

DIVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE & DEVELOPMENT
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

**EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FOR THE
MISSISSIPPI CHILD CARE PAYMENT
PROGRAM**

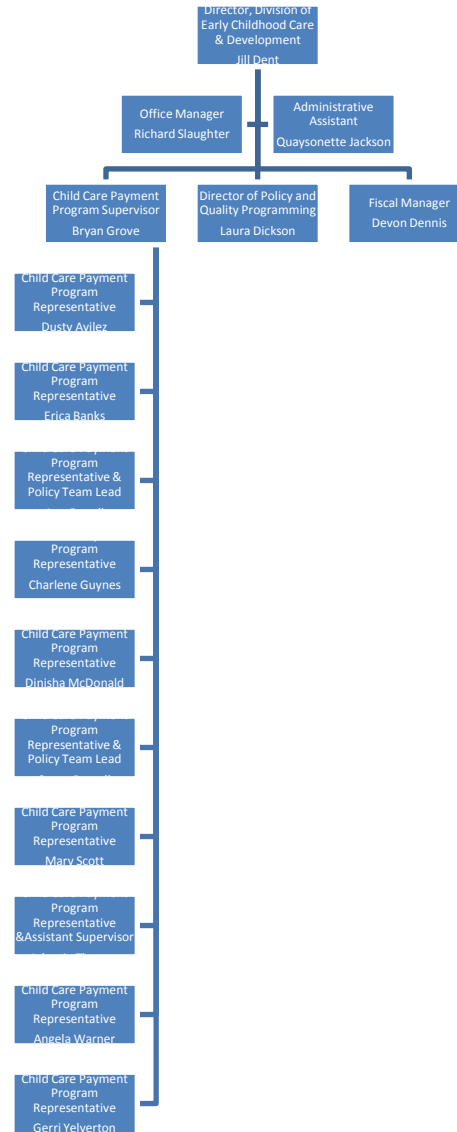
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Division of Early Childhood Care & Development

Organizational Chart



Summary of the Division of Early Childhood Care & Development Overall Responsibilities for Disaster and Emergency Coordination

I. PLAN SUMMARY

Plan Purposes

In the event of an emergency, the role of the Division of Early Childhood Care & Development (DECCD) is to support child care providers and to assist in the provision of safe and healthy child care alternatives for families during and after disasters or emergencies. DECCD's Disaster Plan provides specific actions that the Division may take in emergency situations. This includes provisions for: the coordination and communication in the event of a disaster or emergency, coordination in the relocation of children in affected child care settings, the assessment of the ability of DECCD/partner agencies to function, the assessment of providers' needs, and provision for the establishment of temporary child care.

The Division of Early Childhood Care & Development (DECCD) has developed this plan to support providers and give families safe and healthy alternatives for the care of their children during and after disasters.

Emergency Preparedness

DECCD's emergency preparedness efforts include:

- Training of disaster teams, dialogue with early childhood partners about their roles, update of disaster plan, and communications encouraging providers to prepare
- Ongoing development of partnerships with emergency response agencies
- Nightly automatic backup of DECCD and state information systems
- Development of call down phone trees for DECCD field staff communication
- Extra preparations if given notice of an imminent disaster

Possible DECCD Disaster Functions

The Division of Early Childhood Care & Development has identified the following as activities it *may* carry out during or after a disaster to make sure that children remain safe and healthy:

- Communicating with partners and customers during, after, and in anticipation of emergencies
- Ensuring that children are relocated off-site if hazardous materials, fire, or another emergency poses a threat to their safety while they are in child care
- Assessing whether the Division's capacity to carry out its roles has been affected by the disaster and making provision for the continuation of core DECCD functions (e.g., subsidized child care services).
- Assessing child care facilities' damages and needs resulting from a disaster
- Facilitating the development of temporary child care arrangements to improve access to child care

- Coordinating with the Child Care Facilities Licensure Branch of the Mississippi Department of Health regarding special licensing policies and reestablishing safe and healthy child care
- Coordinating with the Mississippi Department of Human Services Division of Family and Children’s Services to assure the continuation of child abuse and neglect investigations involving child care
- Using subsidy funds to pay for emergency child care
- Other assistance tailored to specific disaster needs

The diagram below shows approximately when in the disaster/emergency management cycle the planned DECCD’s disaster functions might be carried out. Disaster *response* refers to actions that occur immediately before, during, or directly after a disaster. Disaster *recovery* refers to assistance that occurs later to return the community to normal or near-normal conditions. Phases of disaster/emergency management tend to overlap to some degree.

Timeline -- Disaster Preparedness, Response, Recovery

	PREPAREDNESS	RESPONSE	RECOVERY
Partnering	√		
Training	√		
Communications	√	√	√
Provider needs assessment		√	√
Temporary child care (facilitation)		√	√
Continued payment of providers of subsidized child care		√	√
Emergency child care			√

**Shaded areas show when staff would prepare for the disaster function. Check marks indicate when staff would implement disaster function.*

It should be noted that disaster functions could require extra staff, equipment, supplies, or financial resources. Whether or not DECCD carries out an individual disaster function depends on the specific needs at the time, as well as the resources available to DECCD. The DECCD Director will determine which disaster activities or functions should be carried out.

Coordination of Effort In Carrying Out Disaster Response Functions

Before, during and after a disaster or emergency, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) will notify the MDHS Director and the DECCD Director when Emergency Management (EM) has been activated. The DECCD Director will: phone all DECCD Disaster Function Team members letting them know the situation. This communication will continue during the disaster or emergency. Decisions will be made at the Division level by a Disaster Function Team assembled by the DECCD Director.

If called upon, Disaster Function Team Leaders will ensure coverage of shift assignments. The specific role of DECCD will be clarified during the assignment by the DECCD Director.

The DECCD Director and/or Disaster Function Team Leaders will determine which disaster team members to activate and which functions in the Disaster Plan are to be carried out. DECCD staff and partner agencies will be called upon, as needed, to assist in making decisions and/or facilitating responses. DECCD staff may also be temporarily reassigned to carry out specific duties.

Whenever possible, DECCD staff members should coordinate with the Division of Family & Children's Services and the Mississippi Department of Health Child Care Facilities Licensure Branch members to ensure that efforts are not duplicated in the communication with impacted county departments of services.

Any requests made during a disaster or emergency should be made through the DECCD hotline number, including those on behalf of the child care facilities, for such needs as staff, and special food or supplies. The Mississippi State University Atlas web site information may be utilized in identifying which child care facilities are impacted by the disaster or emergency and assisting in the recovery efforts. Under certain specific circumstances, special licensing policies may also need to be implemented.

After the disaster or emergency, recovery functions will be put into place. Assessment should continue periodically thereafter until DECCD determines that child care providers impacted by the disaster or emergency are able to offer families safe and healthy child care.

II. COMMAND AND CONTROL

A. Disaster Response Activation Process

- Activation of overall DECCD disaster response by the Division of Early Childhood Care & Development Director
- Considerations for activation of a disaster response:
 - Declaration of state of emergency by the President of the United States, Governor of Mississippi, or other leader(s)
 - Need for action by DECCD
- Because disasters may require immediate action, the DECCD Director or his/her designee has full authority to activate disaster functions and temporarily reassign staff as needed to carry out response functions.

B. Management Structure

DECCD will use a team structure to plan and oversee its disaster response: a *Disaster Function Team* will provide oversight, and specific disaster response tasks will be managed by *Disaster Function Team Leaders*. Regional coordination and collaboration across functions will be managed by *regional disaster teams* comprised of Mississippi Child Care Payment Program Representatives and Mississippi Department of Health local offices.

- The **DECCD Disaster Function Team Leaders** will make important decisions about emergency strategies, policies, and resources and will serve primarily as the team which assists the DECCD Director in any of the following:
 - development of new disaster responses/policies as required for a specific emergency
 - development of requests for emergency resources (funding/personnel/equipment)
 - temporary reassignment of staff as needed to cope with a disaster

On top of pure “emergency management” functions, the Disaster Function Team will consider other teams’ recommendations for new disaster functions and review the annual update of the DECCD Disaster Plan.

- DECCD Disaster Function Team will carry out specific disaster response/ recovery activities and deploy resources to meet specific needs. A team leader and co-leader or alternate team leader are designated for each disaster function and key roles are assigned to the appropriate team members in advance. Disaster function team leaders will report to the DECCD Director.
- **Regional disaster teams (“Regional Teams”)** will be used to facilitate communication and collaboration among DECCD and partner agencies at the regional level, as well as promote clear communication between regional and state levels.

C. Linkages to the Broader Disaster Response

- The Division of Early Childhood Care & Development will collaborate with other agencies on disaster response activities throughout the state. The Director of the Division of Early Childhood Care & Development and the Disaster Function Team will coordinate with the government, military, and nonprofit partners working during and in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. The DECCD Disaster Function Team Leaders are on standby to report to the Director for up to 24-hour coverage if a disaster occurs that requires support for child care providers or children in child care. DECCD's Disaster Function Team members will work alongside other agencies to identify needs and solve problems. As DECCD Disaster Function Team Leaders consider disaster response actions, they will consult with the DECCD Director.
- The DECCD Director or his/her designee will participate in any statewide emergency planning processes and make strategic decisions about coordination with other agencies.
- The DECCD Director will participate in MDHS-sponsored disaster meetings and share information about emergency management/MDHS efforts with the Disaster Function Team.

III. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

A. Regular Review and Update of Disaster Plan

The DECCD Disaster Plan will be reviewed annually. The DECCD Director will oversee the annual review of the plan, which will involve review by Disaster Function Team members (with input from partner agencies), updating of team member and partner lists as needed, and development of recommended changes for the Disaster Function Team's review. After the Disaster Function Team decides on changes, the Director will finalize the plan and distribute the revised version to DECCD staff and partners.

B. Training of DECCD Staff and Partners

- Distribution of Plan Materials – All DECCD staff will be provided with copies of the current Disaster Plan and DECCD's emergency procedures. New staff will receive the plan as part of their general orientation with the DECCD personnel representative. All DECCD staff members will also be provided with a short emergency procedures document that explains what to do in case of emergencies/disasters that take place during the workday. DECCD's key partners will be provided with copies of DECCD's disaster plan or referenced to a web site from which to view/download the plan.
- Disaster-related team lists including work and home contact information will be updated and revisions distributed to team members on a quarterly basis. Each team list will be shared only with its own team members and the DECCD Director. DECCD may choose to share Disaster Function Team contact information with key partners.
- Orientation for staff with disaster preparedness/response roles – Orientation sessions will be tagged onto existing meetings, where possible, for all disaster teams.

Training of team leaders– Team leaders may be asked to participate in emergency drills or attend meetings to discuss disaster roles or procedures.

- Disaster scenario drills – Prior to the update of the Disaster Plan each year, the teams (including partners to the extent possible) may be asked to walk through a given disaster scenario and identify the steps they would take to respond to the situation. The DECCD Director, with feedback from the Disaster Function Team, would plan and facilitate the "table-top" drills. After the drill, each disaster team would discuss the challenges it faced and how, in a real disaster, the "response" could be improved. Teams would be encouraged to use the disaster scenario drills to test their procedures and develop recommendations to improve the plan.
- For DECCD staff members (and possibly partners) tasked with disaster response roles, DECCD will explore the possibility of training that the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Human Services, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, or DECCD itself could provide.

C. Specific DECCD Preparations for Storms and Major Disasters

- *DECCD/State backup of computer systems.* MIS should ensure that regular backup processes are maintained. DECCD backs up its network and all files maintained on its LAN server every night using a tape backup system. DECCD computer applications that are part of the CCPS system (the automated system for the Child Care Certificate Program) are backed up according to state procedures and stored in a remote location.
- *Inventory of staff information.* DECCD may, as part of its disaster plan or team list update process, ask staff each year to volunteer information to help DECCD's Disaster Function Team quickly develop solutions in emergencies. For example, staff could be asked if they have four-wheel drive vehicles, live within five or 10 miles of the office, speak a foreign language, or have other resources or attributes that could be useful in an emergency.
- *Quick review of disaster roles and processes.* If the Division of Early Childhood Care & Development is alerted to the possibility of an impending disaster, the Disaster Function Team should put their staff on alert, ask them to review their disaster plans, be sure they have contact lists for their disaster function and regional teams, identify steps they might take to respond to the specific scenario, and contact partners to walk through how they might work together to respond to the disaster.
- *Actions to prepare DECCD offices.* The Disaster Function Team should encourage DECCD staff to take simple steps to reduce the risk of injury (e.g., if an emergency occurs while staff are in the office) or damage to DECCD property. The Disaster Function Team will be responsible for stocking and continually restocking the office with minimal materials and supplies that DECCD should have on hand during an emergency. Disaster function team leaders should also gather information they may need to respond to the emergency.
- *Communications to child care providers prior to disasters.*
 - Each year, DECCD will provide copies or make available via the web site materials for all regulated child care centers and homes in the state regarding emergency preparedness, safe response to disasters, and emergency contacts.

The DECCD will maintain information on its web site about how child care providers can prepare for emergencies and develop their own emergency/disaster plans.

IV. DISASTER FUNCTIONS

The Division of Early Childhood Care & Development could undertake the following disaster functions in order to fulfill the Office’s role in supporting child care providers and providing families with safe and healthy alternatives for child care during and after disasters or emergencies.

A. Assistance with Relocation of Children Off-Site

“Relocation” (also known as “off-site evacuation”) refers to a child care provider’s movement of children away from regulated child care facilities to a safer location during an emergency.

DECCD does not have the authority to require child care providers to relocate children, but will assist providers, parents, and emergency personnel as needed. DECCD assumes that child care providers will have a plan for relocating children as part of their emergency procedures, per the Mississippi Department of Health Rules and Regulations for Governing Child Care Facilities. DECCD recommends that providers designate in advance the site where children would be relocated, periodically notify parents of this relocation site, and plan for safely transporting the children. Providers are expected to follow instructions from local authorities regarding when to relocate children.

DECCD’s role in case of relocation will be to serve as a central point of contact to:

- ensure that emergency personnel who may be activating the evacuation/relocation have accurate information so that they can find all the providers in the area
- ensure that all providers in the area being relocated by local authorities are aware of evacuation
- inform providers, as needed, of sites designated by local authorities where they might relocate
- obtain information as to where evacuating providers are relocating and when they leave (to relay to parents or emergency personnel as needed)
- remind providers who are relocating children of safe transportation procedures so that there is the safe accounting for every child
- inform local agencies and/or local child care resource and referral agencies of providers who are relocating and whether they need assistance
- enlist local agencies and/or local child care resource and referral agencies in contacting providers or parents as needed, or in helping to transport children as needed

Before a Disaster --

- a) If possible, Regional Managers will obtain a list from Mississippi Department of Health Child Care Facilities Licensure Branch of locations designated by local authorities in advance as possible relocation/evacuation sites where affected children in child care arrangements could be taken.

- b) The DECCD Director and Disaster Function Team members will work to make key information available.

During Disaster – Steps to Implement a Special Response

- a) DECCD will activate the relocation function to assist child care facilities once it is learned that local authorities are requiring public schools in an area to be evacuated, or that individual child care providers may face health/safety concerns due to the emergency. Emergency Management Team members work to determine which roles DECCD may play in offering guidance to providers or giving information to parents during relocation.
- b) DECCD's Director would work with the state emergency management personnel, the MDHS Director, Mississippi Department of Health Child Care Facilities Licensing Branch, and other staff as needed to collect information about the nature of the threat, the geographic area involved, child care providers that may be at risk, and the number of children and adults who should be relocated. If time allows, providers in the affected area could be polled to determine whether they have child seats/vehicles that could be used to transport children and adults to safety.
- c) Child care providers in the threatened area(s) would be alerted about the relocation and told what key supplies and child records to gather. DECCD staff will determine whether state or local emergency personnel are contacting child care facilities. If so, DECCD will ensure that emergency personnel have the latest information on location of child care facilities, and find out where emergency personnel are directing facilities to relocate. DECCD and partners could then assist providers in locating transportation, if needed. If emergency personnel are not contacting facilities, DECCD will find out from state or local emergency personnel where providers could relocate, if needed. DECCD will enlist partners (such as the local Child Care Resource and Referral agency) to assist in calling child care facilities to alert them of the relocation, and to share information from emergency personnel on relocation sites. DECCD and partners could also assist providers in locating transportation, if needed.
- d) To the extent possible, DECCD staff or partners would work with child care providers throughout the relocation to coordinate records on the location and status of children/adults who were evacuated. Information would be made available to parents as quickly as possible concerning where their children are and how/when the parents could pick up their children. DECCD will keep local emergency personnel informed of providers who have relocated with the affected children. Strict procedures would be established to make sure that children are released only to adults who have been authorized by each child's parent/ guardian and that the names/contact information of these authorized persons is recorded and taken to the relocation/evacuation site.
- e) Depending on the nature of the relocation, DECCD staff may work with the Mississippi Department of Mental Health to offer mental health services to children who might have been traumatized by the evacuation.

B. Assessment of Child Care Providers' Damages and Needs

Identify child care facilities affected by the disaster/ the extent of the damage.

Before a Disaster --

The DECCD Director and Disaster Function Team Leaders will clarify which roles team members may be likely to assume in assessing the needs/damages of child care centers and homes.

Following Disaster -- Steps to Implement Special Response

- a) The DECCD Director decides to activate the needs assessment function and determines whether, given the disaster scenario, regional partners or Jackson DECCD staff should take the lead.
- b) If the DECCD regional partners are given the lead role...
 - At the direction of their supervisors, regional partners will use a survey to gather whatever information they can about licensed child care providers in their area.
 - With the help of local agencies if needed, DECCD regional partners give information they gather to the DECCD Division of Early Childhood Care & Development and indicate which child care programs may require additional follow-up. The DECCD staff ensures that the Mississippi Department of Health Child Care Facilities Licensure Branch office has up-to-date information. (Note: The DECCD Director will establish how frequently information should be reported.)
- c) If the Jackson DECCD staff is given the lead role...
 - A team in Jackson conducts the initial survey of child care programs in affected area(s) by making phone calls to child care providers.
 - The Disaster Function Team Leaders identify child care programs for which information is incomplete and asks Mississippi Department of Health Child Care Facilities Licensure Branch and the Mississippi Child Care Payment Program Representatives to fill in the missing information.
 - As requested by their supervisors, Mississippi Child Care Payment Program Representatives or the Mississippi Department of Health Child Care Facilities Licensure Branch track down as much information as they can (e.g., visiting programs that could not be reached by phone) to fill in the missing information.

- d) The designated Disaster Function Team member(s) uses a database or spreadsheet to update the status of affected programs as the information from various sources is consolidated.
- e) The Disaster Function Team Leaders share the data gathered through the needs assessment with the DECCD Director. The DECCD Director uses this information to help determine what types of disaster responses may be needed.
- f) Assessments should be continued or repeated periodically until most, if not all, child care providers have resumed normal operations. The Division of Early Childhood Care & Development might call on partners to help with follow-up efforts.

C. Facilitating the Development of Temporary Child Care

Work with partners to ensure that healthy and safe child care arrangements are accessible to meet the needs of children and parents.

Definition of “temporary child care” for the purposes of this plan: organized supervision of unrelated children that may ordinarily be subject to child care licensure, but due to the severity of a disaster, may be allowed to operate without a license for a limited amount of time. Temporary child care arrangements would be allowed to protect the health and safety of children, as well as promote families’ efforts to recover from the disaster.

As a special emergency preparedness activity, the Disaster Function Team works with partners to make them aware of conditions under which temporary child care may be allowed and encouraged:

- 1) existing licensed child care providers are temporarily or permanently unable to continue providing services (i.e., overall supply of child care in the community is no longer sufficient, as determined through the needs assessment/other sources);
- 2) families need child care while they are seeking disaster assistance or living in temporary housing/shelters so they can focus on recovering from the disaster and their children can get special attention; and/or
- 3) Emergency workers with young children need child care to be able to report for duty.

Following Disaster -- Steps to Implement Special Response

- a) The DECCD Director, or at the Director's request, the entire Disaster Function Team decides whether temporary child care arrangements are needed to supplement existing capacity or make child care more easily accessible to families affected by the disaster or assisting with the relief effort. If temporary child care arrangements are needed, the Director determines the appropriate scope of DECCD involvement.
- b) Using information on family needs gathered with the help of Disaster Function Team members, the Director works with the Mississippi Department of Health Child Care Facilities Licensure Branch to determine what kind of temporary child care arrangements may be allowed and encouraged. *Examples* may include:
- ad hoc child care arrangements set up at such locations as utility offices, police departments, or hospitals for the children of these employees who must work during or just after disasters, when licensed child care facilities may still be closed
 - child care in emergency shelters if shelters are expected to be open for an extended amount of time (e.g., longer than a week)
 - child care at Disaster Application Centers to provide safe supervision of children while parents work with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Small Business Administration (SBA), and other disaster relief representatives
 - care offered at temporary housing sites if no existing child care providers in the area can accommodate extra demand (or if transportation obstacles prevent access)
 - ad hoc child care arrangements set up through Head Start, 4-H, or other partners
 - use of child care arrangements that are license-exempt and would not normally serve children receiving subsidy services
- c) DECCD's Fiscal Director will determine whether funds could be made available to help local partners finance temporary care arrangements.
- d) If this disaster function is approved for the development of temporary child care arrangements, Mississippi Child Care Payment Program Representatives staff will inform providers that they must follow the "Procedures for Emergency Subsidized Child Care" detailed in the *Subsidized Child Care Services Manual* regarding the enrollment of new or temporary providers into the Subsidized Child Care Program or the temporary expansion of capacity of current subsidized child care providers. Temporary child care providers may be approved for a period of up to four months. The Mississippi Child Care Payment Program Representatives will key the change into the DECCD CCPS system.
- e) The Disaster Function Team Leaders convene team meetings and work with partners as needed to facilitate local agencies' development of temporary care arrangements. DECCD will

maintain a *limited* role in the development of temporary child care, serving primarily to communicate with partners about child care needs and resources. Once local partners are in communication with each other and understand what their parameters/possible resources are, DECCD's involvement may only need to be periodic communication to learn about the outcomes of temporary child care.

D. Continuing the Reimbursement for Subsidized Child Care

Ensure that child care providers who offer subsidized child care are reimbursed as quickly as possible.

Steps to Reestablish Function

- a) The first day of disruption, the DECCD Director calls together the Disaster Function Team Leaders. The team leaders determine the extent and estimated duration of the disruption.
- b) If the Child Care Payment System (CCPS) is down throughout the state and it is not anticipated that the system can be reestablished within two weeks, the Disaster Function Team identifies procedures for counties to follow in the interim. In the event that phone, fax, and email communications are disrupted, DECCD staff may make contact on-site if it is possible to travel.
- c) If the CCPS experiences only partial disruption the Mississippi Child Care Payment Program Representatives continue automated procedures with unaffected counties. The Disaster Function Team and Mississippi Child Care Payment Program Representatives follow the procedures for manual operation (described above) in the counties that were affected by the disaster.

E. Child Care Subsidy Emergency Procedures (“Emergency Child Care”)

Identify the needs of families currently receiving subsidy services, and implement procedures to process new applications for families needing assistance as a result of the emergency.

Following Disaster – Steps to Implement Special Response

- a) Based on information provided by DECCD staff, partners, or statewide disaster reports, the DECCD Director or the Director’s designee determines that emergency child care procedures are needed. DECCD Fiscal Director or the alternate verifies that state funding is available for emergency child care.
- b) After confirming that funding exists and obtaining permission from the DECCD Director and/or MDHS Director to activate emergency child care procedures, the Disaster Function Team Leaders (with the help of the team) notifies Mississippi Department of Health Child Care Licensure Branch and Mississippi Child Care Payment Program staff that emergency child care procedures have been activated.
- c) If shelters or Disaster Application Centers are set up following the disaster, the Mississippi Department of Health Child Care Licensure Branch and Mississippi Child Care Payment Program Representatives are encouraged to go on-site to inform and enroll families in emergency child care. (Note that emergency child care may be offered elsewhere in the community.)
- d) DECCD staff will contact the Mississippi Department of Health Child Care Licensure Branch in affected areas to determine the county’s situation (needs of families, number of children needing care, etc.) and identify contact person/contact information for the each agency.
- e) The DECCD will also let all partners know who their primary contact with DECCD will be and try to funnel information through that person to the extent possible. Depending on the disaster scenario, the DECCD contact person could be a Jackson-based or regional DECCD staff member.

V. GENERAL SUPPORT/DECCD ASSISTANCE WITH PARTNER-LED EFFORTS

To help DECCD address the child care needs of disaster-stricken children and families without duplicating other agencies' efforts, the DECCD has (with the input of partners) identified collaborative activities that could be carried out in a future disaster. The following are services that would generally be led by other agencies, or services that involve especially flexible responses by DECCD and therefore do not lend themselves to the step-by-step descriptions included in previous sections of this plan.

- **Assistance to parents so they know where to find child care** – Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network, local CCR&R agencies, departments of social services/other local purchasing agencies, and DECCD. As resources and communications allow, DECCD will maintain information on child care programs that are operational (including relocated, new, and temporary child care) in the disaster area. Partners may help with outreach.
- **General assistance to regulated child care providers (child care centers and family child care homes)** – Mississippi Department of Health Child Care Licensure Branch agents; local CCR&Rs, DECCD; and (for school-age care programs) 4-H Youth Development. Needs and agency roles will vary depending on the disaster.
- **General assistance to license-exempt child care providers (including temporary care arrangements)** – DECCD; local CCR&Rs; 4-H Youth Development. Needs and agency roles will vary depending on the disaster.
- **Efforts to help children and their providers cope with disaster-related stresses** – the Department of Mental Health and the Cooperative Extension Service, in conjunction with local CCR&Rs, the MS CCR&R Network, Mississippi Department of Health Child Care Licensure Branch agents, and DECCD staff. DMH and the Cooperative Extension Service could play the lead roles. Agencies that work with parents and providers (CCR&Rs, and DECCD staff) could help children, families, and child care providers access these services and materials.

Partners may want to clarify their roles after a disaster strikes. Because disasters are inherently unpredictable, DECCD and partners may need to modify functions and roles after the disaster event.