

Research

Providers: Headstart, childcare centers, family day care homes

The 22 Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Mississippi currently are funded to serve 26,742 low-income children ages 0-5 and their families in FY 2003. These services are provided through \$159,090,054 in federal funds and \$36,782,503 in local cash match and in-kind goods and services.

Governor Musgrove has taken steps to develop a formal early childhood education program for Mississippi and to enhance services currently offered through a variety of means:

- During his 2002 State of the State address, Governor Musgrove proposed the implementation of Summer Start, which would provide an extended-year, full-day kindergarten to children who have not been exposed to basic skills by allowing them to begin kindergarten two months the summer before they would ordinarily enter and to continue for two months after kindergarten, right before entering first grade. This program would provide children with the chance to catch up earlier on basic skills so they are developmentally ready to acquire higher skills during the regular kindergarten period. Summer Start would reduce the need for remediation and special education, lower dropout rates, increase the skills of our workforce, and ultimately save the state millions. The Legislature did not choose to fund Summer Start.
- Governor Musgrove announced on October 31, 2002, a partnership between the Barksdale Reading Institute and the Department of Human Services to fund an 18-month early childhood needs assessment. This assessment will identify what is needed in order to improve childcare in our state, what such improvements would cost, and what internal and external resources exist to help pay for those improvements. Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan of Columbia University and Dr. Richard Brandon of the University of Washington, both nationally recognized early childhood experts, are conducting this assessment.
- Governor Musgrove co-chaired the Leadership Summit on Higher Education during which *Building Opportunity in Mississippi Through Higher Education*, a forward-looking and goal-oriented agenda for all of our colleges and universities was released. *Building Opportunity in Mississippi Through Higher Education* recommended that Mississippi expand and improve pre-kindergarten programs for children in all areas of the state.
- Governor Musgrove has worked with the Early Childhood Institute, DHS and Dr. Craig Ramey to promote the *Right from Birth* and the *Birth to School* initiatives aimed at helping break the cycle of at-risk children entering school educationally and developmentally disadvantaged. Pleasure of Dr. Ramey at NGA winter meeting
- DHS's 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 above-mentioned needs assessment is considering such certifications, as well as other critical child care center operations such as educational requirements for child care providers, compensation, and professional development.