



# Southern Regional Action Plan to Improve the Quality of Early Care and Education

## Survey on the Status of Implementation Efforts

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Your State:</b>      | Missouri   |
| <b>Your Name:</b>       | Doris Hallford   |
| <b>Title:</b>           | Deputy Director  |
| <b>Name of Agency:</b>  | Missouri Department of Social Services, Children's Division              |
| <b>Mailing Address:</b> | P.O. Box 1527, Jefferson City, MO 65102                                  |
| <b>E-Mail Address:</b>  | <a href="mailto:doris.hallford@dss.mo.gov">doris.hallford@dss.mo.gov</a> |
| <b>Phone:</b>           | 573-751-6793   |

**Goal 1: All children and families will have the benefit of a quality, comprehensive and coordinated early care and education system.**

**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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

During Missouri's 2004 legislative session, a recommendation was introduced to create an Early Childhood Coordinating Board. The intent is to address children's issues from a systemic approach at the state level that will affect and impact children's success in school and life. The legislation emerged from the work of the Children's Service Commission, which included recommendations that will foster the healthy development of children so they may be successful upon entry into kindergarten. The legislation passed in May 2004 as part of a comprehensive reform of the child welfare system. Funding to establish the board has been provided by the Marion Ewing Kauffman foundation. Governor Holden will be appointing the Board members prior to leaving office in January 2005.

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services received an Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant in September 2003 from the Department of Health and Human Services Maternal and Child Health Bureau. There are three goals of the grant, which has a two year funding time line. The first goal is to establish an interagency, statewide Early Childhood Comprehensive System coalition. The second goal is to develop and promote a state plan that builds public and interagency consensus to improve early childhood developmental outcomes. The third goal is to develop a system that supports economic security and safe living environments that may foster healthy children.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Collaborative planning has continued to improve the quality of early care and education in Missouri through the venues mentioned below, e.g., the Community Partnership Process, the Early Childhood Interagency Team, and the OPEN Initiative. While the blueprint designed by the Governor's Task Force in 1997-98 has provided the framework for action throughout the past five years, state agencies and private sector partners have come together beginning in January 2001 to update planning efforts and move Missouri forward to the next level of implementation.

The Southern Institute cross state planning has been an important impetus for maintaining momentum in the state around early care and education issues. The Governor's appointment of the Director of the Department of Social Services to the Southern Institute's Task Force on Child Care reignited planning efforts. The DSS director ordered assessment and planning to be undertaken within DSS regarding early care and education and a blueprint for action was developed. Opportunity arose for Missouri to participate in the 17 state School Readiness Indicators initiative which has also proven an effective forum for interagency planning around early care and education at the executive management level. The process challenged states to identify statewide indicators for school readiness, establish an ongoing data collection process for the indicators and assess policy implications. The forum for discussing the policy implications of the indicators has been the Missouri Children's Services Commission.

The Missouri Children's Services Commission is comprised of eight state agency directors, eight legislators, two judges and ex officio members. The CSC has the statutory charge to work across state agencies to integrate services for children and to create a statewide plan for coordinated services. Discussions began in 2002 and in the spring of 2003, the Commission appointed a task force to assess the status of early care and education in the state. The charge was to bring recommendations to the commission regarding the development of a system for young children that would result in their healthy development and all children being ready to succeed in school. Specifically, the task force was asked to bring forward recommendations for public policy that would move Missouri toward a system of high quality early care and education for all children. Recommendations will be presented to the CSC in October and a final report will be issued in December. Legislation is expected to emerge for consideration during the FY 2004 legislative session.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Missouri has been fortunate to have had strong leadership and support from both state agencies and the foundation community in support of building a coordinated early childhood system. In the mid 1990's, Missouri launched a systemic reform initiative under executive order of the late Governor Mel Carnahan and with support from the Annie E. Casey, Danforth and Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundations among others. Under the leadership of the then Family Investment Trust, a public-private partnership, Missouri began to build a statewide infrastructure of community partnerships, which would assume accountability for improving results in six core areas. One of those areas was "children ready to enter school." The process was a partnership between communities and state government to effect change that would positively improve outcomes. State agencies were charged with identifying barriers, blending funding and coordinating services to achieve better results. Nearly simultaneously, the state agencies received a grant from the Danforth Foundation to support cross systems integration and planning for early care and education. From this effort, an Early Childhood Interagency Team was formed at the mid-management level, which included membership from the Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education, Social Services, Mental Health, Health and Senior Services, and the Head Start Collaboration Office.

In 1997, responding to brain development research, the late Governor Carnahan appointed an Early Childhood Commission to assess the status of early care and education in the state and make recommendations to move the field forward. As a result of the commission's work, legislation was passed in 1998 setting aside riverboat gaming proceeds for early care and education, which included monies for start up and expansion grants for child care, state funded Early Head Start, in-home supports for poor families with young children and incentives for accreditation. Monies were also set aside for state funded Pre-K. The Early Childhood interagency team became an ongoing venue for cross agency systems planning.

Additionally, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and the Danforth Foundation supported work in the state to do systemic planning around a career development system for early care and education professionals. A collaborative group of many stakeholders came together to do the joint systems planning to improve quality through

a focus on workforce development referred to in Missouri as Opportunities in a Professional Education Network (OPEN). Planning began in 1995 and progressed through the year 2000. The Missouri Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education, Health, Social Services and the Head Start Collaboration Office also provided support.

**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.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

In addition to what has been occurring in Missouri, the following initiatives have begun.

As part of the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems planning process, six focus areas are identified as having critical impact on children's development:

- 1) Reduction of disparate outcomes;
- 2) Early childhood education;
- 3) Family support;
- 4) Medical homes;
- 5) Mental health; and,
- 6) Parenting information.

As the development of a state plan for an early childhood system is pursued, each of the six focus areas will be addressed in: coordinating existing resources, identifying existing gaps; and providing recommendations to public policy makers.

In August 2003, the Office of Early Childhood became part of the newly created Children's Division within the Missouri Department of Social Services. This merger has created the opportunity to partner the best practices of early childhood programming with child abuse and neglect treatment and prevention. It also allows the Children's Division to address children's issues in a more comprehensive approach including children's physical and mental health and family supports.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Missouri continues to refine the work in this arena. The Early Childhood Task Force of the Children's Services Commission is recommending that local coordinating boards for early care and education be established legislatively and charged with the creation of comprehensive systems of care for young children and their families throughout the state. Many communities have been doing this work under the auspices of their Community Partnerships. The recommendation is to expand on this success specifically around the creation of comprehensive early care and education systems statewide.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Missouri launched state funded Early Head Start in 1999. One of only two states at the time to invest state monies in an Early Head Start partnership process, Missouri

implemented the project in such a way as to leverage the dollars invested to improve the quality of care. This was accomplished through a process of partnering family home providers and centers. Early Head Start standards, of course, apply in all settings and include the comprehensive services for which Head Start has long been noted. This investment was made possible through a set aside in the 1998 legislation that earmarked funding for comprehensive early childhood programs for low-income families.

Missouri has also been working at the state level on a comprehensive system of care for children with mental health needs, which has included a focus on very young children.

Missouri's Women, Infant and Children's program administered by Department of Health and Senior Services works closely with local Division of Family Services offices and agreements are in place that streamline eligibility across income maintenance, Medicaid, SCHIP and WIC programs. Extensive efforts have been undertaken to maximize the opportunities through WIC to enroll children in MC+, Missouri's health insurance program for children. An extensive referral network has been created among Missouri's various early childhood programs including WIC, MC+, Parents as Teachers, Head Start, Early Head Start and child care. At the community level, Missouri's community partnerships have undertaken the development of comprehensive service systems for families frequently using schools and early childhood centers as hubs.

**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.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education awards funding to local child care programs through the Missouri Preschool Project. Although the project has been in existence for several years, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education set aside part of the funding in fiscal year 2004 to support research based curriculum through Project Construct and the Parent's as Teacher's National Center. The Missouri Preschool Project targets children age 3 to 4 years and focuses on children's transition to Kindergarten. A transition plan is a requirement for funding. Many local programs in the state have instituted a kindergarten passport project which provides kindergarten teachers with background information on children's transition from preschool programs into kindergarten.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Promoting coordinated transitions for children has been addressed through the Early Childhood Interagency Team, which includes the state's major child serving agencies and the Head Start Collaboration office. In 2002, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education convened a large stakeholder group to address the issue of transition in the state.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has for a number of years asked school districts to speak to their activities around transition in the documentation that they must submit for accreditation, e.g., the Missouri School Improvement Process.

Transition historically has been an important topic at Missouri's major statewide early care and education conferences.

Educare created a "Kindergarten Passport" to help facilitate transition. The "Passport" collects information specific to each child and is presented to the kindergarten teacher at enrollment. This helps familiarize the teacher with the individual child and ease the transition for both child and teacher. The "Passport" has been replicated by numerous programs across the state.

**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.**

**2.1 States will establish staff-child ratios and maximum group sizes for centers and homes that meet NAEYC<sup>1</sup>, NAFCC<sup>2</sup>, APHA<sup>3</sup> or AAP<sup>4</sup> national standards.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

The Department of Health and Senior Services has published their rule revisions on the internet through the Missouri Secretary of State's office. There is a public comment period that is in place through December 15, 2004. The rule revision process has been ongoing for three years with the publication being the final step toward incorporating them into the state's licensing requirements. Staff to child ratio, group size, and related care are all addressed in the published rule revisions including reducing the total number of children in a home based facility when some of the children in care are under the age of two.

Many of the staff to child ratios currently in place in Missouri are in compliance with accreditation recommendations from NAEYC and NAFCC. Many of the current licensing requirements meet or exceed the recommended health, fire and safety requirements set forth by APHA and the AAP.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Department of Health and Senior Services, Bureau of Child Care is in the process of revising their administrative rules. Included in the rule revision is a requirement to set group sizes for programs serving pre-school children (ages three and four) to a maximum of 20 and for programs serving school age children (ages five and up) to a maximum of 32.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Department of Health and Senior Services, Bureau of Child Care established staff-child ratios and group sizes in group homes and center based care as follows:

| AGE                      | MAXIMUM CHILD/STAFF RATIO              | MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Birth through age two:   | 4-1                                    | 8                  |
| Age two only:            | 8-1                                    | 16                 |
| Ages three through four: | 10-1                                   | *                  |
| Ages five and up:        | 16-1                                   | *                  |
| Mixed ages of two years  | 10-1                                   | *                  |
| And up:                  | (with no more than four Two-year-olds) |                    |

\*Group homes may not exceed 20 children in their total capacity.

**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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

See 2.1

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The requirements described below continue to be applicable.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

The Department of Health and Senior Services requires an initial inspection by licensing staff at the time of application for licensure. The facility must also be inspected by their local health/sanitation and fire safety departments. After licensure, facilities are inspected by the Bureau of Child Care, local departments of health and sanitation, and fire safety on an annual basis for a total of three inspections, annually. Current licensing requirements meet or exceed the recommended health, fire, and safety requirements set forth by APHA and the AAP.

**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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Child care licensing is conducted by the Department of Health and Senior Services, Bureau of Child Care. The Bureau of Child Care continues to administer all necessary disciplinary action on licensed facilities. Actions may include: warnings of non-compliance, remedial action plans, or a recommendation for suspension and/or revocation. If the immediate safety of a child is in question, the Bureau of Child Care may immediately suspend a license.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Legislation in FY 2002 strengthened the Bureau of Child Care's ability to revoke licenses immediately in cases of immediate danger to the child.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

The Department of Health and Senior Services, Bureau of Child Care has the authority to deny, suspend, place on probation or revoke a child care license.

The least serious sanction is a letter of censure for non-compliance. Occurrences of non-compliance after a letter of censure, or more grievous circumstances, may result in license revocation. The licensee is notified of proposed revocation and is given an opportunity to request an administrative review of the proposed action within thirty days of the receipt of the notification of revocation. If the licensee requests an administrative review, their license may remain active until a final disposition is reached through the administrative hearing process.

The Department may suspend a license if there is a threat of "imminent bodily harm to the children in care." The suspension may occur simultaneously with notice of revocation. The licensee is given an opportunity to appeal the suspension within ten days of receipt or mailing of notice. Their license will remain suspended until the conclusion of the administrative review process.

At any time it is deemed necessary and/or appropriate, the prosecuting attorney of the county where a child care facility is located may file suit to oversee or prevent the operation of a child care facility for documented violations.

Additionally, in cases of "imminent bodily harm to children in the care of a child care facility," the Bureau of Child Care may file suit for the removal of children from the facility, overseeing the operation, or closing the facility.

**2.4 States will conduct at least three unannounced monitoring visits per year to verify compliance with requirements.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

There have been no changes to the current licensing requirements which include three monitoring visits per year; two from the Bureau of Child Care (one unannounced) and one sanitation visit.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The policy below remains in effect.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Child Care Licensing currently conducts two licensing visits per year, one announced and one unannounced. This is in addition to the annual health/sanitation inspection and fire/safety inspection, which may also be unannounced.

**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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

All state licensed facilities must have their employees register with the Family Care Safety Registry. The Family Care Safety Registry is a state repository of information on the background screenings of anyone who cares for children or the elderly. The information includes state screenings for child abuse/neglect activity, criminal history, listings of employee disqualification with the Department of Mental Health and Division of Aging, and a listing of sexual offenders.

Since the last report, state legislation passed in the 2004 legislative session which now requires informal family home child care providers to submit two sets of fingerprints for federal and state criminal background screenings in addition to the existing child abuse and neglect screenings. This provision is only required if an informal family home provider requests child care subsidy reimbursement. Additionally, the legislation requires all household members who are age seventeen or older to be background screened for state child abuse and neglect and state criminal history.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

A comprehensive, child protection reform bill was introduced in the 2003 Missouri legislative session that included a requirement for fingerprint screening for federal and state criminal records. The bill was vetoed, but the fingerprinting requirement will continue to be pursued by the Department of Social Services.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Licensed child care providers were required to pass both state criminal and child abuse/neglect background screenings.

In 1999 legislation passed requiring both state criminal and child abuse/neglect background screenings of registered child care providers (those providers providing care for 4 or less unrelated children).

In addition, a law was passed in the 1999 legislative session establishing the state's Family Care Safety Registry. This registry is administered by the Department of Health and Senior Services for the purpose of maintaining a repository of individuals who have passed state criminal background, state child abuse/neglect, Foster Care license revocation, Child Care license revocation, and Department of Aging and Mental Health employee disqualification list screenings. Any person seeking employment in the field of child care must register with the Family Care Safety Registry and pass the screening process. Failure to comply with this requirement results in a class B misdemeanor.

**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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

The published child care licensing rules include requirements for basic training of newly licensed programs and their staff as well as programs applying for licensure. The requirements include a component on recognizing and reporting child abuse and

neglect. The Missouri Child Care Resource and Referral Network also partnered with the Missouri Department of Social Services, Children's Division on a Zero to Three grant, "Partnering with Parents: Preventing Abuse and Neglect", which provides state of the art prevention training to child care providers.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services developed a statewide basic orientation for new child care providers, which includes a two hour module on child abuse/neglect and reporting. DHSS has rule revisions pending, which make such training a requirement for all licensed child care providers.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Training for informal care and licensed facilities is available statewide through the Department of Social Services and the state's Child Care Resource and Referral agencies. The training was countable toward the Department of Health and Senior Services' annual requirement of twelve clock hours for child care providers to maintain licensure.

**2.7 States will have a well-trained regulatory workforce with average caseloads between 50 and 75 per staff person<sup>5</sup> and a system capable of providing technical assistance.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

No change has been reported since October 2003. Current caseloads for licensing staff average 72 child care facilities (family home, group home and center based facilities).

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The average caseload for licensing staff in October 2003 is 72 as reported by Department of Health and Senior Services.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

The recommended caseload for each child care licensing specialist prior to 2001 was 50 to 75 child care facilities (family home, group home and center facilities).

**2.8 States will ensure parental right of access to their child's early care and education facilities.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

No change has occurred with this requirement since last reported. Access is a requirement.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

By state statute, both licensed child care providers and informal child care providers receiving state subsidy are required to provide parental access at any time during normal hours of operation or when the child is in care.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

By state statute, both licensed child care providers and informal child care providers receiving state subsidy are required to provide parental access at any time during normal hours of operation or when the child is in care.

**Goal 3: States will support development of quality early care and education programs for all children.**

- 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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Activity continues in the state to support a system of service delivery that supports the education and training of a competent work force through the efforts of: OPEN (Opportunities for a Professional Education Network), Educare, the Missouri Resource and Referral Network, Community Partnerships, and grant funding through House Bill 1519 which supports the state Early Head Start/Child Care Partnership, Start Up and Expansion grants and Accreditation Facilitation grants. In addition to these efforts, Missouri received funding through Zero to Three to support technical assistance activities for the creation of a strategic plan around infant/toddler issues. The grant was awarded in May 2004 and will end in September 2005. Included in the planning process of this grant are the identification and responses to technical assistance and training needs of providers serving infants and toddlers.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The below activities continue to be administered and mature. Work is currently underway to recruit more providers into the Professional Achievement and Recognition System and the Trainer Registry. New licensing rules, which are slated to take effect in 2004, will require Basic Child Care Orientation Training of all licensed providers. And, Missouri is working to institute minimal training for all providers in the state that receive child care subsidy.

Missouri's state agencies have been working together to evaluate investments in the resource and referral and professional development systems. During 2003, the state agencies along with the Head Start Collaboration Office, child advocates and other key stakeholders engaged in a Reinvention and Transition Team planning process. The intent is to more clearly define roles within the professional development and resource and referral system and to maximize resources to build on the excellent work Missouri has done in this arena. A design has been created and has been posted for public comment during the fall of 2003. State fiscal years 2004 and 2005 are transitional with the intent for the design to be fully in place by 2006.

The Head Start Collaboration Office took the lead to convene stakeholders in a focused effort to address Missouri Access to Early Childhood Higher Education (MAECHE) in collaboration with the OPEN Initiative and other stakeholders. The collaboration office along with its partners initiated the work in 2000, but hired a consultant in 2002. The

group has been quite active over the past year and the work has resulted in a Directory of Missouri ECE Higher Education credentials and degrees, a monthly newsletter for early childhood faculty, a State of the Landscape Report on access to Missouri's early childhood higher education programs. Some of the ultimate outcomes for the process are improved quality of early childhood degree programs and optimal articulations within and across schools.

Grants continue to be offered to providers that can be used to assist them in meeting health and safety standards. Accreditation facilitation projects throughout the state continue to provide technical assistance and support for child care providers pursuing the accreditation process.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Missouri has invested in building a systemic professional development system as described in 1.1. Planning began in 1995 and various components were implemented throughout the years between 1995-2000. The Opportunities in a Professional Development System (OPEN) process has yielded a career lattice for early care and education professionals, core competencies, an automated Professional Achievement and Recognition System and a Trainer Registry.

Missouri supports the OPEN system with funding from the Departments of Social Services, Health and Senior Services and Elementary and Secondary Education. The Head Start Collaboration Office and Resource and Referral Network also provide support, as well as generous support over the years from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and the Danforth Foundation.

In like fashion, various state resources and private funding support resource and referral in Missouri. Missouri's eight resource and referral agencies incorporated in 1999 and formed the Missouri Child Care Resource and Referral Network. Since that time, MCCRRN has worked diligently to standardize services and protocols across member agencies. The Network compiles regional training calendars, convenes quarterly meetings for regional training coordination, and coordinates Basic Child Care Orientation Training sessions across the state, as well as specialized Infant/Toddler Training. MCCRRN also administers the T.E.A.C.H. program.

Missouri also invests in outreach and training to its registered provider population through its Educare program. Educare is administered through 17 community-based organizations covering 71 of Missouri's 115 counties and provides workshops, on site mentoring, and support to providers with their professional development planning and work towards quality improvement including accreditation.

Beginning in 1999, Missouri has offered grants to providers to assist them in expanding their capacity through both the Department of Social Services and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Through the Start Up and Expansion Program and Missouri Pre-School Project grants providers have access to monies to help them meet licensing standards, establish or expand program, invest in professional development, etc. Professional development plans are required through the RFP process and the MPP program has offered technical assistance and support to its grantees through a contract with the Project Construct National Center.

In 2000, the Missouri Department of Social Services and Department of Health and Senior Services also began supporting accreditation through contracting for accreditation facilitation with MCCRRN, community partnerships and others.

Missouri also has two pilot compensation projects that have made significant strides in reducing the turnover rate and increasing the educational level of staff. One project exists in the Kansas City area and another multi-county project is administered through a grant to the Center for Family Research and Policy at the University of Missouri, Columbia.

**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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

The Missouri Resource and Referral Network continues its work to coordinate training opportunities in the state. Each agency maintains a training calendar that is accessible through the internet that informs child care providers of available training opportunities. In addition, the Network receives funding to support the facilitation of Accreditation activities.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Missouri's Child Care Resource and Referral Network continues to function in a coordinating capacity in the area of training for the state. Working in partnership with Educare and other training providers, MCCRRN seeks to coordinate training and technical assistance so that resources are available to all child care providers in the state. Beginning in 2002, the Network also began coordinating all Basic Child Care Orientation Training sessions, the training authorized by the Department of Health and Senior Services as the basic building block of training for all child care providers. These functions are collaboratively supported by funding from both the Department of Social Services and the Department of Health and Senior Services.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

As mentioned in 3.1, Missouri's child care resource and referral agencies incorporated in 1999 beginning a strategic process to standardize services across the state. The MCCRRN member agencies provide services to Missouri's 10 service delivery areas. The Network provides key functions coordinating training within each service delivery area and publishing regional training calendars, as well as many other functions. MCCRRN also administers T.E.A.C.H. and a portion of the accreditation facilitation projects in the state.

**3.3 States will implement a rating system to recognize providers for incremental levels of quality.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Missouri is currently piloting two Quality Rating Systems in the state. One pilot is funded through an Early Learning Opportunities Grant awarded in fall 2003 to the

Metropolitan Council on Early Learning in Kansas City. The pilot is based on the Educare Colorado model and supports the development of an infrastructure that will provide local programs, in the Kansas City area, the technical assistance and other supports to participate in the QRS. The second pilot targets the rural part of the state.

It is based on components identified as important for quality programming. The out state pilot requires program accreditation to reach the highest rating level. Through federal funding, the Midwest Research Consortium will be evaluating the effectiveness of these two pilots which will inform state policy.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

In 2002 and 2003, Missouri conducted research on quality rating systems and is in the process of planning the launch of 1-3 pilot sites in the state. The Early Childhood Task Force of the Children's Services Commission is recommending the establishment of three pilot sites and ultimately that a quality rating system be established statewide. The metropolitan Kansas City area has received a federal grant to support such a pilot project and the state is working to identify two other areas in which to pilot the quality rating system.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

In 1999, Missouri implemented several rate differentials within the subsidy system, including differential reimbursement for licensed providers serving 50% or more subsidized children and an enhancement for accreditation. Missouri has licensed, licensed exempt and registered providers as legal categories of child care providers in the state, but has no statewide quality rating system.

**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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

No additional activity has occurred since last reported.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Missouri continues to provide incentives with an eye toward an across the board rate differential for licensed providers and ultimately a reimbursement system tied to quality rating.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Missouri began providing incentives for higher quality programs in 1999-2000 through an enhanced subsidy reimbursement rate for accredited providers and an enhanced rate for licensed providers serving 50% or more subsidized children.

**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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

In addition to what has been previously reported, the Missouri Quality Rating System pilot encourages programs to earn additional points by incorporating formal processes for garnering parent feedback and involvement in their programming. Programs must demonstrate what their process is and provider appropriate methodology in order to receive the additional points.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The Department of Social Services has an Early Childhood Advisory Council that provides guidance and policy recommendations to the Office of Early Childhood. Members of this council include parent representation.

Beginning in 2001, the Department of Social Services posted the CCDF state plan on their internet web site. The web site has an area in which the public may submit comment to the Department about the state plan and the programs that CCDF funding supports.

In July 2003, a statewide stakeholders' meeting was convened to present a proposed design for the states' continuous growth of its resource and referral and professional development system. Parents were encouraged to attend this meeting as a venue in which they could provide comment on the state's plan to coordinate the resource and referral and professional development activities in the state.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Child Care and Development Fund federal regulations require states to conduct statewide public hearings prior to submitting their state plan to the Department of Health and Human Services for approval. Missouri completes a series of a minimum of five public hearings throughout the state every two years. The public hearings are advertised statewide and garner input from the general public, including parents, child care providers, child advocates and policy makers. This formal forum is an opportunity for attendees to respond to the use of the federal funding to support the state's child care subsidy program, resource and referral programs, professional development for child care providers, and the licensing activities administered through the Department of Health and Human Services.

Missouri's Early Head Start Program fosters the Head Start policy of convening policy councils for the purpose of program evaluation and policy recommendations. The councils consist of Early Head Start parents who are given an opportunity to provide feedback on individual Early Head Start programs. Parents are an integral part of the council's process of program evaluation.

**3.6 States will identify and support the use of effective research based curricula.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

As mentioned in 1.3 above, the Missouri Preschool Project provided funding to the research based Project Construct national center to provide technical assistance to its grantees. As part of the ongoing requirements for Missouri's Start Up and Expansion

grants, applicants and grantees must use approved research based curricula in their programs. They must demonstrate what the research based curriculum is and how it is to be used in their programs. Through the OPEN trainer approval register and the Resource and Referral training coordination, all training offered for credit hours must relate to the Missouri Core Competencies. Training that targets developmentally appropriate practices should be supported by research based curriculum.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Research based curricula will be an element of the quality rating system being piloted in Missouri.

In 2001 and 2002, a partnership between ACF Region VII Office and the Missouri Department of Social Services brought West Ed Training to Missouri to support Missouri's Early Head Start programs. The Department of Health and Senior Services Infant/Toddler training, which is offered to providers after completion of Basic Child Care Orientation training, discusses the use of research based curricula and provides some guidance in the use of such. Missouri is the home of the National Center for Project Construct, which has a contract to provide technical assistance on the use of research-based curricula to Department of Elementary and Secondary Education funded early childhood programs and preschools.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Missouri has required the use of research based curricula in its state funded Pre-K program, the Missouri Preschool Project (MPP), which began in 1999. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has identified a list of such curricula from which grantees may choose. The Department of Social Services also asks applicants to speak to the use of research based curricula in their applications for Start Up and Expansion grants.

**Goal 4: Staff in early care and education settings will be appropriately credentialed and adequately compensated.**

**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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Since 2002, the work of the Reinvention and Transition Team concluded by recommending a plan for incorporating the current activities of OPEN, MOCCRRN, and Educare into a cohesive system of professional development service delivery. The concept of "ChildLink" was created that focuses on aligning the funding and scopes of work of the different service delivery entities in order to respond to the training and technical assistance needs of providers that is comprehensive and universal and that diminishes duplication.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

In 2003, the Department of Social Services in conjunction with the Departments of Health and Senior Services and Elementary Education and other key stakeholders

undertook a process of reviewing and retooling the current system of professional development service delivery. That process is still under development, but will incorporate OPEN, the Child Care Resource and Referral Network, and the state Educare program into a more cohesive comprehensive system of professional development service delivery.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Missouri's professional development system infrastructure is known as OPEN (Opportunities in a Professional Education System). OPEN began in 1995 with support from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation in Kansas City and the Danforth Foundation in St. Louis. A wide representation of the early childhood community was engaged in the development of OPEN. In 2000, OPEN moved under the auspices of the University of Missouri Columbia Outreach and Extension and the Center for Family Policy and Research. OPEN is supported currently primarily by grants from the Missouri Departments of Social Services and Health and Senior Services.

The primary components of OPEN include:

- Development and Dissemination of Early Childhood Core Competencies
- Maintaining a Training Calendar and Trainer Registry
- Articulation
- Career Advising
- Professional Achievement and Recognition System
- Finance and Compensation

OPEN was developed with the widest range of input possible and the standards of both state and national organizations such as NAEYC, NAFCC, (Early) Head Start, Parents as Teachers, and APHA/AAP were reviewed and taken into consideration in the development of the core competencies and other components of OPEN.

Although OPEN is the "umbrella" under which many career development efforts will occur, numerous early childhood agencies and organizations will play a substantial role in the implementation of Missouri's Career Development System for Early Childhood Professionals.

**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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Work continues to encourage training for informal providers through contracts with Educare. Educare is administered through 17 community based organizations covering 71 of Missouri's 115 counties. It provides workshops, on site mentoring, and support to providers with their professional development planning. The Missouri Resource and Referral Network tracks available training through an internet based training calendar. OPEN continues to register approved trainers through their Trainer Registry. In the new child care licensing rule revision, requirements are proposed for a process to approve trainers to deliver specified training, including Child Care Orientation Training. The

licensing rule revision also requires Infant/Toddler Child Care Orientation Training for programs serving infants and toddlers

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

See 4.1. OPEN has implemented a trainer registry and in conjunction with the state departments (primarily Child Care Licensing) is working toward both trainer and training approval. Child Care Licensing is also working on proposed rules that will increase the training requirements of licensed child care providers. The Department of Social Services is working on a proposed statute revision to allow for the authority to implement minimum training requirements for registered providers.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Child Care Licensing requires 12 clock hours of training per year for all licensed providers.

- 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.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Efforts to expand TEACH in Missouri include the dissemination of a policy briefing through the University of Missouri's Center for Family Research and Policy. The briefing, titled "Who is Educating Missouri's Youngest Children" recommends additional funding to support the expansion of TEACH.

The Missouri Preschool Project has also dedicated state funding to support TEACH through House Bill 1519 funding.

The Missouri Department of Social Services continues to support the Missouri Resource and Referral Network which administers TEACH, in addition to training to support accreditation and CDA, through CCDF funding.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The activities described below are ongoing.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

The Missouri Child Care Resource and Referral Network purchased the license for TEACH and has implemented it with financial support from various sources.

In 1998, a portion of state gaming funds was set aside in an Early Childhood Development Education and Care Fund to be jointly administered by the Departments of Social Services and Elementary and Secondary Education. These funds provide for Start Up/Expansion of Early Childhood Programs, state funded Early Head Start, and

Accreditation Facilitation. Within each of these programs are components to assist with the cost of CDA's, and two- and four-year degrees appropriate to the specific program. (i.e. Start Up assists with CDA's, Accreditation facilitation assists with two- and four-year degrees, Early Head Start provides professional development opportunities consistent with staff needs.)

**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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

As previously reported, the Missouri Head Start State Collaboration office supports the ongoing training/education efforts through "Heads Up! Reading". That initiative has transitioned to "Winning Teams" training that is a distance learning opportunity for providers.

The Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education continues to address articulation issues.

All approved training opportunities must relate back to the Missouri Core Competencies and the Missouri Pre-K Standards.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The Head Start Collaboration Office in conjunction with OPEN, the Missouri Head Start Association, AEYC-MO and the various state agencies contracted with an independent contractor to address specific issues related to articulation. Work is ongoing, but one concrete outcome is a directory of all universities and community colleges and their courses and contacts and other pertinent information to assist early childhood facilities and staff in locating education and training appropriate to their needs.

The Coordinating Board for Higher Ed has appointed an internal committee to begin addressing issues of Early Childhood articulation. That work is also ongoing.

As "Heads Up! Reading" was such a success over the past two years, this year Missouri plans to introduce "Winning Teams" as the next phase for consistent statewide distance learning for providers.

All training in the state, be it at conferences, workshops, or more individualized is encouraged to identify which core competencies, early learning guidelines, and in some cases CDA component and (Early) Head Start performance standard the training addresses. Plans are to make this a more formalized process once the trainer and training registries are complete.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Missouri has undertaken a variety of initiatives to address this issue. Included are:

- Educare which provides intensive on-site education and training with a focus on state subsidized child care providers.

- The implementation of Heads Up! Reading at 52 down-link sites around the state and provided at appropriate times for providers. Eventually 14 universities and community colleges offered college credit for these courses.
- University Extension has explored and offered a variety of distance learning opportunities for providers.
- Child Care Resource and Referral and Workshop on Wheels provide education and training for providers in a variety of formats and at a variety of times and places.
- Articulation discussion began in Missouri with the Coordinating Board for Higher Education.
- The state funded Early Head Start program funded West Ed to come to Missouri and provide training to Missouri trainers. Care was taken to select not only trainers that worked with EHS programs, but those that could also provide training to the wider community of child care providers in Missouri.

**4.5 *The federal government and states will provide financial incentives that reward completion of approved levels of professional development.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Efforts to expand WIN (Workforce Incentive) in Missouri include the dissemination of a policy briefing through the University of Missouri's Center for Family Research and Policy. The briefing, titled "Who is Educating Missouri's Youngest Children" recommends additional funding to support the expansion of WIN.

Providers who participate in the state child care subsidy reimbursement program are given a 20% enhancement on their base rate of reimbursement for each subsidized child if their program is accredited through one of the seven state or nationally recognized accrediting models.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

In 2003, the WIN project entered its final pilot year. There is much interest in continuing and expanding this project, however, funding is currently an issue.

In 2002 and 2003, Missouri conducted research on quality rating systems and is in the process of planning the launch of 1-3 pilot sites in the state. The Early Childhood Task Force of the Children's Services Commission is recommending the establishment of three pilot sites and ultimately that a quality rating system be established statewide. The metropolitan Kansas City area has received a federal grant to support such a pilot project and the state is working to identify two other areas in which to pilot the quality rating system.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Missouri implemented the WIN project which is a 3 year bi-state pilot project (in conjunction with Kansas) funded primarily by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and other local funders, to address compensation based on education levels. In Missouri, OPEN administers and oversees this project.

Providers receiving child care subsidy payments from the Missouri Department of Social Services receive a 20% increase in their base subsidy rate if they become accredited by one of 7 state or nationally recognized accrediting organizations.

**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.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

No activity reported.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

No response.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Discussion but no activity.

**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.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Work is ongoing to try to increase subsidy reimbursement levels for licensed providers and to identify additional funding sources to support WIN (see 4.5), as well as work around a tiered quality rating system (see 3.3).

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Work is ongoing to try to increase subsidy reimbursement levels for providers and to identify funding sources for projects such as WIN (see 4.5), as well as work around a tiered quality rating system (see 3.3).

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

In 1998, state gaming funds were set aside in an Early Childhood Development Education and Care Fund to enhance early childhood in Missouri to be jointly administered by the Departments of Social Services (DSS) and Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). One component of this funding allows these two state agencies to provide grants for Start Up/Expansion of Early Childhood programs. DESE focuses on providers serving 3 and 4 year olds and requires that school districts receiving this funding consider early childhood staff employees of the district and thereby entitled to receive levels of pay comparable to other public education staff.

DSS focuses on the birth to 3 year population and has been unable to implement this requirement as this population is served primarily by private not-for profit or for profit providers who cannot afford to pay comparable levels.

**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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

See 4.4.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

See 4.4.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

See 4.4.

**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.**

**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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Since 2002, the work of the Reinvention and Transition Team concluded by recommending a plan for incorporating the current activities of OPEN, MOCCRRN, and Educare into a cohesive system of service delivery. The concept of "ChildLink" was created that focuses on aligning the funding and scopes of work of the different service delivery entities in order to respond, not only to the training and technical assistance needs of providers that is comprehensive and universal and that diminishes duplication, but responds to the needs of families interested in the highest quality and accessibility of care. MOCCRRN is involved with the work of Missouri's Quality Rating System that will create an easy method for parents to make informed child care choices.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Missouri's state agencies have been working together to evaluate the state of and investments in resource and referral and professional development. During 2003, the state agencies along with the Head Start Collaboration Office, child advocates and other key stakeholders engaged in a Reinvention and Transition Team planning process. The intent is to more clearly define roles within the professional development and resource and referral system and to maximize resources to build on the excellent progress Missouri has made in this arena. A design has been developed and has been posted for public comment during the fall of 2003. State fiscal years 2004 and 2005 are transitional with the intent for the final design to be in place by 2006. The design includes core components areas of Provider Services.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Missouri has supported resource and referral activities since the early 1990's. Prior to the state's investment, the major metropolitan areas each had a not-for-profit organization that saw the need for such service and stepped forward to meet the need.

Child Day Care Association in St. Louis and Heart of America Family Services in Kansas City predate other resource and referral agencies in the state. The state began supporting resource and referral statewide in the early 1990's. In 1999, the eight resource and referral agencies in the state incorporated to form the Missouri Child Care Resource and Referral Network. A core function of MCCRRN is to provide information on child development, quality indicators, provider choices, vacancies and other information to families. A statewide toll free number makes services easily accessible to families, and regional offices create a web of coverage. Services are also accessible online.

**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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

See 3.5

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Missouri continues the activities stated below. In addition, RFP's for DSS and DESE start up/expansion grants require parental involvement.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Missouri's Early Head Start Program fosters the Head Start policy of convening policy councils for the purpose of program evaluation and policy recommendations. The councils include Early Head Start parents who are given an opportunity to provide feedback on individual Early Head Start programs. Parents are an integral part of the council's process of program evaluation.

The Parents as Teachers (PAT) National Center in St. Louis developed a PAT training for child care providers to assist them in becoming parent educators for the families they serve. Several child care programs in Missouri have completed this training.

**Goal 6: Quality early care and education programs will be financially accessible to all children.**

**6.1 Federal and state governments will adjust the child care tax credit expense limits to accurately reflect the cost of quality care.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

No activity to report.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

No action taken.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Missouri has no state tax credit for child care expenses.

**6.2 States with income taxes will establish refundable child and dependent care tax credits.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

The continued work of the Children's Services Commission encourages legislation to establish refundable child and dependent care tax credits.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The Children's Services Commission Task Force on Early Childhood is recommending the establishment of a refundable child and dependent care tax credit and is working for inclusion of such a tax credit in early care and education legislation for the 2004 legislative session.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Missouri has no child and dependent care tax credits. Attempts to establish such a tax credit have been unsuccessful.

**6.3 State and federal child and dependent care tax credit income-eligibility and expense limits will be indexed for inflation.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

See 6.2.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

See 6.2.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

See 6.2.

**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 state median income.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Missouri is proposing an increase in the child care subsidy income eligibility guidelines in the legislative budget proposal for FY 06. The proposed increase will raise the income guidelines from 112% of the Federal Poverty Level (43% of State Median Income) to 120% of the Federal Poverty Level.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Currently, eligibility guidelines in Missouri permit access to financial support through the subsidy program at approximately 45% of the state median income. The Children's Services Commission's Task Force on Early Childhood is recommending

that income guidelines be established in legislation that would ramp up eligibility over a period of time to 85% of the median income. This provision is recommended for inclusion in legislation during the FY 2004 legislative session.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Efforts have been made in Missouri to increase the investment in child care subsidy to raise eligibility limits and rates. The last major state increase in the subsidy program was made in 1999, when the legislature appropriated monies that allowed waiting lists to be cleared and some rate differentials to be instituted. Subsequent requests have not received approval.

**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.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

See 6.4. Sliding fees are established at less than 10% of a family's total gross income.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Missouri continues the policy stated below.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Missouri's sliding fee scale has been based on a guideline that eligible families should pay no more than 10% of their gross income for early care and education since the early 90's.

**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.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Missouri is proposing a 10% increase in the base reimbursement rates to licensed child care providers. The proposal is part of the FY 06 legislative budget package. The intent of this request is to establish a reimbursement schedule that will support the efforts of a statewide quality rating system.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Differential rates have been continued, and in spite of the very difficult fiscal environment in the past 2-3 years, both the Governor and state legislature have protected child care from cuts. Missouri has been committed to maintaining its investment in early care and education through this difficult environment. The Children's Services Commission Task Force on Early Childhood is recommending a quality rating system and payment rates that provide incentive for providers to progress along a continuum toward high quality with rates at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile with rates being adjusted biennially in response to the market rate survey.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

In 1999, Missouri significantly increased infant and toddler rates and instituted differential rates for care provided in licensed centers that serve a disproportionate share of subsidized children, children with special needs, children needing care during non-traditional hours and for accredited care. These differential rates bolster payments to some facilities to the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile. However, base rates remain well below the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile. Missouri law does not make provision for inflation adjustments to payment rates, and appropriations have been inadequate to support raising rates to the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile across the board.

**6.7 States will implement payments to providers commensurate with the quality-rating level achieved by the early care and education programs.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

See 6.6.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Missouri will pilot a quality rating system in 1-3 pilot sites beginning in 2004.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Missouri does have differential rates for accredited providers and licensed providers serving a disproportionate share of subsidized children as of 1999.

**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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

See 6.6.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The Early Childhood Task Force of the Children's Services Commission is recommending that rates be incrementally increased in Missouri and that the rate structure be reconfigured to coincide with a quality rating system and to allow access to the market at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Missouri recognizes that its reimbursement rates are not adequate to support the cost of quality care as outlined in this document. The last substantial rate increase was implemented in 1999-2000.

**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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Information about the child care assistance program is available on the Missouri Department of Social Services web site. Applications consist of a one page document and are made available through the Missouri Family Support Division which may be submitted in person or through the mail. Outreach is accomplished by making child care assistance application available through local child care Resource and Referral agencies and some child care center franchises. There is dedicated Resource and Referral staff on site at the Jackson County Family Support Division office and the St. Louis City Family Support Division office to assist families with child care assistance.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The activities below continue.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Missouri has publicized the child care subsidy program through the Department of Social Services web site, in county family support offices, and through WIC, the resource and referral network, community partnerships and Educare. In addition, nearly 50% of all families with young children in Missouri are served by the Parents As Teacher Program, which makes families aware of assistance for low-income families with early care and education expenses.

**Goal 7: States will ensure that accountability is built into all systems, programs and activities undertaken to achieve the goals of this action plan.**

- 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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

In addition to what has been previously reported, a group of early care and education stakeholders gather on a quarterly basis as part of the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant and as part of the Zero to Three's Infant and Toddler initiative. Each of these groups includes many of the same stakeholders and has similar charges to develop systemic recommendations around early care and education. Both initiatives are heavily involved in a strategic planning process that is sustainable beyond the funding period.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The OPEN planning process resulted in a written strategic plan published in October 2001 for improving the quality of early care and education through professional development. Implementation has proceeded from that point forward. The plan includes six component areas of a professional development system with specific outcomes and short and long term objectives.

Through the Early Childhood Task Force of the Children's Services Commission recommendations are being made to support the development of an official infrastructure for Missouri that will have the authority to convene a broad based group of stakeholders to perform strategic planning for a comprehensive early childhood system in Missouri.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

The Opportunities in a Professional Education Network strategic planning process occurred between 1999 and 2000.

**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.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Since 2002, the Missouri School Readiness Indicators Project has finalized the document that identifies the indicators that most impact children's success at kindergarten entry. The document titled "Ready Set Grow" contains specific child characteristics that are tracked by various state departments. As the indicators are used, it is expected that they will inform future state policies.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

In May 2002, Governor Bob Holden appointed a team to participate in the 17-state, school readiness indicators initiative. This team evaluated the historical lists, created a matrix of indicators and worked through a process to methodically consider each indicator's value in terms of measurability, communication and proxy power in terms of results. The purpose has been to reach agreement across state agencies regarding the measures that will be monitored over time and upon which Missouri's statewide strategic plan will be built. The list is nearly finalized, and is slated for release by the end of 2003. Status on the indicator list will be published annually.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Missouri's late Governor Mel Carnahan initiated a results-based planning process in the mid-90's that would focus the use of state resources on outcomes. Measures were identified, including early care and education measures, called "Show Me Results." This was a laudable process and much progress was made toward beginning to identify indicators for the state. The Community Partnerships across the state also came together to preliminarily identify outcome measures; there was much overlap. When Missouri's present Governor Bob Holden took office, the Governor's office continued to build upon previous work and further refinement resulted in Managing for Results Indicators, which included some early care and education measures.

**7.3 States will use data and annual reports to make continuous policy improvements and evaluate quality enhancement activities.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Since 2002, the Missouri Department of Social Services, Office of Early Childhood has published a Child Care Monthly Management report detailing information about children and families accessing child care assistance in the state.

Information contained in this publication include children served, family demographics and child care provider characteristics.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

In fall 2003, the Early Childhood Task Force of the Children’s Services Commission is recommending a Coordinating Board for Early Care and Education that is charged with development of a statewide systemic plan for a quality early childhood system. The Coordinating Board would have the responsibility to create the strategic plan, establish and monitor outcomes, and recommend policy improvements.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Each individual state agency has a wealth of information that is collected and used for decision-making. However, Missouri has no coordinating entity for early care and education to assess data across programs and make decisions for systemic improvements.

---

<sup>1</sup> NAEYC – National Association for the Education of Young Children

<sup>2</sup> NAFCC – National Association of Family Child Care

<sup>3</sup> APHA – American Public Health Association

<sup>4</sup> AAP – American Academy of Pediatrics

<sup>5</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.