



State Early Childhood Advisory Council

of Mississippi

*ASPIRING FOR GREATNESS:
Leaving a Legacy Upon Which to Build*



Annual Report of Activities of the State Early Childhood Council
to Governor Haley Barbour

December 2011

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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 (SECAC-MS) issued its third report to the Governor in December 2010. 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 2011. The 2011 report will outline the progress the Council has made in meeting the 2010-2011 goals and describe the next set of objectives and goals that are specific to 2012. The 2012 work of the Council will be 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. At the conclusion of this year, Council members appointed by Governor Barbour may be requested to remain on the Council or be “retired” by newly elected Governor Phil Bryant. For that reason, this report is entitled “Leaving a Legacy Upon Which to Build”. It is appropriate to acknowledge Governor Barbour in his support for the work of the Council and to each member who has faithfully served during the four years the Council has functioned. Special appreciation is given to Stacy Callender and Annjo Lemons who have served as the Council Executive Directors.

This fourth 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 them 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, then 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. 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)*. A copy of the membership roster is found in Appendix B.

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 followed by Trecina Green, Associate 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. Brooks Ann Gaston with the Delta Health Alliance replaced Dr. Karen Fox, and in January, 2011, Annjo Lemons was hired as Executive Director of the Council.

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.

The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007(Public Law 110-134), {42 USC 9801 et seq.} not only required 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 designated a non-competitive grant opportunity for 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.

The SECAC of Mississippi has focused on five areas of work that it believes will support and stabilize the early childhood education system in the state and set in process permanent relationships/collaborations between the state agencies that serve children and families.

Listed below are the major initiatives the Council has been working on with partners during the year.

Data System

SECAC is working with Dr. Domenico Parisi from the National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center (nSPARC) at Mississippi State University for the purpose of expanding the state's longitudinal data system to include more data on early childhood education programs, providers, quality elements and children who attend. Contracted by the State to help develop the State Longitudinal Data System, nSPARC will include data components related to early childhood services and education. Examples of data to be included in the longitudinal system are: child care certificate program recipients, participating child care programs and their ratings on the Mississippi Quality Step Program housed at the Mississippi Department of Human Services (DHS), childcare licensing information and child data on children attending Part C early intervention programs housed at the Mississippi Department of Health (MDH), data on children attending Head Start/Early Head Start, children in pre-k programs and Part B special education programs housed at the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), early childhood teacher certification, data on early childhood education graduates from the Institutions of Higher Learning and Junior College Board and others.

The purpose of the data collection is to allow the Council and other entities to ascertain specific characteristics about children and families so the planning for future interventions and targets will be data driven and more accurate. nSPARC will be contracted in 2012 to do a study of the 10 lowest performing school districts with data on children's environments/resources/teacher qualifications, etc.

Coordinated Services Models

SECAC is coordinating a consolidated services model study for DHS, MDH, 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 2012-2013.

The Early Childhood Care and Development Division at DHS released an RFP for the work earlier this year, and Public Consulting Group (PCG) in Nashville, TN, was awarded the contract. The work with focus groups and interviews with service providers began on July 1, 2011 with a release of findings and suggestions due in December 2011 for models to be piloted in 2012.

Home Provider Registry

Through funding from MDHS, a voluntary registry of in-home child care providers was developed by the Nurturing Homes Initiative project at MSU-Extension Service.

Currently, there are over 700 providers registered, and the Nurturing Homes Initiative will continue the recruitment process into 2012.

Workforce Development

A career ladder for early care and education teachers has been designed along with a method of providing compensation for career advancements. This is currently being piloted through the Allies project at the MS Center for Education Innovation with 70 childcare teachers in the Hinds/Rankin County area. A diagram of the system is found in Appendix C.

The majority of the funds received by the Department of Human Services for quality improvements in child care have been targeted for workforce development. These funds are allocated for the T.E.A.C.H./W.A.G.E.\$ program that several states have embedded in their early childhood education systems. A description of the program is found in Appendix D.

Health Access Study

A contract for a health services review of state health resources and practices for children for the purpose of streamlining and justifying the need for health service providers in areas of the state identified as in critical need of health services was awarded to the PCG group in October, 2011, with the final report due in April 2012.

MEASURING THE SECAC-MS ACTIVITIES FOR 2011

The work completed by the Council in 2011 was done through working committees and contracting with consultants to do the work related to each recommendation. 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 2011.

Table 1.

Accomplishments of the Council in Meeting Recommendations from 2010

2010-2011 Recommendations	Completed-YES/NO	Documentation	Projected Completion Date
Employ an executive director for the Council	Yes	Annjo Lemons was hired as the Executive Director in January 2011	N/A
Develop a data sharing system that is inclusive of core data elements from the MS Departments of Education (MDE), Health (MSDH), Human Services (MDHS), Institutions of Higher Learning, State Board for Community Colleges and the Head Start Collaboration Office.	Partial	A pilot of the early childhood data system within the state longitudinal data system will be launched with a study of the 10 lowest performing school districts with data on children's environmental resources/teacher qualifications, etc.	December 2012
Sponsor 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 2012.	Partial	The Division of Early Childhood Care and Development (DECCD) at the MS Dept of Human Services contracted in July 2011 the firm of PCG to do the study of the model. PCG will release its findings. Pilot the model.	December 2011 June 2012
Develop a voluntary registration process for family child care providers for communication purposes around training and emergency preparedness planning.	Yes	A voluntary registry of home providers has been developed by DECCD at MS Dept of Human Services and the Nurturing Homes Initiative at MS Ext. Service, which is currently recruiting home providers to participate	N/A
Develop and implement a career ladder for early care and education teachers with a method of providing compensation for career/educational advancements.	Yes	The Council approved the pilot of 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 is being implemented through the Allies project at the MS Center for Education Innovation with 70 child care providers in Hinds and Rankin

			counties.
Develop a review of state health practices for children 0-4 years of age for the purpose of streamlining current processes more efficiently, starting with the removal of administrative barriers to families to enroll their eligible children.	Partial	The firm, PCG, was awarded a contract to provide the health services review in October 2011.	June 2012

Mississippi’s application for Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant funds was the focus of the Council during the later part of 2011. The Council was tapped by the Governor to oversee the State’s application and gathered over 100 people from the state to work on committees in the grant writing process. The Council’s prior work served the state well in providing the cornerstone for the RTT application.

APPROPRIATION REQUESTS FY2012

- The Council requests that the budget allocation requested by the Division of Early Childhood Care and Development at the MS Department of Human Services be approved. In the event Mississippi receives funding as a Race to the Top Early Childhood Challenge state, budget requests from any state agency that are made related to the award be approved.

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.

- Provide 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.
- Develop and disseminate a curriculum that reflects the newly revised and aligned learning standards 0 through 5 years of age.

- Increase funding to the *Nurturing Homes Initiative*, 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 2012.
- 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.
- Continue production and dissemination by the MS Child Care Resource and Referral Network of a newborn calendar that is currently available to all parents through the Governor's Office and the MS Department of Education upon the birth of their baby for the purpose of providing them with developmental milestones and other information helpful to them as their child's first teacher.
- 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 Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT), to identify barriers to participation and to suggest strategies to encourage and promote the accessibility and use of preventive health care.
- Support the implementation of a scientifically sound population based measure of school readiness that encompasses all developmental domains and is linked to the State's Longitudinal Data System.
- Develop a plan for using the population-based assessment data to raise awareness about early childhood development, engage a broader group of stakeholders and inform the SECAC's planning and decision-making.

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-evaluate 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.

- Utilize the data from the population-based assessment to inform planning and identify supports needed for children in the early elementary grades.
- Implement a uniform 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.
- Develop a consistent state-wide skill-based progress report form for parents of children in grades pre-k through grade 3 by 2013

CONCLUSION

The MS State Early Childhood Advisory Council has worked diligently over the past four years to create a plan by which early care and education services are coordinated through a statewide system that focuses on young children and their families. This work has resulted in solid agency collaborations and a Mississippi early childhood agenda, which is at the forefront of state policy and community awareness. Regardless of the success in securing future federal funding, the Council will continue to provide support and recommendations to improve early care and education programs and the system which supports those programs.

APPENDIX A

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

COUNCIL CHAIR

Dr. Cathy Grace
Director, Early Childhood Institute
Mississippi State University
46 Blackjack
P.O. Box 6013
Mississippi State, MS 39762
Phone: 662-325-4954
Fax: 662-325-5436
Email: cgrace@colled.msstate.edu

REP. OF STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILD CARE

Mr. Richard Berry
Deputy Administrator for Programs
MS Department of Human Services
750 North State Street
Jackson, MS 39202
Phone: 601-359-4458
Email: richard.berry@mdhs.ms.gov

Dr. Jill Dent
Director, Office of Children and Youth
MS Department of Human Services
750 North State Street
Jackson, MS 39202
Phone: 601-359-4551
Email: jill.dent@mdhs.ms.gov

REP. OF STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY

Trecina Green
MS Department of Education
P.O. Box 771
Jackson., MS 39205
Phone: 601-359-5105
Email: lhouse@mde.k12.ms.us

REP. OF LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY

Ms. Nadine Coleman
Director, Center for Families and Children
Petal School District
Petal, MS 39465
Phone: 601-584-4704
Email: Nadine.coleman@petalschools.com

REP. OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE

Dr. Louise E. Davis
Extension Professor
Child & Family Development
Mailstop 9745
RM 325 Lloyd-Ricks Bldg
Mississippi State, MS 39762
Phone: 662-325-3083
Email: louised@ext.msstate.edu

REP. OF LOCAL EARLY EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

Ms. Margarette Davenport
Clay County Day Care Center, Inc.
539 Brame Ave.
West Point, MS 39773
Phone: 662-494-4405
Email: claycoda@yahoo.com

Ms. Lora Mederos
Hancock County Human R & R Agency
9930 Hwy 603
Bay St. Louis, MS 39520
Phone: 228-466-4334
Email: hchra@aol.com

REP. FROM HEAD START AGENCIES AND INDIAN HEAD START PROGRAMS

Ms Nita Norphlet-Thompson
Executive Director
Mississippi Head Start Association
921 N. Congress Street
Jackson, MS 39202
Phone: 601-969-6979
Email: nthomps@bellsouth.net

Ms. Tanya Tullos
Director, Early Childhood Education
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
Head Start/Early Head Start
P.O. Box 6010
Philadelphia, MS 39350
Phone: 601-650-1722
Email: Tanya.tullos@choctaw.org

THE STATE DIRECTOR OF HEAD START COLLABORATION

Ms. Holly Spivey
MS Head Start Collaboration Director
Office of Governor Haley Barbour
P.O. Box 139
Jackson, MS 39201
Phone: 601-576-2021
Email: hspivey@governor.state.ms.us

REP OF THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 610 / PART C, INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

Susan Boone
Part C Coordinator
First Steps Early Intervention Program Mississippi
State Department of Health
350 Woodrow Wilson
Jackson, MS 39213-1700
Phone: 601-576-7816
E-mail: Susan.Boone@msdh.state.ms.us

REP OF STATE AGENCIES RESPONSIBLE FOR HEALTH OR MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Mr. Festus Simkins
Bureau Director
Office of Licensure
Mississippi State Department of Health
143 LeFleur's Square
P.O. Box 1700
Jackson, MS 39215-1700
Email: fsimkins@msdh.state.ms.us

Ms. Gay Logan
Division Director 1
Child Care Facilities Licensure Division
Mississippi State Department of Health
143 LeFleur's Square
P.O. Box 1700
Jackson, MS 39215-1700
Email: gay.logan@msdh.state.ms.us

Ms. Lisa Romine
Bureau of Interdisciplinary Programs
MS Department of Mental Health
239 North Lamar Street
1101 Robert E. Lee Bldg
Jackson, MS 39201
Phone: 601-359-1288
Email: lisa.romine@dmh.state.ms.us

REP OF OTHER ENTITIES DETERMINED BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE

Mr. Johnny Franklin
K-12 Education Policy Advisor
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 139
Jackson, MS 39201
Phone: 601.576.2012
Email: jfranklin@governor.state.ms.us

Ms. Rhea Williams-Bishop
MS Center for Education Innovation
200 South Lamar St., Ste. 100-S
Jackson, Mississippi 39201
Phone: (601) 321-1966
Email: rbishop@mscei.com

Mr. Steve Renfroe
Policy, Public and Government Affairs, Mississippi
Chevron
P.O. Box 1300, Pascagoula, MS 39568-1300
250 Industrial Road, Pascagoula, MS 39581
Tel 228 938 4548 Fax 228 934 7226
Cell 228 219 9589
Email: steverenfroe@chevron.com

Brooks Ann Gaston
Delta Health Alliance
435 Stoneville Road
Stoneville, MS 38776
Phone: 662.686.3520
Email: KFox@deltahalliance.org

Ms Oleta Fitzgerald
Executive Director
Children's Defense Fund
P.O. Box 11437
Jackson, Mississippi 39283
Phone: (601) 321-1966
Fax: (601) 321-8736
Email: ofitzgerald@childrensdefense.org

APPENDIX C

SCOPE OF SERVICE **The Career Ladder Project**

This scope of service will serve as a guide to the Career Ladder Project, which is being piloted with the Allies for Quality Care Project housed at the Mid-Jackson Family Resource Center and will serve Rankin and Hinds childcare centers. The pilot will recruit 70 teachers with only a GED or high school diploma and supply incentives for the completion of an age-specific credential, and Child Development Associate online course. The pilot will also offer the opportunity to enter a leadership program and receive a national director's credential to the 16 center directors in the Allies for Quality Care project.

The Career Ladder Project will:

1. Begin with an age-specific credential encompassing a total of 40 hours. Training will continue toward additional credentials.
 - a. Infant/Toddler Credential (40 hours)
 - b. Pre-K Credential (40 hours)
 - c. Child Development Associate credential (120 hours)
 - d. Two-year Child Development Degree – A.A.

2. Serve 70 teachers who will apply for the study.
 - a. They will decide if they want to apply for the Infant/Toddler or Pre-K credential.
 - b. They will sign a contract to stay with the center for a minimum of three years.
 - c. They will enter the appropriate 40 hours of training. (6 months)
 - d. Upon complete of 40-hour credential, they will receive a bonus of \$100.
 - e. After completion of 40-hour credential, they will move into the Child Development Associate credential through an online course. (12 months)
 - f. After completion of CDA, they will receive a bonus of \$400.
 - g. After completion of CDA, they will move into the A.A. degree program.

3. Provide for:
 - a. Two CDA Field Technical Assistants to work with the providers who will have a caseload of 70 over the entire project period.
 - b. The CDA Field Technical Assistants will conduct workshops about the CDA process and will also serve as a liaison between the providers and the local community colleges. They will assist the providers with identifying the degree programs that are available to them and also assist with completing the enrollment and financial aid paperwork.
 - c. Additional technical assistance in the classrooms if needed from the Mississippi Child Care Resource & Referral Network (MSCCR&R).
 - d. 10 additional computers to be housed at the Mid-Jackson Family Resource Center and at Pearl Family Resource and Referral Center for teachers to use while completing their online training.

Leadership and National Credential for Directors

4. A consultant with expertise in leadership development and the 2 CDA Field Technical Assistants will provide leadership workshop/seminar trainings and one-on-one technical assistance to center directors in the Allies for Quality Care project and demonstrate research-based techniques necessary to run a successful, high-quality, early childhood program. These workshops will lead to a national credential from the Aim4Excellence program.
 - a. Will issue an invitation to the 16 directors to apply for this Leadership Training opportunity.
 - b. Will provide up to 20 hours of Technical Assistance to each of the 16 directors.
 - c. Will provide an online advanced director's credential by using the Aim4Excellence, delivered by the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership. This system will include an online tracking system and also provides nine modules that offer 144 hours or college credit.
5. Create a professional development plan for each early care and education director that will enhance his/her knowledge of child care and educational quality and leadership abilities.
 - a. Will provide a tracking system of each person's staff development training, the number of hours received, and the type of workshops attended through a specialized database created for the resource and referral centers.
 - b. Will provide a \$500 bonus for completion and award of the national director's credential.

Program Evaluation

Measurement of the success of the model will be obtained several ways:

1. Successful completion of the 40-hour credential
2. Successful completion of a Child Development Associate credential
3. Successful completion of the Aim4Excellence directors credential
4. Successful retention rate of the teachers and directors

APPENDIX D

T.E.A.C.H./WAGES

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholarship Project is a comprehensive scholarship program that provides the early childhood workforce with access to education. By promoting higher education, the program is helping to establish a well-qualified fairly compensated and stable workforce for this nation's children. T.E.A.C.H. also creates new and diverse advocates who are necessary to support long-lasting policy changes. From higher education institution capacity building to individual educational goals, T.E.A.C.H. can be a change agent in every state.

T.E.A.C.H. Core Values

- 1) Build **partnerships** for professional development
- 2) Reach the **diversity** of the field
- 3) Use and strengthen existing **higher education** systems
- 4) Increase **collaboration** through formation of a state-level advisory committee
- 5) Collect, analyze and share **data**
- 6) Create **educational pathways**
- 7) Strengthen early childhood **infrastructure**
- 8) Work to deliver high-quality, **outcome-focused** services
- 9) Think **system**, not program
- 10) Advocate for **increased compensation** for the early childhood workforce

T.E.A.C.H. scholarships provide access to education so that participants can take coursework leading to Associate and Bachelor's degrees, credentials and licensure in early childhood education or child development. States develop scholarship models to address the specific needs of their workforce.

The program provides the opportunity for a diverse population of adult learners already working in the early childhood field to take coursework to increase their knowledge and skills and to give them access to a college diploma.

Data collection is critical to the success and expansion of the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project. Through systematic data collection, it is easy to see the important contribution T.E.A.C.H. is making to the early childhood field. Each year data from all T.E.A.C.H. state projects is collected, collated and analyzed, and a national report is produced that highlights the collective accomplishments of all T.E.A.C.H. states.

Child Care WAGE\$ provides education-based salary supplements to low-paid teachers, directors and family child care providers working with children between the ages of birth-5.

To help stem the tide of turnover and increase teacher continuity, Child Care WAGE\$ provides regular salary supplements to early childhood educators based on education achieved and the continuity of care they provide. While a salary supplement helps keep educated and motivated

teachers in classrooms, WAGE\$ is more than just a check. WAGE\$ also serves to equalize the playing field by successfully reaching the diversity of the field.

WAGE\$:

- Recognizes the challenges and diversity of the workforce
- Links incremental educational accomplishments and continuity of care with compensation incentives
- Provides children with more stable relationships with better educated teachers because the supplement increases earnings and rewards teacher education and continuity of care
- Is available to teachers, directors and family child care providers working in regulated settings

This report was prepared by the
State Early Childhood Advisory Council

Dr. Cathy Grace
Council Chair

Annjo Lemons
Executive Director

Office of Governor Haley Barbour
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