



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

Survey on the Status of Implementation Efforts

Your State:	Mississippi
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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

The Governor created the Interagency Coordinating Council for Early Childhood Services in 2001 which consists of representatives from MS Department of Human Services, Departments of Health, Mental Health, Education, and a host of other State and local agencies as well as parents. The council developed a unified child care tracking system which collected various data and has been distributed Statewide. This tracking system has allowed the council to see what areas are weak and struggling and from there how to provide these child care workers with suggestions for improvement by using local university staff as well as other public personnel.

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

Mississippi's Governor has created the Mississippi Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council for Early Childhood Services and the Mississippi Governor's Interagency Advisory Council for Early Childhood Services. The Councils are made up of representatives from Mississippi Department of Human Services, Mental Health, Department of Health, Department of Education and a host of other State and local agencies. The Head Council, to the Legislature, is co-chaired by the Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Human Services and the State Superintendent of Education. Both councils were created in order to address key issues surrounding legislation concerning Early Childhood Issues in the State. The two committees met for the purpose of creating tentative legislation to be reviewed and adopted by the Mississippi Legislative body. The first outcome of this coordinating/collaboration effort has been the initial development of a unified child care tracking and data system.

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

No action taken.

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

Outreach activities are still being implemented through partnerships, subgrantees, public forums and media activities.

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

Currently, outreach activities are being implemented through partnerships, subgrantees, public forums and media activities.

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

No action taken.

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

Mississippi continues its attempts to provide coordinated transitions for preschool age children through its continued collaborative efforts between key agencies with early care, education, health and safety.

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

Mississippi continues its attempt to provide coordinated transitions for preschool age children through its continued collaborative efforts between key agencies with early care, education and health and safety.

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

No action taken.

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 NAEYC¹, NAFCC², APHA³ or AAP⁴ national standards.*

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

The Mississippi DHS/Office for Children & Youth does not perform the monitoring of child care facilities. This is handled by the Mississippi Department of Health. Please contact Festus Simpkins at 601-576-7613.

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

Same as above.

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

The Mississippi DHS/Office for Children and Youth does not perform the monitoring of child care facilities. This is handled by the Mississippi Department of Health. Please contact Festus Simpkins at 601-576-7613.

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

Please see response to Action Step 2.1.

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

Please see response to Action Step 2.1.

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

Please see response to Action Step 2.1.

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

Please see response to Action Step 2.1.

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

Please see response to Action Step 2.1.

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

Please see response to Action Step 2.1.

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

Please see response to Action Step 2.1.

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

Please see response to Action Step 2.1.

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

Please see response to Action Step 2.1.

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

Please see response to Action Step 2.1.

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

Please see response to Action Step 2.1.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)
Please see response to Action Step 2.1.**

- 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
Please see response to Action Step 2.1.**

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003
Please see response to Action Step 2.1.**

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)
Please see response to Action Step 2.1.**

- 2.7 *States will have a well-trained regulatory workforce with average caseloads between 50 and 75 per staff person⁵ and a system capable of providing technical assistance.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004
Please see response to Action Step 2.1.**

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003
Please see response to Action Step 2.1.**

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)
Please see response to Action Step 2.1.**

- 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
Please see response to Action Step 2.1.**

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003
Please see response to Action Step 2.1.**

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)
Please see response to Action Step 2.1.**

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

The MS Department of Human Services (MDHS) provided child care quality enhancement subgrants to providers throughout the State to be utilized for the improvement of quality in areas listed. Early learning materials, equipment and technical assistance were provided to those who chose to participate. This hands-on technical assistance was provided by accredited teachers and included lessons in the most effective ways to spend the subgrant funds such as age-appropriate child care materials and toys. MDHS staff also assisted with the development of a three-year old curriculum. Not only did staff participate in the development, but the Office for Children & Youth distributed copies of the curriculum to every licensed child care center in the State, as well as all Head Start centers and some family home day care providers that have requested to be placed on our mailing list.

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

Mississippi Department of Human Services currently provides early care providers with resources to aid in improving quality through numerous quality enhancement initiatives.

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

MDHS provided child care quality enhancement grants to providers throughout the state to be utilized for the improvement of quality in areas listed. Early learning materials, equipment, wage, resource and referral (health care screening) and assistance with child care development training opportunities. As a result all participants were provided extensive hands on technical assistance (by accredited teachers) which included lessons in the most effective ways to spend the grant monies, such as age-appropriate child care materials and toys.

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

Currently providing early care providers with resources to aid in improving quality through numerous quality enhancement initiatives such as Project PREPARE and a CDA program through the University of Southern Mississippi, Right From Birth and Going To School by Mississippi Broadcasting, Nurturing Homes Project and The Early Childhood Institute at Mississippi State University, and the Credentialed Director's program through Mississippi Forum on Children and Families.

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

The state currently maintains and offers a referral network for providers, caregivers and parents of young children.

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

No response.

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

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

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

No response.

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

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

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

No action taken.

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

Continuing this process with public and parental forums as well as resource and referral programs.

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

Currently being done through public and parental forums and resource and referrals programs.

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

In 1999, MDHS conducted a formal survey of parental participation, involvement and evaluation of state child care systems. As a result, data collected was used in the updating of the MS State Plan Childcare Development Fund Services in state plan that was completed in the year of 2002.

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

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

The three-year old curriculum was completed and distributed statewide to all licensed child care centers. Those with access to the internet can download the four-year-old curriculum from the State Department of Education Web site. All providers were encouraged to use the curriculum.

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

Efforts are currently underway.

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

No action taken.

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

Mississippi Department of Health

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

Mississippi Department of Health.

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

No action taken.

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

Training programs are approved and verified by the Mississippi State Department of Health, of child care licensure.

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

Training programs are approved and verified through the Mississippi Department of Health.

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

Training approved and verified by the Mississippi Department of Health.

- 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

The Office for Children & Youth (MDHS) established a scholarship program to allow child care providers an opportunity to obtain professional development training specific to the field of early childhood development and education to be applied to a 2 year degree in the field of early childhood development or early childhood education. The scholarship program also provides for travel, books and paid release time. OCY also has three subgrantees that provide director's training. Two are sponsored by state universities, at which they get a Child Development Associate (CDA), and one is sponsored by a private agency where they are given a Credentialed Director (CD) certification. All agencies have been approved by the State's licensing agency.

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

Mississippi Department of Human Services has designed an early childhood development scholarship program to provide early childhood providers an opportunity to obtain professional developmental training specific to the field of early childhood development and education to be applied to a 2-year degree in the field of early child development or early childhood education.

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

No action taken.

- 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

Currently being done through the Community and Junior College information board.

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

Currently being done through the Community and Junior College information board.

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

No action taken.

- 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

The Office for Children & Youth (MDHS) established a scholarship program to allow child care providers an opportunity to obtain professional development training specific to the field of early childhood development and education to be applied to a 2-year degree in the field of early childhood development or early childhood education. The scholarship program also provides for travel, books and paid release time. Participants are also awarded a one-time \$1,000 stipend compensation for successful completion.

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

Mississippi Department of Human Services had designed an early childhood development scholarship program to provide early childhood providers an opportunity to obtain professional developmental training specific to the field of early childhood development and education to be applied to a 2-year degree in the field of early child development or early childhood education.

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

No action taken.

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

Currently being done through the Office for Children & Youth is a Scholarship Program for a two-year degree in early childhood education which is not required to be re-paid. Participants are asked to remain in the field for a period of one year after successful completion of the program.

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

Currently being done.

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

No action taken.

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

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

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

No action taken.

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

Currently being done.

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

Currently being done.

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

No action taken.

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

The Office for Children & Youth (MDHS) currently has a child care resource and referral that through a toll-free number is available statewide as well as a Family Resource First Network.

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

It is anticipated that the state will be successful in the development of such a system as a result of state legislation that has recently been appropriated.

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

No action taken.

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

Handled through the Mississippi Department of Education and the Mississippi Department of Health.

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

Handled through the Mississippi Department of Education.

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

No action taken.

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

The state does not offer child care tax credits.

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

The state does not offer child care tax credits.

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

No response.

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

This has not been accomplished.

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

This has not been accomplished.

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

No response.

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

This has not been accomplished.

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

Not applicable.

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

No response.

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

The Governor created an Interagency Coordinating Council to address early childhood issues, including education efforts by members and their respective agencies. The council continues to address issues and annually presents a report to the legislature with information and recommendations for action.

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

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

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

No response.

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

There are no established co-payment fees for parents which exceed 10% of their gross income.

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

There are no established co-payment fees for parents which exceed 10% of their gross income.

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

No response.

6.6 *States will set payment rates at no less than the 75th 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

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

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

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

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

No response.

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

Currently, Mississippi does not utilize a quality rating system for early child care systems, but has a tiered reimbursement system.

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

Currently, Mississippi does not utilize a quality rating system for early care systems.

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

No response.

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

An initiative continues to examine financing of quality child care as it relates to tiered reimbursement.

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

An initiative to examine financing of quality care is currently being done.

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

No response.

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

This was completed by the State's early child care and education agencies.

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

This is currently being done by the state's early child care and education agencies.

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

No action taken.

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

This was completed by the Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council.

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

This is currently being done through the Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council.

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

No response.

- 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

This was completed by the Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council.

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

This is currently being done through the Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council.

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

No action taken.

- 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

This was completed by the Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council

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

This is currently being done through the Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council.

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

No action taken.

¹ NAEYC – National Association for the Education of Young Children

² NAFCC – National Association of Family Child Care

³ APHA – American Public Health Association

⁴ AAP – American Academy of Pediatrics

⁵ 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.