

***Mississippi Head Start Collaboration Project Refunding Proposal***  
***for***  
***August 1, 2002 through July 31, 2003***

The Mississippi Head Start Collaboration Office proposes to meet the following goals and objectives during its next program year.

Project Goals and Objectives:

- ◆ Work to facilitate and support the Head Start Association's Long Range Plan
- ◆ Continue to support the availability and accessibility of quality services to Head Start and other low-income children with disabilities
- ◆ Support the increase of available, accessible, quality child care for children and families through partnership building and collaboration
- ◆ Partner with agencies and community organizations in support of the State's agenda for children and families
- ◆ Support the planning and implementation of the semi-annual state level Head Start Conference
- ◆ Continue efforts to blend services among Head Start programs and public schools
- ◆ Support school readiness initiatives statewide
- ◆ Improve the transition for children and families between Head Start and other settings to facilitate school readiness
- ◆ Develop new partnerships and strengthen existing ones that promote shared agendas including federal and state compliance issues
- ◆ Foster environments to improve the number of programs with higher compliance levels by at least 25% statewide
- ◆ Assist Head Start and the early care community with achieving professional development mandates by 2003
- ◆ Strengthen existing and continue to develop new strategic partnerships with businesses, community agencies, civic entities, and professional organizations
- ◆ Promote effective and efficient Human Resource management systems that include professional development; recruitment and retention of competent staff
- ◆ Develop a statewide website to enhance growth and development utilizing technology
- ◆ Identify training and resources for continuous improvement for all child care providers
- ◆ Advocate for improved access of low-income families to health care services including preventive activities designed to deter health related problems
- ◆ Advocate for improved services to homeless children and families

The Head Start Collaborative Office has funded a program through the University of Alabama Civitan International Research Center work with five counties in Mississippi to improve, develop and expand early childhood program options for children birth to five. Extensive data was collected and analyzed in order to determine the unique strengths and needs of each community. During the second year of the project, the Civitan group meet will local collaborative community groups in each county to deliver the final report and to obtain consensus on the priority recommendations on which the group would like to focus. A strategic plan was developed by each group to allow them to move toward fulfilling the priority recommendations. Funding to continue this work is requested.

The Head Start Association has requested that the Mississippi Department of Education provide partial funding to support the impact study being conducted by Dr. Craig Ramey and Associates. This study is designed to collect data over a three year period in order to document the impact of Head Start on children, families and communities, to provide useful, practical guidance for program improvement where necessary, and to document the Head Start program as actually deliver by components and relate these to children and family outcomes. MDE intends to provide partial funding for the study. The Head Start Collaborative Office will need to work collaboratively with MDE and Head Start programs in supporting this research project.

Research has emphasized the importance of early language experiences in helping ready children learn to read. The Bureau's Early Literacy Initiative seeks to expand and enrich preschool Head Start children's early literacy competence by increasing teachers' knowledge about how early literacy develops. It also seeks to expand teachers' repertoires of behaviors that correlate with children's increased competence in early literacy. This is to be accomplished through the CIRCLE training program. The Head Start Collaboration Director should receive this training if she is to be able to provide support to Head Start programs working to implement this training. A member of the Office of Reading, Early Childhood and Language Arts will also be trained so these two individuals can more work together with preschool and child care providers statewide. Training individuals from both departments should increase understanding of what is expected of Head Start teachers and encourage the utilization of similar early literacy strategies in an increasing number of other programs serving preschool children. This should result in improvement of students' readiness skills and in an easier transition from Head Start to other settings.