



THE SOUTHERN INSTITUTE  
on Children and Families

Action Plan to Improve Access  
to Child Care Assistance  
for Low-Income Families

Survey Results on the  
Status of State  
Implementation Efforts

February 2002

Alabama  
Arkansas  
Delaware  
District of Columbia  
Florida  
Georgia  
Kentucky  
Louisiana  
Maryland  
Mississippi  
Missouri  
North Carolina  
Oklahoma  
South Carolina  
Tennessee  
Texas  
Virginia  
West Virginia

# **SOUTHERN REGIONAL INITIATIVE ON CHILD CARE**

**Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance  
for Low-Income Families**

## **Survey Results on the Status of State Implementation Efforts**

**February 2002**

### **List of States Responding**

**Alabama  
Arkansas  
District of Columbia  
Georgia  
Kentucky  
Louisiana  
Maryland  
Mississippi  
Missouri  
North Carolina  
Oklahoma  
South Carolina  
Tennessee  
Texas  
West Virginia**



## Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care: Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance for Low-Income Families in the South

### Survey Results on the Status of State Implementation Efforts

#### Background

The Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance for Low-Income Families in the South expresses the position of the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care that bold action is needed to make child care financial aid available and accessible for low-income parents who need and seek it. The 10 goals and 52 action steps call on public and private sector leaders to support specific initiatives, including significant increases in child care resources, eligibility simplification, improved customer service, implementation of tax strategies and creation of employer partnerships.

The Southern Institute on Children and Families conducted this survey to provide states the opportunity to report efforts made toward the implementation of the Action Plan goals and action steps outlined in the *Sound Investments* report.

The surveys were sent to Task Force members appointed by the Governors of 16 southern states and the mayor of the District of Columbia. A response was not received from Florida in time for publication. Delaware's position to the Task Force has been vacant since January 2001 thus Delaware did not participate in the survey. In January 2000, Virginia declined to participate as a member of the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care and thus no information is included on Virginia.

Survey respondents were asked to complete each section of the survey by entering actions taken on or after January 2000. For actions addressed prior to January 1, 2000 respondents were asked to include an approximate date of implementation. A copy of the survey introduction and instructions are included in this report.

Also included is a chart that displays the results of state implementation efforts at a glance. Results are reported as "**Action Step Completed**," "**Action Taken Toward Goal**," or "**No Action Reported**." Respondents were asked to enter N/A or "Not Applicable" if no action was taken to accomplish the action step. Action steps reported by states as completed prior to January 1, 2000 are presented in bold and italics. States do not appear on the chart if no response was entered on the survey. The following state reports reflect implementation efforts as of September 2001.



# Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care: Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance for Low-Income Families in the South

## Survey of Implementation Efforts

### Survey Introduction:

This survey is being conducted by the Southern Institute on Children and Families to identify the status of efforts being made to implement the Goals and Action Steps outlined in the December 2000 report of the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care, titled *Sound Investments: Financial Support for Child Care Builds Workforce Capacity and Promotes School Readiness*. The survey is being sent to Task Force members appointed by Governors of 16 southern states and the Mayor of the District of Columbia.

We have created the survey in an electronic format to facilitate the entry and tabulation of responses. Please enter the status of your state's implementation efforts under each action step and return the survey to us no later than Monday, September 24<sup>th</sup>. We will greatly appreciate receiving responses earlier, but we recognize that you will need to engage a number of persons in the preparation of your responses.

Survey responses will be included in a report to be distributed at the Southern Regional Forum on Child Care on October 10-11, 2001 in Atlanta. It is our intent to print your status comments as written. In the event we do not receive your response, a notation will indicate that the information is not available. **Please be advised that we will be unable to include status comments received after September 24 in the report.**

The time frame for your responses should reflect actions taken on or after January 1, 2000. If your state has already addressed the action step, please note the action taken and the approximate date. Questions regarding the survey should be directed to Zenovia Vaughn, Deputy Director for Child Care at (803) 779-2607 or [zenovia@kidsouth.org](mailto:zenovia@kidsouth.org).

### Survey Instructions:

The survey is a "Microsoft Word™ for Windows" document. Enter your responses in the appropriate text boxes, save a copy of the file for your personal records, and e-mail the completed Word™ document to Zenovia Vaughn at [zenovia@kidsouth.org](mailto:zenovia@kidsouth.org).



**Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care  
 Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance  
 for Low-Income Families in the South  
 State Implementation Status**

<b>GOAL 1: Federal, state, local and private funds should be sufficient to meet 100% of need for direct child care assistance, based on initial eligibility levels at 85% of the state median income. Redetermination levels should allow families to retain child care assistance until they reach 100% of the state median income.</b>			
<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Action Step Completed</b>	<b>Action Taken Toward Goal</b>	<b>No Action Reported</b>
1.1. Educate federal and state policy makers on the need for action.		AL, AR, DC, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, WV	
1.2. Educate the business community on the need for leadership in achieving state, federal and community resources to meet 100% of need.		AL, AR, DC, GA, KY, MD, MS, NC, <b>OK</b> , SC, TN, TX	LA, MO
1.3. Increase federal funding for the Child Care and Development Fund to fulfill current policy allowing federal matching funds for child care assistance up to 85% of the state median income.	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
1.4. Increase state funding to provide child care subsidies to all eligible families who seek child care assistance.		AL, AR, DC, GA, KY, MD, MS, MO, OK, SC, TN, WV	LA, NC, TX
1.5. Mobilize federal, state and community resources in support of families who need child care assistance.		AL, AR, DC, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, WV	
<b>GOAL 2: States and communities should broaden their child care eligibility and subsidy policies to meet the economic, work and education needs of families.</b>			
<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Action Step Completed</b>	<b>Action Taken Toward Goal</b>	<b>No Action Reported</b>
2.1. Establish co-payments not to exceed 10% of gross family income.	AL, DC, GA, KY, MD, MS, MO, <i>NC</i> , SC, WV	OK, TN	AR, LA, TX
2.2. Provide child care assistance to students who qualify under the income guidelines.  (A state's definition of "student" may include but is not limited to adults in school full-time or job training programs. See state status reports for complete descriptions.)	AL, AR, <b>DC</b> , KY, <b>LA</b> , MD, MS, MO, <i>NC</i> , SC, TN, <b>WV</b>	GA, <b>OK</b> , TX	
2.3. Explore broad use of income exemptions to address affordability of child care.	AR, DC, <b>OK</b> , SC	AL, GA, KY, <b>LA</b> , MD, MS, MO, NC, TN, WV	TX
2.4. Eliminate asset testing (e.g. automobile or savings account) from criteria for child care assistance.	<b>AL</b> , AR, <b>DC</b> , <b>GA</b> , <b>KY</b> , <b>LA</b> , <b>MD</b> , <b>MS</b> , <b>MO</b> , <b>NC</b> , <b>OK</b> , <b>SC</b> , <b>TN</b> , <b>TX</b> , <b>WV</b>		
2.5. Index income eligibility levels for inflation.	AR, MD, SC	DC, NC, TN	AL, GA, KY, LA, MS, MO, OK, TX

**Notes:**

- State respondents were asked to report actions taken on or after January 1, 2000. For actions addressed prior to January 1, 2000, respondents were asked to provide an approximate date. Respondents were asked to enter "N/A" or "Not Applicable" if no action was taken. Action Steps reported by states as completed prior to January 1, 2000 are presented in bold and italics.
- Data is not reported for Florida, Delaware and Virginia. A response was not received from Florida in time for publication. Delaware's position to the Task force has been vacant since January 2001 thus Delaware did not participate in the survey. In January 2000, Virginia declined to participate as a member of the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care and thus no information is included on Virginia.
- States will not appear on the State Status Results chart if no response was entered on the survey.

**Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care  
Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance  
for Low-Income Families in the South  
State Implementation Status**

<b>GOAL 3: Outreach initiatives should be designed and aggressively implemented to assure that families have accessible and easy-to-understand information on child care assistance and are provided assistance in applying.</b>			
<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Action Step Completed</b>	<b>Action Taken Toward Goal</b>	<b>No Action Reported</b>
3.1. Provide information on child care subsidies through multiple sources, venues and the media.	AL, DC, KY, MD, MS, MO, TX, WV	AR, GA, LA, NC, OK, SC, TN	
3.2. Ensure that information is accurate, family friendly, employer friendly, culturally sensitive and provided in multiple languages, as appropriate.		AL, AR, DC, KY, LA, MD, MS, MO, NC, SC, TX	GA, OK, TN
3.3. Present information in a manner that would remove the stigma associated with receiving subsidies.	AR, MD, MS, SC, WV	DC, KY, LA, MO, NC, OK, TX	AL, GA, TN
3.4. Provide literature and assistance to help parents make informed provider choices.	AL, AR, DC, GA, MS, MO, OK, SC, TX, WV	KY, LA, MD, NC, TN	
3.5. Coordinate ongoing and strategic outreach activities among common organizations and providers.	DC, MD, MO, SC, TX	AL, AR, KY, LA, MS, NC, OK, TN, WV	GA
3.6. Offer cross-training and information to providers, community organizations, faith organizations and state agencies to inform them about child care assistance programs and how to assist families in filing applications.	AL, AR, DC, MO, OK, SC, TX, WV	KY, LA, MD, MS, NC	GA, TN
<b>GOAL 4: The child care application and redetermination processes should be uncomplicated and family friendly.</b>			
<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Action Step Completed</b>	<b>Action Taken Toward Goal</b>	<b>No Action Reported</b>
4.1. Simplify applications for child care assistance.	AL, DC, MD, MS, MO, OK, SC, TX	AR, GA, KY, LA, NC	TN
4.2. Allow filing by mail, phone, fax or internet.	AR, TX	AL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC	DC, TN
4.3. Minimize requests for documentation at initial application and utilize documents already on file.	AL, DC, MD, MO, OK	AR, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TX	TN
4.4. Provide applications at multiple sites.	AL, AR, DC, MO, OK, TX	GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, SC, WV	TN
4.5. Offer non-conventional hours of operation for eligibility offices and provide toll-free phone lines to include evening and weekend hours.		AL, DC, GA, KY, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX	AR, LA
4.6. Explore presumptive eligibility or otherwise provide immediate eligibility contingent upon final approval.		AR, GA, KY, LA, MS, OK, SC, TX	AL, DC, MD, MO, NC, TN
4.7. Eliminate requirements for a face-to-face interview both for initial application and for redetermination.	KY, LA, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, TX	AL, AR	DC, GA, TN
4.8. Provide consultation on making appropriate choices when excessive requests for provider changes are filed.	AL, AR, DC, GA, MD, NC, TX, WV	KY, MO, SC, TN	LA, MS, OK

**Notes:**

- State respondents were asked to report actions taken on or after January 1, 2000. For actions addressed prior to January 1, 2000, respondents were asked to provide an approximate date. Respondents were asked to enter "N/A" or "Not Applicable" if no action was taken. Action Steps reported by states as completed prior to January 1, 2000 are presented in bold and italics.
- Data is not reported for Florida, Delaware and Virginia. A response was not received from Florida in time for publication. Delaware's position to the Task force has been vacant since January 2001 thus Delaware did not participate in the survey. In January 2000, Virginia declined to participate as a member of the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care and thus no information is included on Virginia.
- States will not appear on the State Status Results chart if no response was entered on the survey.

**Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care  
Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance  
for Low-Income Families in the South  
State Implementation Status**

<b>Action Steps (continued)</b>	<b>Action Step Completed</b>	<b>Action Taken Toward Goal</b>	<b>No Action Reported</b>
4.9. Establish a 12-month redetermination period where there are no changes in income or job status.	DC, GA, KY, MO, NC, <b>OK</b> , SC	AR, LA, MD, TN, TX	AL, MS
4.10. Continue eligibility for full subsidy for 12 weeks if family loses employment but can document that a job search is underway.	<b>DC</b>	AL, AR, KY, LA, MD, MO, NC, OK, SC, WV	GA, MS, TN, TX
<b>GOAL 5: Establish a coordinated, seamless eligibility system so that funding sources are invisible to families and support continuity of child care.</b>			
<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Action Step Completed</b>	<b>Action Taken Toward Goal</b>	<b>No Action Reported</b>
5.1. Eliminate the need for families to reapply when eligibility categories change by automatically searching to exhaust all eligibility categories before closing cases.	AL, <b>DC</b> , GA, KY, MD, MS, <b>MO, NC, OK</b> , TX, WV	AR, SC	LA, TN
5.2. Explore the potential for policy and procedural changes to achieve linkages with or combined applications for child care assistance, Head Start, Pre-K and Title I.	<b>DC</b>	AR, GA, KY, <b>MD</b> , MS, NC, SC, TX	AL, LA, MO, OK, TN, WV
5.3. Continue eligibility in programs with multiple funding sources to assure continuity of care in the event that eligibility has expired or terminated in one program.	<b>DC</b> , KY, MD, NC, <b>OK</b> , SC, TX	AL, AR, GA, MS, TN	LA, MO
5.4. Work collaboratively with all public and private programs and funding sources to assure that children receive stable and consistent early child care services.	<b>DC</b> , MD, MS, MO, NC, SC	AL, AR, GA, KY, LA, <b>OK</b> , TN, TX, WV	
<b>GOAL 6: Establish customer service outcome goals and set standards to ensure that all families are treated with dignity and respect and are served in an efficient manner.</b>			
<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Action Step Completed</b>	<b>Action Taken Toward Goal</b>	<b>No Action Reported</b>
6.1. Provide professional and well-trained eligibility staff who are culturally and linguistically sensitive.	<b>DC</b> , SC	AL, AR, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, MO, OK, TX, WV	NC, TN
6.2. Facilitate quick eligibility determination through reasonable caseloads and/or administrative structure.	DC	AL, KY, LA, MD, MS, MO, OK, SC, TX, WV	AR, GA, NC, TN
6.3. Conduct periodic, independent and thorough consumer satisfaction assessments, assuring the confidentiality of information collected.		AR, DC, GA, KY, LA, MD, MO, NC, <b>OK</b> , SC, TN, TX, WV	AL, MS
6.4. Provide adequate support for child care resource and referral services.	AL, <b>AR</b> , <b>DC</b> , GA, MO, WV	KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, <b>OK</b> , SC, TN, TX	

**Notes:**

- State respondents were asked to report actions taken on or after January 1, 2000. For actions addressed prior to January 1, 2000, respondents were asked to provide an approximate date. Respondents were asked to enter "N/A" or "Not Applicable" if no action was taken. Action Steps reported by states as completed prior to January 1, 2000 are presented in bold and italics.
- Data is not reported for Florida, Delaware and Virginia. A response was not received from Florida in time for publication. Delaware's position to the Task force has been vacant since January 2001 thus Delaware did not participate in the survey. In January 2000, Virginia declined to participate as a member of the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care and thus no information is included on Virginia.
- States will not appear on the State Status Results chart if no response was entered on the survey.



**Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care  
 Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance  
 for Low-Income Families in the South  
 State Implementation Status**

<b>GOAL 7: Design the subsidy system so that rate structures assure that families receiving child care assistance have access to all types of child care and disallow charges above established co-payments.</b>			
<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Action Step Completed</b>	<b>Action Taken Toward Goal</b>	<b>No Action Reported</b>
7.1. States should cap reimbursement rates at no less than the 75 <sup>th</sup> percentile based on a market rate survey conducted every two years that accurately reflects the price of all types of care in communities across the state.	AR, KY, <i>MD</i> , MS, OK, SC, WV	AL, DC, GA, LA, MO, NC, TN, TX	
7.2. Establish and evaluate reimbursement policies that encourage provider participation and are responsive to family needs.	AR, DC, KY, MO, SC, <i>WV</i>	AL, GA, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, TN, TX	
7.3. Prohibit providers from charging above the established co-payments.	AR, <i>DC, OK</i> , TX, <i>WV</i>	MO	AL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, SC, TN
<b>GOAL 8: Create partnerships with employers to expand child care assistance for working families.</b>			
<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Action Step Completed</b>	<b>Action Taken Toward Goal</b>	<b>No Action Reported</b>
8.1. Educate employers about the bottom line benefits associated with public and private child care assistance.	GA, MD, <i>TX</i> , <i>WV</i>	AL, AR, DC, KY, MS, SC, TN	LA, MO, NC, OK
8.2. Enlist business leaders to champion the involvement of southern businesses and to serve as mentors to other businesses.	<i>TX</i>	AL, AR, <i>DC</i> , KY, MD, SC	GA, LA, MS, MO, NC, OK, TN
8.3. Provide information to employers on all available tax benefits related to child care assistance, including deductions for donations to tax-exempt child care organizations, capital costs for constructing a child care center and establishing a pre-tax dependent care assistance plan.	AR, MD, <i>TX</i> , <i>WV</i>	AL, DC, GA, KY, MS, MO, SC, TN	LA, NC, OK
8.4. Facilitate collaborative initiatives that enable employers to share ideas as well as pool their resources to address child care needs.		AL, AR, DC, KY, MD, SC, TN, TX	GA, LA, MS, MO, NC, OK
8.5. Provide matching funds or other tax or financial incentives for employers to invest in child care.	<i>GA</i> , MD, MS, TN	AL, AR, <i>DC</i> , SC, TX	KY, LA, MO, NC, OK
8.6. Establish incentives for employers to create child care benefit programs for their employees or to contribute to child care purchasing pools in their state or community.	MD, <i>TX</i>	AR, SC, TN	AL, DC, GA, KY, LA, MS, MO, NC, OK
8.7. Reduce the administrative burden on employers participating in any joint public/private child care assistance program.	DC, MS, TX	AR, KY, SC	AL, GA, LA, MD, MO, NC, OK, TN
<b>GOAL 9: Provide child care assistance to working families through federal and state tax laws.</b>			
<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Action Step Completed</b>	<b>Action Taken Toward Goal</b>	<b>No Action Reported</b>
9.1. Make the federal child and dependent care tax credit refundable.	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

**Notes:**

- State respondents were asked to report actions taken on or after January 1, 2000. For actions addressed prior to January 1, 2000, respondents were asked to provide an approximate date. Respondents were asked to enter "N/A" or "Not Applicable" if no action was taken. Action Steps reported by states as completed prior to January 1, 2000 are presented in bold and italics.
- Data is not reported for Florida, Delaware and Virginia. A response was not received from Florida in time for publication. Delaware's position to the Task force has been vacant since January 2001 thus Delaware did not participate in the survey. In January 2000, Virginia declined to participate as a member of the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care and thus no information is included on Virginia.
- States will not appear on the State Status Results chart if no response was entered on the survey.

**Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care  
 Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance  
 for Low-Income Families in the South  
 State Implementation Status**

<b>Action Steps (continued)</b>	<b>Action Step Completed</b>	<b>Action Taken Toward Goal</b>	<b>No Action Reported</b>
9.2. Establish refundable child and dependent care tax credits in states with income taxes.	<b>AR, DC</b>	AL	GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC,
9.3. Raise federal and state child care tax credit expense limits to accurately reflect the price of quality care.  According to the National Women's Law Center, the Child Tax Credit will increase to \$600 beginning 2001 and will further increase to \$1,000 by year 2010. <sup>1</sup>		AL, KY, MD	AR, DC, GA, LA, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX
9.4. Index for inflation the state and federal child and dependent care tax credit income eligibility and expense limits.		AL, KY	AR, DC, GA, LA, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX
9.5. Ensure that child and dependent care tax credits are clearly identified and easy to claim by filers using either the short or long form.	DC, KY		AL, AR, GA, LA, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX
9.6. Encourage the use of efficient state tax strategies to provide financial support for child care.	GA	AR, KY, MD, TX	AL, DC, LA, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, TN
<b>GOAL 10: States should have effective, coordinated systems to guide child care and early childhood policy decisions and direct use of resources.</b>			
<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Action Step Completed</b>	<b>Action Taken Toward Goal</b>	<b>No Action Reported</b>
10.1. Facilitate greater coordination in eligibility policies across child care and early childhood education programs at state and local levels.	<b>AR, DC</b>	GA, KY, LA, MD, MO, SC, TX, WV	AL, MS, NC, OK, TN
10.2. All southern states and the District of Columbia should participate in a collaborative effort to develop and collect common data elements across states. <sup>2</sup>		AL, AR, DC, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, WV	

<sup>1</sup> Source: National Women's Law Center, 2001, "New Tax Law's Expansion of the Partial Refundability of the Child Tax Credit Benefits Millions of Women and their Children," Washington, DC.

<sup>2</sup> Although not exclusive to the South, all southern states and the District of Columbia participate in an effort to collect common data elements as required by Federal regulations.

**Notes:**

- State respondents were asked to report actions taken on or after January 1, 2000. For actions addressed prior to January 1, 2000, respondents were asked to provide an approximate date. Respondents were asked to enter "N/A" or "Not Applicable" if no action was taken. Action Steps reported by states as completed prior to January 1, 2000 are presented in bold and italics.
- Data is not reported for Florida, Delaware and Virginia. A response was not received from Florida in time for publication. Delaware's position to the Task force has been vacant since January 2001 thus Delaware did not participate in the survey. In January 2000, Virginia declined to participate as a member of the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care and thus no information is included on Virginia.
- States will not appear on the State Status Results chart if no response was entered on the survey.





# Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care: Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance for Low-Income Families in the South

**Survey Results on the Status of Implementation Efforts  
September 2001**

<b>Your State:</b>	Alabama
<b>Your Name:</b>	Jeanetta E. Green
<b>Your Job Title:</b>	Program Manager
<b>Name of Agency:</b>	Alabama Department of Human Resources
<b>Mailing Address:</b>	P O Box 304000 50 Ripley Street Montgomery, AL 36130
<b>E-Mail Address:</b>	<a href="mailto:Jgreen@dhr.state.al.us">Jgreen@dhr.state.al.us</a>
<b>Fax:</b>	334-353-1491

**Goal 1 - Federal, State, Local and Private Funds Should Be Sufficient to Meet 100% of Need for Direct Child Care Assistance, Based on Initial Eligibility Levels at 85% of the State Median Income. Redetermination Levels Should Allow Families to Retain Child Care Assistance Until They Reach 100% of State Median Income.**

***(Action Step 1.1) - Educate federal and state policymakers on the need for action.***

Many national organizations including the Education Commission of the States (ECS) are providing the State of Alabama technical assistance on early care and education policy issues. Through a two-year ECS public policy institute on early learning, we are educating state policy makers on the need for action. The advocacy community is working with state agency representatives, the Alabama Partnership for Children and the business community to coordinate our efforts on early care and education issues and to ensure that we are delivering a consistent message to federal and state policy makers.

***(Action Step 1.2) - Educate the business community on the need for leadership in achieving state, federal and community resources to meet 100% of need.***

The Alabama Partnership for children is working with business, state and nonprofit entities to implement Alabama's strategic plan for children. The business community through APC leads the effort to maximize federal, state and community resources.

***(Action Step 1.3) - Increase federal funding for the Child Care and Development Fund to fulfill current policy allowing federal matching funds for child care assistance up to 85% of the state median income.***

NA

***(Action Step 1.4) - Increase state funding to provide child care subsidies to all eligible families who seek child care assistance.***

In September 2001 the Department created the staff position of Special Projects Coordinator within the child care program. The Special Projects Coordinator functions to research and seek alternative sources of funding for child care including seeking additional sources of state funding. The position was filled effective January 2, 2002.

***(Action Step 1.5) - Mobilize federal, state and community resources in support of families who need child care assistance.***

The Alabama Partnership for Children (APC), a 501(c)3, has been established to assist the State in full utilization of available resources for children by providing a state structure for public/private partnerships. The APC will initially allow us to bring business together with State Agencies and communities to improve coordination of services and maximize utilization of resources as well as bring new resources to Alabama. Child care assistance is a tremendous issue for families with young children and we plan to help with coordination and resource development through this new nonprofit.

**Goal 2: States and Communities Should Broaden Their Child Care Eligibility and Subsidy Policies to Meet the Economic, Work and Education Needs of Families**

***(Action Step 2.1) - Establish co-payments not to exceed 10% of gross family income.***

The average co-payment paid by parents is 8.8% of the gross income. Plans are underway to reduce co-pays by allowing a discount for the second and any subsequent children.

***(Action Step 2.2) - Provide child care assistance to students who qualify under the income guidelines.***

Participation requirements were reduced to an average of 15 hours per week to allow for more participation of students. In addition, full-time students are deemed to meet the participation requirement.

***(Action Step 2.3) - Explore broad use of income exemptions to address affordability of child care.***

Currently there are no specific income exemptions in place. However, the need for exemptions of some income is being explored.

***(Action Step 2.4) - Eliminate asset testing (e.g. automobile or savings account) from criteria for child care assistance.***

There are no asset testing requirements in place in Alabama for eligibility of child care assistance.

***(Action Step 2.5) - Index income eligibility levels for inflation.***

NA

**Goal 3: Outreach Initiatives Should Be Designed and Aggressively Implemented to Assure That Families Have Accessible and Easy-To-Understand Information on Child Care Assistance and Are Provided Assistance in Applying.**

***(Action Step 3.1) - Provide information on child care subsidies through multiple sources, venues and the media.***

Information on eligibility for child care subsidies in Alabama are readily available through printed materials from any of the 12 Child Care Management Agencies (CMA) throughout the state and from DHR staff in any of the 67 county DHR offices. In addition CMAs distribute child care eligibility information from resource van visits. General information and some statistics are also available on the Department's web site.

***(Action Step 3.2) - Ensure that information is accurate, family friendly, employer friendly, culturally sensitive and provided in multiple languages, as appropriate.***

Application information from each of the 12 Child Care Management Agencies (CMAs) is reviewed during programmatic monitoring for content. Regions that serve multi-language populations have some information available in Spanish.

***(Action Step 3.3) - Present information in a manner that would remove the stigma associated with receiving subsidies.***

In our experience this has not been a tremendous issue in Alabama. The process of payment for subsidy and the parents sharing in the cost makes it more difficult for families to be identified as receiving assistance.

***(Action Step 3.4) - Provide literature and assistance to help parents make informed provider choices.***

Each of the 12 Child Care Management Agencies maintains a Resource & Referral (R & R) for all licensed and approved exempt providers within their region. The list is made available to each applicant and recipient needing assistance in selecting a child care provider. In addition, pamphlets on choosing child care applicable to a child's age level are provided to parents.

***(Action Step 3.5) - Coordinate ongoing and strategic outreach activities among common organizations and providers.***

Communication and coordination is being stressed through quality child care initiatives of the Department of Human Resources, the Department of Children's Affairs, and the Alabama Partnership for Children. The Governor appointed a Commission on Early Learning headed by twelve of Alabama's most prominent business leaders to develop a plan for early learning. This Commission made several recommendations in the area of coordination of services.

***(Action Step 3.6) - Offer cross-training and information to providers, community organizations, faith organizations, and state agencies to inform them about child care assistance programs and how to assist families in filing applications.***

Through the Kids and Kin Program in partnership with VOICES for Alabama's Children, community and faith-based organizations are helping to identify informal relative care child care providers. These providers are being mentored by child care partners who assist them with all types of resources including information about the subsidy program. They help the relative caregivers work through the paperwork and resources associated with accessing the program. In 2001 several trainings were held for faith-based providers on the States licensing regulations. Subsidy Program information was shared with providers at these training.

**Goal 4: The Child Care Application and Redetermination Processes Should Be Uncomplicated and Family Friendly.**

***(Action Step 4.1) - Simplify applications for child care assistance.***

The application process completed by the parent has been simplified to a one-page document.

***(Action Step 4.2) - Allow filing by mail, phone, fax or internet.***

Currently a parent can make application for the waiting list either in person, by phone or by mail.

***(Action Step 4.3) - Minimize requests for documentation at initial application and utilize documents already on file.***

Applicants are not required to submit duplicate copies of birth certificates, personal IDs, etc. which are already on file from a previous application. Further, income and other documentation provided on client referrals from the TANF, Protective Service and foster care units are deemed to be sufficient verification without requiring additional verification from the parent.

***(Action Step 4.4) - Provide applications at multiple sites.***

Applications are provided at each main location and satellite office of the 12 CMAs in Alabama, as well as at each county DHR office.

***(Action Step 4.5) - Offer non-conventional hours of operation for eligibility offices and provide toll-free phone lines to include evening and weekend hours.***

Some of the CMAs in Alabama, especially in urban areas, have extended hours of operation 1-2 nights per week for applying for services and conducting interviews to determine eligibility.

***(Action Step 4.6) - Explore presumptive eligibility or otherwise provide immediate eligibility contingent upon final approval.***

NA

***(Action Step 4.7) - Eliminate requirements for a face-to-face interview both for initial application and for redetermination.***

A face to face interview is not required for client cases referred from the protective service, foster care, and TANF agencies.

***(Action Step 4.8) - Provide consultation on making appropriate choices when excessive requests for provider changes are filed.***

Staff at each CMA provides individual consultation to parents when frequent changes of providers are made.

***(Action Step 4.9) - Establish a 12-month redetermination period where there are no changes in income or job status.***



All certification periods are set at a maximum of six months.

***(Action Step 4.10) - Continue eligibility for full subsidy for 12 weeks if family loses employment but can document that a job search is underway.***

Eligibility can continue for an additional 10 days and up to 20 after the loss of employment, if the parent reports the change in circumstances within 10 days of the occurrence.

**Goal 5: Establish a Coordinated, Seamless Eligibility System So That Funding Sources Are Invisible to Families and Support Continuity of Child Care.**

***(Action Step 5.1) - Eliminate the need for families to reapply when eligibility categories change by automatically searching to exhaust all eligibility categories before closing cases.***

The Departments only funding source for child care is CCDF. Some CMAs receive local funding for subsidized care. Parents that are ineligible for CCDF subsidy and eligible for local funding subsidy are automatically changed to the new funding category without the need to reapply.

***(Action Step 5.2) - Explore the potential for policy and procedural changes to achieve linkages with or combined applications for child care assistance, Head Start, Pre-K and Title I.***

NA

***(Action Step 5.3) - Continue eligibility in programs with multiple funding sources to assure continuity of care in the event that eligibility has expired or terminated in one program.***

Some of the CMAs have local funding sources available to provide childcare for higher income caps. Thus, some families who become ineligible for CCDF due to excess income can continue receiving local subsidies.

***(Action Step 5.4) - Work collaboratively with all public and private programs and funding sources to assure that children receive stable and consistent early child care services.***

The Department works collaboratively with the Department of Children's Affairs, Head Start Collaboration Office and other state agencies that deal with early care issues. In it's RFP for quality services the Department stressed the importance of each funding agency collaboration with state and local early care service providers and resources in their area. Part of the evaluation of submitted proposals focused on the strength of the agency's collaborative efforts.

























































































































































































































































































































































