
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: GOVERNOR
FROM: RILEY
SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STATE TEAM TO THE “INVESTING INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL IN EARLY CHILDHOOD HEALTH” CONFERENCE
DATE 12/18/00
CC: SIMMONS
BOYD
FILE

Dr. Cathy Grace has forwarded the attached final recommendations of the state team that this office sent to the National Committee on Partnerships for Children’s Health’s “Investing Intellectual Capital in Early Childhood Health” Conference held in Charlotte, North Carolina, in October. The attached recommendations address building a strong infrastructure for early childhood services that includes: 1) a data system to support and guide policy decisions regarding comprehensive services; 2) quality child care; 3) quality health care; and, 4) quality resources for parents.

The team recommends that your administration’s first priority in the area of childcare be to create a Children’s Information Center at the Research and Development Center (*p. 1 of the report*). Among other things, the Center would establish a system that specifies the type of data, gathers and tracks it on programs serving children eight years and younger for the purpose of evaluation and to inform agencies of duplication and gaps in programs.

In the area of child care (*p. 2 of the report*), the team recommends your support of the Office of Children and Youth’s “Blueprint for Achieving Quality Early Childhood Services for Mississippi’s Children” (*p. 11 of the report*). The team also recommended that you direct legislation requiring 20,000 additional childcare slots over three years, at a cost of \$60,000,000 each year, for a total cost of \$180,000,000. The team recommends a number of funding sources for this initiative, including: 1) establishing a business partnership for donations to an early childhood trust fund similar to North Carolina’s; 2) drawing down the maximum amount of federal funds; 3) providing a tax incentive to businesses that offer childcare as an employee benefit; and 4) raising the tax on casinos to the national average and allocate at least 1% of the increase in revenue to early childhood programs.

The team used Healthy People 2010 as its model for success for quality health care (*p. 3 of report*). The team is of the opinion that most of its recommendations in this area can

be accomplished with a redesign of the Medicaid State Plan. The team recommended that you:

- Direct the Division of Medicaid and the State Health Officer to consult with Sara Rosenbaum of George Washington University's School of Public and Health Policy (*NOTE: Rosenbaum spoke at the Charlotte conference.*) to modify the existing Medicaid State Plan to take full advantage of existing and any additional matching resources to develop a comprehensive system of medical, developmental and mental health services for children up to eight years of age. The team identified potential Medicaid State Plan modifications;
- Support legislation mandating that state agencies implement a well-child and school readiness screening to be administered to every five year old child prior to school entry beginning in July 2002. The team used Florida's School Readiness Legislation (*p. 15 of the report*) as its model for this recommendation;
- Direct all state agencies to maintain efforts to enroll every eligible child in the CHIP so that 85% of eligible children are enrolled by January 2002 and 98% of eligible children are enrolled by January 2004; and,
- Support legislation mandating that the Department of Mental Health develop a plan for the implementation of programs that comprehensively address the need for community-based family focused mental health services and programs.

The team recommends the following parent resources (*p. 7 of the report*):

- Access for three years to a personal visit parent education program for all new parents by January 2002;
- One viable parent resource center per county by January 2003;
- A statewide transportation system by January 2008 that would support families in meeting their basic health and educational needs and would provide access for families to needed services; and,
- A resource and referral agency in each DHS region to inform parents as to options of available childcare and to educate parents as to quality childcare settings.

The team also made the following recommendations (*p. 8 of the report*) which are known to be controversial, but deemed worthy of recommendation:

- Place responsibility for funding of childcare centers and for the setting and enforcing of standards and childcare licensing in the same agency;
- Mandate student attendance in kindergarten programs that are consistent with current program guidelines; and,
- Develop a marketing strategy to address early intervention and child development in specified ways.

The team has requested a meeting with you to brief you on its work and on recent research in early childhood developments. Dr. Grace is available to answer questions prior to this briefing (662-325-4954, work). The team has offered its support in promoting any early childhood initiative developed from these recommendations or other means. **Please advise as to if you would like a briefing from the team.**