
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: GOVERNOR
FROM: RILEY
MAYO
SUBJECT: MARCH 12, 2002, 2:00 P.M. EARLY CHILDHOOD PRESS CONFERENCE
DATE: 3/8/2002
CC: FILE

Per your instructions at this morning's staff meeting, we have developed the following proposal for an early childhood press conference. Please look over this information at your convenience this weekend so that we may discuss it with you Monday. Thanks!

**Press Conference to Announce Plans to Develop a Viable System of
Early Care and Education**

Date, time & location: Tuesday, March 12; 2:00 p.m.; 2nd Floor Rotunda

Invite to be present:

1. Cathy Grace, MSU Early Childhood Institute
2. Barksdale Institute (Claiborne will be out of the country)
3. Steve Renfroe at Chevron
4. Penny Barr, Beverly Peden, Kaye Sowell and other members of the MS Early Childhood Association
5. Reginal Henderson at MVSU (submitting grant to Department of Labor to create a statewide credentialed career pathway for early child care development workers)
6. Lynn Masters, Head Start Collaboration Project
7. Rica Lewis-Peyton, Medicaid's Early Childhood Health collaborative with Sister Donna of the Catholic Diocese and Angie Williams of the Methodist Conference
8. Janice Broome-Brooks (DHS is funding a lot of the early childhood initiatives)
9. Louise Davis, MSU Cooperative Extension Service (funded through DHS)
10. ETV's Producer of Right from Birth (funded through DHS)
11. Jane Boykin of the Family Forum (???)
12. Rep. Eloise Scott (???)
13. Senator Gloria Williamson (???)

Talking Points:

1. Your administration has taken steps to assess the quality of early childhood services in Mississippi:
 - You sent a state team 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 2000. The team provided you with a report and recommendations that addressed 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.
 - Mississippi's Leadership Summit on Higher Education, which you co-chaired, identified the importance of early childhood education. The summit's report set forth the priority that all children will start school ready to learn. The report recommended that we expand and improve pre-kindergarten programs for children in all areas of the state.
2. Recent research findings on what children need for healthy brain development to occur has concluded that "Striking disparities in what children know and can do are evident well before they enter kindergarten. These differences are strongly associated with social and economic circumstances, and they are predictive of subsequent academic performance. Redressing these disparities is critical, both for the children whose life opportunities are at stake and for a society whose goals demand the children be prepared to begin school, achieve academic success, and ultimately sustain economic independence and engage constructively with others as adult citizens" This research also addressed the devastating affect of poverty on young children and concluded that, ". . . Growing up in poverty greatly increases the probability that a child will be exposed to environments and experiences that impose significant burdens on his or her well-being, thereby shifting the odds toward more adverse developmental outcomes. Poverty during the early childhood period may be more damaging than poverty experienced at later ages, particularly with regard to eventual academic achievement..."
3. You recognize that there are several initiatives under way to improve early childhood services (NOTE: This is not a comprehensive list):
 - *Leaders in Literacy* is a pilot project of the Barksdale Reading Institute in partnership with The Early Childhood Institute at Mississippi State University and the W.K.Kellogg Foundation. The pilot project is located in West Point and Greenville with the main objective centering on the language development of preschool children. The eighteen month project targets children birth up to age four years.
 - ChevronTexaco, along with many of Mississippi's leading experts such as MSU's Early Childhood Institute and the Barksdale Reading Institute, is developing a certification process whereby communities can be recognized for their efforts to benefit their youngest citizens. The voluntary program, due to be formally announced later this year, will rely on public and private partnerships and existing state resources.

- The Mississippi Early Childhood Association provides a complimentary copy of the Rob Reiner produced video “I’m Your Child” to parents. Funding is provided via the Phil Harden Foundation.
- Several initiatives being funded via DHS grants:
 - ETV’s “Right from Birth Series” is targeted at parents and caregivers of young children, and presents information to help them prepare the foundation for their children's future learning and success in school. The series currently airs on 118 PBS stations.
 - The Nurturing Homes Initiative is a collaborative effort of the Department of Human Services, the Mississippi State University Extension Service and the Alcorn State University Cooperative Extension Program. The initiative provides educational information, training and technical assistance to non-licensed family home providers that offer full day, full year child care services to children of families falling below the 200% poverty level.
 - Mississippi State’s Early Childhood Institute’s *Partnerships for Quality Child Care Project* assesses nearly 174 childcare centers that receive quality enhancement funding from DHS and who serve low income children for the purpose of improving the quality of care provided at the centers. The Institute uses quality rating scales that are used across the country to guide the technical assistance provided by the project staff.
 - The Department of Human Services’ Office of Children and Youth provides memberships in the Mississippi Early Childhood Association for over 450 childcare directors of centers who participate in the child care certificate program. The Office of Children and Youth also enables these same directors and one staff member to attend a continuing education class on early childhood development.
 - The Office of Children and Youth’s Child Care Director’s credentialing program provides a 130-hour curriculum on best practices in child care management for child care directors and staff. The child care workers’ scholarship program provides scholarships to child care workers to obtain their two-year associate degree or a four-year bachelor’s degree.
- Mississippi Valley State University and the Department of Education have collaborated to recently submit a grant proposal to the Department of Labor to create a career ladder certification process for child care workers.
- Housed in the Department of Education’s Office of Reading, Early Childhood and Language Arts, the Mississippi Head Start Collaboration Office is a state-level office established for the purpose of building a collaborative partnership between federally-funded Head Start programs and state-funded early childhood programs to improve the quality of services to low-income children and their families in Mississippi.
- The Division of Medicaid, the State Department of Health, the Department of Finance and Administration, the Department of Human Services, Kidney Care Incorporated Foundation of Mississippi and other entities have collaborated to submit a health initiative support grant application to the Southern Institute on

- Children and Families, in conjunction with the Robert Wood Foundation, to implement a state coordinated integrated health care delivery system for children.
- First Steps Early Intervention is a Department of Health program providing services to children 0-3 who have developmental delays. First Steps makes educational/developmental resources available to help families of infants from birth to age three recognize possible problems so that help can be obtained as early as possible.
 - The Mississippi Forum on Children and Families directs Mississippi's Parents as Teachers program, which covers child development from birth to age 5 and suggests parent activities, which encourage language and intellectual growth, curiosity and social skills.
4. While we have initiatives, we have no state plan and long range set of goals to address early childhood and that is where the focus should be moving. You are committed to serving all Mississippians, including our smallest. We are in desperate need of high quality care and education settings for all of our children, but of special concern are the thousands living in poverty or on the brink of poverty that are spending time in questionable care settings.
- You are ready to work with national early childhood leaders and advocates within our state in developing a viable system of early care and education that addresses the unique needs of young children in Mississippi and those caring for children in all types of care environments.