

**APPENDIX H
MISSISSIPPI**

**Survey Results on the Status of State Implementation Efforts
October 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003**



Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care: Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance for Low-Income Families in the South

**Survey on the Status of Implementation Efforts
Current Report Period: October 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003**

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Goal 1 - Federal, State, Local and Private Funds Should Be Sufficient to Meet 100% of Need for Direct Child Care Assistance, Based on Initial Eligibility Levels at 85% of the State Median Income. Redetermination Levels Should Allow Families to Retain Child Care Assistance Until They Reach 100% of State Median Income.

(Action Step 1.1) - Educate federal and state policymakers on the need for action.

2003 Response:

In addition to the Governor Interagency Coordination Council, staff from Columbia University has been contracted to conduct an early childhood needs assessment for MS. The needs assessment will be presented to the legislature in the 2004 session.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

The Governor has created an Interagency Coordinating Council to address early childhood issues, including education efforts by members and their respective agencies. This Council has addressed these issues and presented a report to the legislature for information purposes with recommendations for actions.

(Action Step 1.2) - Educate the business community on the need for leadership in achieving state, federal and community resources to meet 100% of need.

2003 Response:

OCY has been successful in partnering with State Institutions, local municipalities, and county government. OCY continues to seek out partners to access all available Federal Matching Funds.

2002 Response:

OCY continues to seek out partners to access all available funds for child care including drawing down 100% of MS's Federal Matching Allotment.

2001 Response:

OCY has established and continues to seek out partners in our efforts to access all available funds for child care, including drawing down 100% of MS's Federal Matching allotment.

(Action Step 1.3) - Increase federal funding for the Child Care and Development Fund to fulfill current policy allowing federal matching funds for child care assistance up to 85% of the state median income.

2003 Response:

Federal funding has not been increased and only a limited number of families in the 85% of the State Median Income are receiving child care assistance.

2002 Response:

Child care assistance is available up to 85% of the State Median Income.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 1.4) - Increase state funding to provide child care subsidies to all eligible families who seek child care assistance.

2003 Response:

MDHS/OCY has not received the maximum State dollars to access 100% of the CCDF federal matching allocation.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

The MDHS/OCY has requested additional state funds to enable us to access all matching federal funds, which would provide services to many families now on the waiting list. To date, OCY has not received sufficient state funding to access 100% of our CCDF federal matching allocation.

(Action Step 1.5) - Mobilize federal, state and community resources in support of families who need child care assistance.

2003 Response:

Recently the Barksdale Reading Institute was designated as the agency to receive private donated funds for MS CCDF match. A portion of funds expended by the Institute for child care services are utilized for CCDF match.

2002 Response:

OCY has established and continues to seek out partners in our efforts to access all available funds for child care. An example would be OCY'S partnership with Head Start for extended day child care services in an effort to meet the needs of working parents.

2001 Response:

OCY has established partnerships with a municipality and a private business to access additional federal matching funds. We are in the process of establishing a designated entity to receive donated funds which will enable us to access even more of the funds which are available to Mississippi. OCY has established and continues to seek out partners in our efforts to access all available funds for child care. An example would be OCY'S partnership with Head Start for extended day child care services in an effort to meet the needs of working parents.

Goal 2: States and Communities Should Broaden Their Child Care Eligibility and Subsidy Policies to Meet the Economic, Work and Education Needs of Families

(Action Step 2.1) - Establish co-payments not to exceed 10% of gross family income.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Currently there are no established co-payment fees that exceed 10% of gross family income.

(Action Step 2.2) - Provide child care assistance to students who qualify under the income guidelines.

2003 Response:

Child care assistance is provided for full-time students, without regard to income.

2002 Response:

Full-time child care is provided for full-time students who are eligible without regard to income.

2001 Response:

Full-time child care is provided for full-time students who are income-eligible.

(Action Step 2.3) - Explore broad use of income exemptions to address affordability of child care.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

This is currently being implemented, such as SSI benefits, TANF money payments, grants or student loans, and non-court-ordered child support.

(Action Step 2.4) - Eliminate asset testing (e.g. automobile or savings account) from criteria for child care assistance.

2003 Response:

Asset testing is not required. The size of the family household and the gross income are considered.

2002 Response:

Asset testing is not required. Only the size of the family and the gross income are considered.

2001 Response:

Asset testing is not required. Only gross income is considered.

(Action Step 2.5) - Index income eligibility levels for inflation.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No flexibility regarding the index income eligibility levels for inflation was allowed.

2001 Response:

N/A

Goal 3: Outreach Initiatives Should Be Designed and Aggressively Implemented to Assure That Families Have Accessible and Easy-To-Understand Information on Child Care Assistance and Are Provided Assistance in Applying.

(Action Step 3.1) - Provide information on child care subsidies through multiple sources, venues and the media.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

This is currently being accomplished through promotional radio spots, media conferences, and public workshops. The child care licensure mailing list is utilized to send information through the mail as well as routine mailings to all providers who participate in the Child Care Certificate Program. OCY also sponsors a toll-free Resource and Referral Child Care statewide hotline.

(Action Step 3.2) - Ensure that information is accurate, family friendly, employer friendly, culturally sensitive and provided in multiple languages, as appropriate.

2003 Response:

Early childhood consumer education information has been developed and distributed at a low-literacy level to ensure that it is easily understood.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Programmatic literature and early childhood consumer education has been developed at low-literacy levels to ensure that it can be easily understood.

(Action Step 3.3) - Present information in a manner that would remove the stigma associated with receiving subsidies.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change, except that in addition, MDHS utilizes colleges, media, Resource and Referral Agencies, and other agencies to disseminate information.

2001 Response:

The child care certificate program and early childhood educational information is made available through nine Designated Agents across the state. These nine Designated Agents administer comprehensive community economic development programs in addition to child care. The Child Care Certificate Program is the only government-subsidized assistance program they administer.

(Action Step 3.4) - Provide literature and assistance to help parents make informed provider choices.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

Consumer education information on early childhood development and quality child care is provided to assist parents to make informed decision in evaluating quality, licensed child care centers and family child care homes. Parents are provided a **Child Care Parental Monitoring Guide** to assist them in evaluating child care services.

2001 Response:

Consumer information on early childhood development and quality child care is provided to assist parents in evaluating quality, licensed child care centers and family child care homes.

(Action Step 3.5) - Coordinate ongoing and strategic outreach activities among common organizations and providers.

2003 Response:

Currently, outreach activities are being implemented statewide through partnership sub grants, public forums, media activities, and public announcements.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Currently outreach activities are being implemented statewide through partnership sub grants, public forums, and media activities.

(Action Step 3.6) - Offer cross-training and information to providers, community organizations, faith organizations, and state agencies to inform them about child care assistance programs and how to assist families in filing applications.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Applications and technical assistance is provided by the state lead agency through the Resource and Referral hotline, the nine OCY Designated Agents, and through county MDHS offices.

Goal 4: The Child Care Application and Redetermination Processes Should Be Uncomplicated and Family Friendly.

(Action Step 4.1) - Simplify applications for child care assistance.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

The application process has been simplified to include only information required for determining eligibility for the program and to meet state and federal reporting requirements.

(Action Step 4.2) - Allow filing by mail, phone, fax or internet.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Applications may be submitted by mail. However, OCY does not have a statewide, automated child care system in place which would allow applications to be submitted by email or phone.

(Action Step 4.3) - Minimize requests for documentation at initial application and utilize documents already on file.

2003 Response:

If a change in status occurs, OCY requires current information in determining eligibility.

2002 Response:

The MDHS (OCY) requires nine Designated Agents to use information already on file for families when applying or reapplying for child care services for instance, birth certificates and current Immunization Records.

2001 Response:

The OCY requires nine Designated Agents to use information already on file for families when applying or reapplying for child care services.

(Action Step 4.4) - Provide applications at multiple sites.

2003 Response:

The MDHS (OCY) Designated Agents make applications available by mail and at satellite offices within their service areas for easy access across the state.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

The OCY Designated Agents make applications available at multiple sites within their service areas for easy access across the state.

(Action Step 4.5) - Offer non-conventional hours of operation for eligibility offices and provide toll-free phone lines to include evening and weekend hours.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Based upon volume and specific program schedules, hours are extended for eligibility determination as needed. This is specifically noted during the roll-over process.

(Action Step 4.6) - Explore presumptive eligibility or otherwise provide immediate eligibility contingent upon final approval.

2003 Response:

Immediate eligibility is not provided, or retroactive certificates written.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Immediate eligibility is not provided but retroactive certificates are written based upon client's service eligibility date.

(Action Step 4.7) - Eliminate requirements for a face-to-face interview both for initial application and for redetermination.

2003 Response:

A face-to-face interview is not required for initial application or for redetermination.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

This has been accomplished.

(Action Step 4.8) - Provide consultation on making appropriate choices when excessive requests for provider changes are filed.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

After the second request for change in providers, the nine Designated Agents council parents on this issue.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 4.9) - Establish a 12-month redetermination period where there are no changes in income or job status.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Currently there is a six-month redetermination period.

(Action Step 4.10) - Continue eligibility for full subsidy for 12 weeks if family loses employment but can document that a job search is underway.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

Eligibility is continued for a 30 day period.

2001 Response:

Currently child care is not provided for job search.

Goal 5: Establish a Coordinated, Seamless Eligibility System So That Funding Sources Are Invisible to Families and Support Continuity of Child Care.

(Action Step 5.1) - Eliminate the need for families to reapply when eligibility categories change by automatically searching to exhaust all eligibility categories before closing cases.

2003 Response:

Cases are closed if families become ineligible, such as, lack of funding, child ages out, parents no longer working, or income exceed the 85% of the State Median Income.

2002 Response:

No change. Additionally, parents are required to provide additional information when transferring from TANF to other child care funding sources.

2001 Response:

This is currently OCY policy. Cases are only closed if families become ineligible, such as, child ages out, parent no longer working, or income exceeds 85th percent of the State Median Income.

(Action Step 5.2) - Explore the potential for policy and procedural changes to achieve linkages with or combined applications for child care assistance, Head Start, Pre-K and Title I.

2003 Response:

This action step has not been accomplished.

2002 Response:

This is being accomplished with Head Start only.

2001 Response:

This is currently being accomplished with Head Start and we are exploring the possibility of coordinating services with Pre-K and Title 1.

(Action Step 5.3) - Continue eligibility in programs with multiple funding sources to assure continuity of care in the event that eligibility has expired or terminated in one program.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Certificates are written for a twelve-month period irrespective of funding sources.

(Action Step 5.4) - Work collaboratively with all public and private programs and funding sources to assure that children receive stable and consistent early child care services.

2003 Response:

This is currently being done. The Office for Children and Youth is working to keep eligibility requirements consistent with the TANF Child Care Program. Also, OCY has developed a Child Care System to avoid a break-in-service for those children and families moving from transitional child care to other eligibility categories.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

This is currently being done. The Office for Children and Youth is working to keep eligibility requirements consistent with Head Start, USDA Foods, and TANF Child Care Programs. Also, OCY has developed a Child Care System to avoid a break-in-service for those children and families moving from one eligibility category to another.

Goal 6: Establish Customer Service Outcome Goals and Set Standards to Ensure that All Families are Treated With Dignity and Respect and Are Served in an Efficient Manner.

(Action Step 6.1) - Provide professional and well-trained eligibility staff who are culturally and linguistically sensitive.

2003 Response:

This is an ongoing process.

2002 Response:

This is being accomplished.

2001 Response:

This is currently being done to the extent which limited funding will allow.

(Action Step 6.2) - Facilitate quick eligibility determination through reasonable caseloads and/or administrative structure.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

This is currently being done to the extent which limited funding will allow.

(Action Step 6.3)- Conduct periodic, independent and thorough consumer satisfaction assessments, assuring the confidentiality of information collected.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

This has not been accomplished.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 6.4) - Provide adequate support for child care resource and referral services.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

These services are offered by the state lead agency.

Goal 7: Design the Subsidy System So That Rate Structures Assure That Families Receiving Child Care Assistance Have Access to All Types of Child Care and Disallow Charges Above Established Co-Payments.

(Action Step 7.1) - States should cap reimbursement rates at no less than the 75th percentile based on a market rate survey conducted every two years that accurately reflects the price of all types of care in communities across the state.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

Providers are reimbursed at the 75th percentile unless they charge a lower rate to the general public.

2001 Response:

This is the current policy.

(Action Step 7.2) - Establish and evaluate reimbursement policies that encourage provider participation and are responsive to family needs.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

Reimbursements are evaluated only when fair market rate surveys are done.

2001 Response:

This is accomplished on a routine basis.

(Action Step 7.3) - Prohibit providers from charging above the established co-payments.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

Because of the economy of the State, this has not been an issue.

2001 Response:

N/A

Goal 8: Create Partnerships With Employers to Expand Child Care Assistance for Working Families.

(Action Step 8.1) - Educate employers about the bottom line benefits associated with public and private child care assistance.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

This is currently being done to the extent which limited funding will allow.

(Action Step 8.2) - Enlist business leaders to champion the involvement of southern businesses and to serve as mentors to other businesses.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

This has not been accomplished.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 8.3) - Provide information to employers on all available tax benefits related to child care assistance, including deductions for donations to tax-exempt child care organizations, capital costs for constructing a child care center and establishing a pre-tax dependent care assistance plan.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

This is being done on a limited basis.

(Action Step 8.4) - Facilitate collaborative initiatives that enable employers to share ideas as well as pool their resources to address child care needs.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 8.5) - Provide matching funds or other tax or financial incentives for employers to invest in child care.

2003 Response:

This is being accomplished with one on-site employer sponsored child care center.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

This is currently being accomplished.

(Action Step 8.6) - Establish incentives for employers to create child care benefit programs for their employees or to contribute to child care purchasing pools in their state or community.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

This has not been accomplished.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 8.7) - Reduce the administrative burden on employers participating in any joint public/private child care assistance program.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

This is being done for the limited number of participating employers.

2001 Response:

This is currently being accomplished.

Goal 9: Provide Child Care Assistance to Working Families Through Federal and State Tax Laws.

(Action Step 9.1) - Make the federal child dependent care tax credit refundable.

2003 Response:

Not applicable to states.

2002 Response:

The State does not offer child dependence care tax credit.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 9.2) - Establish refundable child and dependent care tax credits in states with income taxes.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

This has not been accomplished.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 9.3) - Raise federal and state child care tax credit expense limits to accurately reflect the price of quality care.

2003 Response:

Mississippi does not have a child care tax credit expense.

2002 Response:

This has not been accomplished.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 9.4) - Index for inflation the state and federal child and dependent care tax credit income eligibility and expense limits.

2003 Response:

Mississippi does not offer an index for inflation for the state and federal child care dependent care tax credit income eligibility and expense limits.

2002 Response:

N/A

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 9.5) - Ensure that child and dependent care tax credits are clearly identified and easy to claim by filers using either the short or long form.

2003 Response:

Mississippi does not offer child and dependent care tax credits.

2002 Response:

N/A

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 9.6) - Encourage the use of effective state tax strategies to provide financial support for child care.

2003 Response:

This is a recommendation that is being presented to the legislature.

2002 Response:

N/A

2001 Response:

N/A

Goal 10: States Should Have Effective, Coordinated Systems to Guide Child Care and Early Childhood Policy Decisions and Direct Use of Resources.

(Action Step 10.1) - Facilitate greater coordination in eligibility policies across child care and early childhood education programs at state and local levels.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

This is being done on a limited basis.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 10.2) - All southern states and the District of Columbia should participate in a collaborative effort to develop and collect common data elements across states.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

This is currently being accomplished.