

Early Care and Education Services Provided by the Forum on Children and Families

1. Parents as Teachers

The Forum is one of the states with a non-profit organization serving as the state agency affiliated with the Parents as Teachers National Center.

In that capacity, the Forum has guided a decade of growth and there are now PAT programs operating in half of the counties in the state.

The Forum provides an on-going program of training and technical assistance and oversees the initial certification and annual re-certification of PAT Parent Educators and PAT programs.

A focus of continued expansion of Parents As Teachers is the implementation of the PAT child care model – a study conducted for the Missouri Department of Education shows that children with the highest level of “school readiness” had participated in both PAT and preschool.

2. Child Care Director’s Credential Training Program

Mississippi was one of the first states to develop and implement a training program to credential directors of child care programs. The 120-hour training program, supported by a Quality Improvement grant from the federal child care funds administered by MDHS, provides the foundation for a continuous increase in the quality of licensed child care in the state.

To date, over 1000 individuals have either completed or are currently in the process of completing the training. These individuals represent 43% (745 centers of 1750 total) of the state’s licensed child care and Head Start facilities.

Individuals earning the credential have the opportunity for further professional development through advanced courses that focus on increasing parental involvement and supervising caregivers in the implementation of curriculum that addresses specific school readiness skills.

3. Child Care Resource and Referral

Since its founding in 1992, the Forum has operated a state-wide child care resource and referral service for businesses that assist employees in finding needed child care. This “enhanced” referral service, compliments the “public access” child care information service provided by the Office for Children and Youth, MDHS.

4. Parental Assistance / Family Resource Centers

The Forum is the state's Parental Information and Resource Center, designated by the U.S. Department of Education. The on-going program of training and technical assistance expands beyond the Parents as Teachers program and assists local school districts and community-based organizations developing and/or operating parental assistance / family resource centers.

Most, if not all of these centers, provide early childhood services ranging from respite care for kinship caregivers to parent resource libraries.