's guide to supporting a comprehensive, high quality early childhood state system. Washington, DC: National Governor's Association

This report was prepared by the
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Publication Date: December 2010