

**Southern Institute on Children and Families  
Southern Regional Action Plan to Improve the Quality of Early Care and Education  
2001-2004 State Implementation Status Report**

Action Step	Action Step Completed 1/1/2001-6/30/2004	Action Taken Before 1/2001	Action Taken 1/1/2001 – 6/30/2004	No Action Taken After 1/1/2001	Negative Action Taken 1/1/2001 – 6/30/2003	Negative Action Taken 7/1/2003 – 6/30/2004
<b>Goal 1 – All children and families will have the benefit of a quality, comprehensive and coordinated early care and education system.</b>						
1.1 Public policy at the federal, state and local level will require planning and coordination across major systems to improve quality, including Head Start, state pre-kindergarten, subsidized child care and licensing.	<b>AR (State level)</b> , DC, GA (State level), <b>KY (State level)</b> , <b>MD (State level)</b> , <b>MO (State and local level)</b> , <b>NC (State and local level)</b> , SC (State and local level), TX (State and local level), <b>VA (State level)</b> , WV (State and local level)	OK	AL, DE, FL, MS, OK	LA		
1.2 Public policy at the federal, state and local level will support families by linking early care and education programs to health coverage, physical and mental health care, nutrition, economic support, transportation and parenting education services.	DC	AR, DC, GA, KY, MD, MO, NC, SC, TX, VA, WV	AL, AR, DE, DC, FL, GA, KY, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA, WV	LA		
1.3 Federal, state and local policies and systems will ensure coordinated, seamless transitions for children moving among early care and education programs and into kindergarten.	<b>NC (State level)</b> , <b>SC (State level)</b> , WV (State and local level)	AR, DC, GA, KY, MD, MS, MO, TX, VA	AL, AR, DE, DC, FL, GA, KY, MD, MS, MO, TX, VA	LA, OK		
<b>Goal 2 – Rigorous licensing requirements and/or regulatory processes will be enacted to ensure that children are adequately protected in all early care and education settings.</b>						
2.1 States will establish staff-child ratios and maximum group sizes for centers and homes that meet NAEYC <sup>i</sup> , NAFCC <sup>ii</sup> , APHA <sup>iii</sup> or AAP <sup>iv</sup> national standards.	<b>DC</b>	AL, GA, KY, MD, NC, TX, WV	AL, AR, DE, DC, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MO, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA, WV	(MS did not answer for licensing agency)		
2.2 States will develop and enforce health, fire and safety requirements for all early care and education settings that reflect standards set forth by the APHA and the AAP.	<b>MO</b>	DC, NC, OK, TX	AL, AR, DE, DC, FL, GA, KY, MD, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA, WV	LA (MS did not answer for licensing agency)		TX

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2.3 State law will require strict enforcement of licensing requirements. States will use a range of sanctions that will include license revocation when a provider is unable or unwilling to meet requirements.	<b>AL, AR, DE, DC, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MO, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA, WV</b>		GA, MD, MO, NC, SC	(MS did not answer for licensing agency)		
2.4 States will conduct at least three unannounced monitoring visits per year to verify compliance with requirements.	<b>AR, OK</b>	AL, DC, GA, KY, LA, MD, MO, NC, SC, TX, VA, WV	AL, DE, DC, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MO, NC, SC, TX, VA, WV	(MS did not answer for licensing agency)		
2.5 States will require that child care providers, early childhood teachers and others who have regular access to children in early childhood settings have federal and state background checks using fingerprinting and screening against the state child abuse registry.	AL, <b>AR, DE, DC, MD, SC</b>	AL, GA, KY, LA, MO, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA, WV	FL, GA, KY, LA, MO, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA, WV	(MS did not answer for licensing agency)		WV
2.6 States will ensure that all licensing and early care and education staff are educated in recognizing signs of child abuse and are trained in the state's child abuse reporting laws.	<b>AR, KY, MD, NC, TX, VA</b>	AL, DC, GA, MO, OK, SC, TX, WV	AL, DE, DC, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, SC, WV	LA (MS did not answer for licensing agency)		
2.7 States will have a well-trained regulatory workforce with average caseloads between 50 and 75 per staff person <sup>v</sup> and a system capable of providing technical assistance.	AL, <b>AR, VA</b>	AL, DC, KY, MD, MO, NC, OK, VA, WV	GA, KY, MD, MO, NC, OK, SC, WV	DE, FL, LA, TX (MS did not answer for licensing agency)	MD, SC	DC
2.8 States will ensure parental right of access to their child's early care and education facilities.	<b>AL, AR, DE, GA, KY, LA, MD, NC, OK, TX, VA, WV</b>	MO, SC, VA, WV	DC, FL, MO, SC	(MS did not answer for licensing agency)		
<b>Goal 3 – States will support development of quality early care and education programs for all children.</b>						
3.1 States will provide all early care and education providers with resources to help them improve the quality of care and education they deliver, such as technical assistance and training, accreditation support, grants to meet health and safety requirements and grants to support family child care home networks.	GA, <b>MS, MO</b>	AL, AR, DC, GA, KY, LA, MD, MO, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA, WV	AL, AR, DE, DC, FL, KY, LA, MD, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA, WV		MD	

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3.2 States will have Child Care Resource and Referral networks to deliver quality early care and education enhancement support services to providers, such as outreach, training and technical assistance.	<i>AL, DE, GA, KY, NC, WV</i>	AR, DC, LA, MD, MS, MO, OK, SC, TX, VA	AR, FL, GA, LA, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA			
3.3 States will implement a rating system to recognize providers for incremental levels of quality.	AR, <i>DC, FL, KY, MD, NC, OK, SC, TX</i>	LA, MO, WV	DE, GA, LA, MO, VA, WV	AL, MS		
3.4 States will implement tax and other incentives to develop and expand early care and education programs that demonstrate a higher level of quality.	<i>AR, OK</i>	DC, GA, KY, MO, OK, SC	DC, FL, GA, KY, MO, SC, VA	AL, DE, LA, MD, MS, NC, TX, WV		
3.5 States will use a formal mechanism to seek parental input in program evaluations and will use that information in making policy decisions related to early care and education programs.	AR	AL, AR, GA, KY, MD, MS, MO, NC, SC, TX, VA	AL, DE, DC, FL, GA, KY, MD, MS, MO, OK, SC, TX, VA, WV	NC, LA		
3.6 States will identify and support the use of effective research based curricula.	<i>AR, FL, KY, MO, NC, SC, TX</i>	MD, NC, TX	DE, DC, GA, KY, MD, MS, NC, OK, TX, WV	AL, LA, VA		
<b>Goal 4 – Staff in early care and education settings will be appropriately credentialed and adequately compensated.</b>						
4.1 States will maintain a professional development system that ensures, at a minimum, providers in early care and education settings meet standards set forth by NAEYC, NAFCC, APHA or AAP.		AL, DC, KY, MD, MO, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA	AL, AR, DE, DC, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MO, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA, WV	(MS did not answer for licensing agency)		GA
4.2 States will require approved ongoing annual professional development for staff, appropriate to their education levels and job requirements, as specified in APHA and AAP. States will provide and implement a professional development system that verifies trainers, approves training and tracks the training of participants.	DE	AL, AR, DC, KY, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA	AL, AR, DC, FL, GA, KY, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA, WV	LA		

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4.3 The federal government and states will provide universally available, comprehensive scholarships to early care and education providers who are pursuing a CDA or two- or four-year degree in child development, early childhood education, early childhood special education or child care administration. Scholarships will address the costs of tuition, fees and books and will support components such as travel costs, paid release time and child care.	<i>MO, NC, OK</i>	AL, AR, DC, GA, KY, MD, SC, TX, VA, WV	AL, AR, DE, DC, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, SC, TX, VA, WV		MD, OK	
4.4 States will work with educational institutions to ensure that coursework is accessible in order to meet the early care and education workforce training needs, such as courses offered at night, on weekends, in accelerated formats, on-line and in various languages. Courses will address the varying educational levels of the workforce.	<i>KY</i>	AL, AR, DC, GA, MD, MO, NC, SC, TX	AL, AR, DE, DC, FL, GA, LA, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, TX, WV	VA		
4.5 The federal government and states will provide financial incentives that reward completion of approved levels of professional development.	AL, DC, FL, <i>GA, KY, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC</i>	DC, MD, MO, SC	AR, DE, DC, MO, SC, TX	LA, VA, WV		
4.6 The federal government and states will provide college loan forgiveness programs for persons earning an approved degree who work for a specified period of time in early care and education programs.	<i>MS, NC</i>	TX	AR, DC, GA, MS, SC, TX	AL (AL responded that this action is beyond the authority of the Department), DE, FL, KY, LA, MD, MO, OK, VA, WV		
4.7 States will work toward a system whereby staff with approved degrees or credentials will receive employment benefits and compensation at comparable levels to the state's public education system.	<i>NC</i>	DC, MD, MO	AR, DC, KY, MD, NC, OK, SC, WV	AL, DE, FL, GA, LA, MS, MO, TX, VA		
4.8 States will ensure meaningful agreements and processes to enable the transfer of credits between and among approved two- and four-year degree programs.	DE, GA, KY, MD, TX	DC, KY, MD, MO, NC, SC, TX, VA, WV	AL, AR, DC, FL, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, VA, WV	LA		

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<b>Goal 5 – Families will have the information to make well-informed decisions about the quality of their child’s care and education and to be actively involved in their child’s care and education.</b>						
5.1 States will support Child Care Resource and Referral networks that are easily accessible to parents and that provide information on child development, quality indicators, provider choices, vacancies and linkages to additional information.	<b>AL, KY, MO, NC, WV</b>	AR, DC, GA, LA, MD, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA	AR, DE, DC, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA		MD	
5.2 States will support early care and education providers in promoting parental involvement and in seeking parental input into the development and improvement of their programs.	<b>AR, GA, KY, MD, OK, WV</b>	AR, DC, MO, NC, SC, TX, VA	DE, DC, FL, MO, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA	AL, LA (MS did not answer for Education)		
<b>Goal 6 – Quality early care and education programs will be financially accessible to all children.</b>						
6.1 Federal and state governments will adjust the child care tax credit expense limits to accurately reflect the cost of quality care.				AL (AL responded that this action is beyond the authority of the Department), AR, DE, DC, GA, KY, LA, NC, OK, SC, VA  MD, MS, MO & WV do not have a child care tax credit.  FL & TX do not have a state income tax.		
6.2 States with income taxes will establish refundable child and dependent care tax credits.	<b>AR</b>	DC, NC, SC, VA	KY, MO, NC, SC, VA	AL (AL responded that this action is beyond the authority of the Department), DE, GA, LA, MD, MS, OK, WV  FL & TX do not have a state income tax.		

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6.3 State and federal child and dependent care tax credit income-eligibility and expense limits will be indexed for inflation.			AR	AL, DE, DC, GA, KY, LA, NC, OK, SC, VA  MD, MS, MO & WV do not have a child care tax credit.  FL & TX do not have a state income tax.		
6.4 Federal, state, local and private funds will be sufficient to meet 100% of the need for direct early care and education financial aid, based on initial eligibility levels at 85% of the state median income. Federal law will allow and states will implement redetermination policies that allow families to retain early care and education financial aid until they reach 100% of the state median income.		AL, MD, NC, TX	AL, DC, FL, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, TX, VA	AR, DE, KY, LA, WV	SC	GA, OK
6.5 Federal and state governments should develop policies and systems to assure families receiving financial aid pay no more than 10% of their gross income for early care and education.	<i>AL, DC, GA, KY, MS, MO, NC, SC, VA, WV</i>	AR, MD	AR, FL, GA, MD, OK, VA	DE, LA, TX	WV	
6.6 States will set payment rates at no less than the 75 <sup>th</sup> percentile based on a market rate survey conducted every two years for each level and type of care. Annual inflation adjustments to payment rates will be made between market surveys.	<b>AR, SC</b>	AL, DC, GA, KY, MD, MO, NC, OK, VA, WV	AL, DE, FL, GA, KY, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, VA, WV	LA, TX	DC, WV	
6.7 States will implement payments to providers commensurate with the quality-rating level achieved by the early care and education programs.	<b>DC, FL, KY, MD, NC, OK, SC, TX</b>	MO, WV	AR, GA, MS, MO, SC, VA, WV	AL, DE, LA		

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6.8 States will examine the financing of quality early care and education in their state and work toward providing payment rates that recognize the cost commensurate with the standards set forth in this action plan.		DC, KY, MD	AR, DC, FL, GA, KY, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, VA	AL, DE, LA, TX, WV		
6.9 States will design and aggressively implement outreach initiatives to provide families with easy-to-understand early care and education financial aid information and application assistance.	AR, NC	AL, DC, GA, KY, MD, MO, NC, TX, VA	AL, DC, FL, GA, KY, MD, MS, MO, OK, TX, VA	DE, LA, SC, WV		
<b>Goal 7 – States will ensure that accountability is built into all systems, programs and activities undertaken to achieve the goals of this action plan.</b>						
7.1 States will convene appropriate stakeholders to develop written strategic plans for improving the quality of early care and education programs in the state. These plans will include key goals, quantifiable measures of progress and program outcomes for all quality enhancement activities.	AR, <b>GA, KY</b> , MD, MS, NC, SC	AR, DC, MO, NC, VA	AL, DE, DC, FL, GA, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA, WV	LA		
7.2 States will collect and analyze data and produce written annual reports on progress toward identified goals. Reports will be made readily available to the public.	<b>KY, MS</b>	AL, AR, DC, GA, MO, NC, OK, SC, TX	AL, AR, DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA	LA, WV		
7.3 States will use data and annual reports to make continuous policy improvements and evaluate quality enhancement activities.	AL, <b>KY, MS, NC</b>	AR, DC, MD, SC, VA	AR, DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, MS, MO, OK, SC, TX, VA	LA, WV		

**Source:** Southern Institute on Children and Families

<sup>i</sup> NAEYC – National Association for the Education of Young Children

<sup>ii</sup> NAFCC – National Association of Family Child Care

<sup>iii</sup> APHA – American Public Health Association

<sup>iv</sup> AAP – American Academy of Pediatrics

<sup>v</sup> American Public Health Association & American Academy of Pediatrics. 2002. *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance—Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs*. Washington, DC: American Public Health Association.

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