

April 24, 2000

Dear Marla,

We are very excited about the Governor announcing the COMPASS Project at the Children's Mental Health Institute on May 9. It is fitting that this announcement take place during Children's Mental Health month and that it be made by the Governor. We so appreciate his emphasis on doing business in new ways in Mississippi. We feel that the COMPASS Project exemplifies this philosophy. The project is funded by Children's Mental Health Services within the Department of Health and Human Services, and is based on state-of-the-art practice in children's mental health, including: keeping children in their communities, homes and schools; strengths-based partnerships with families; creative blending of funding and services across systems and agencies; incorporation of informal supports into interventions with children; cultural competence; and closely evaluating the outcomes of the services delivered. It would be very helpful if the Governor could emphasize these principles in his remarks, especially partnering with parents, focusing on families' and children's strengths, and agencies working together. The name COMPASS was very deliberately chosen – this project is guided by the input of families and children on all levels – practice, program and policy. No more shaming and blaming families; instead, we want to form genuine partnerships with them.

I have attached a handout with general information about the COMPASS Project. You will notice that this money is essentially seed money that gives us time to develop these services and find alternate funding for them by the end of the five year grant period. We hope to develop ways to fund these services throughout Mississippi, not just Hinds County. Possibilities for funding include redirected state dollars, as well as using medicaid dollars more effectively and flexibly. Several state agencies, including the Departments of Mental Health, Education and Human Services, have already committed to providing the matching dollars required by the funding source. We would be grateful if the Governor would acknowledge their commitments in his remarks and encourage other agencies to join them in this important effort. We would also appreciate him encouraging legislators and policy makers to back legislation, such as House Bill 250, that supports blended funding efforts and inter-agency collaboration.

There will be a number of family and professional groups represented at the institute. We will be taking a few moments before the Governor's remarks to introduce these groups. I think he will be impressed by the groundswell of support this project has. After the Governor finishes his remarks, we would like him to introduce Mrs. Teresa Blackmon, a parent who will be sharing how this project will benefit her family. At the conclusion of Mrs. Blackmon's remarks, we would like to present the Governor with a Declaration of support for the children and families served through this project. We anticipate that Gary DeCarolis, the Director of Children's Mental Health Services at Health and Human Service, will be in attendance when the Governor speaks.

If I can provide you with any further assistance or information, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Joy Hogge, Ph.D
Director, COMPASS Project