

## Executive Summary

Attached are results from a survey of child care centers participating in the child care certificate program. The survey was conducted by the MS Low Income Child Care Initiative and the MS Center for Justice during the spring of 2010.

The results show some improvements in comparison to survey results previously obtained by the Mississippi Low Income Child Care Initiative. Specifically, respondents report that applications and re-determinations are being processed in a more timely fashion than previous results have shown (slide 20 and 21). Other encouraging results show that overwhelmingly providers report being able to speak to someone in the Designated Agents (DA) offices (slide 36), the DA offices extend deadlines for parents who don't have all the required documentation (slide 45), and the DAs provide training that is helpful (slide 47). Also, there are fewer complaints about the DAs, though there are still areas of concern with regard to the DAs level of customer service (slides 41, 42, 48). The most important improvement was the result of the federal ARRA funds which allowed OCY to increase the number of certificates by 6000 and reduce the waiting list (slide 12, 28).

Some results indicate areas where improvement can still be made. Specific areas where the Department of Human Services can make reforms in the operation of the child care certificate program are listed below:

1. Improve performance at the DAs. Respondents report loss of paperwork, administrative errors, and difficulties in customer relations as continuing problems (slide 6, 11, 27, 41, 42, and 48).
2. Require consistent application of the OCY Policy Manual. Respondents indicated that terminations occur due to failure to supply social security numbers in some DA areas (slide 10); and that different DAs allow different amounts of time for parents to keep their certificates after the loss of a job (slide 19)
3. Utilize the priorities only when processing applications at the beginning of the year (slide 7)
4. Extend the re-determination period to one year (slide 24, 25, 27)
5. Reinstate slot-based contracts (slide 24)
6. Make full-time students a higher priority without a work requirement, and allow students to have a certificate for a full school year (slide 27)
7. Eliminate the child support requirement (slide 30)
8. Create grant opportunities to support child care centers that provide services to Head Start program where Head Start programs are not paying for these services (slide 33)

The Urban Institute study commissioned by MLICCI, "Designing Subsidy Systems to Meet the Needs of Families," includes recommendations to states to address many of the problems listed above. This document includes an Executive Summary as well as Appendix C: Key Steps Subsidy Agencies Can Take to Improve Subsidy Access and Retention." This document supports continued efforts to improve the operation of Mississippi's child care certificate program.

Information from providers about their experience with MCCQSS (slides 49-52) provides input that may help OCY develop provider supports and incentives to increase the number of participating child care centers.

It's interesting to note that while 82% of providers indicate support for increased reimbursement rates (slide 55), 71% say they would not support rate increases if the rate increase reduced the number of certificates available for children (slide 56). It is not surprising that 95% of those surveyed indicated support for increasing funding for the certificate program so that rates can increase without reducing the supply of certificates (slide 57).

One area explored by the survey was child care provider interest in business support. Providers overwhelmingly indicated they are interested in business support (slide 58). Providers list the types of business support they would like to see offered (slide 72) and they list the difficulties they face running their child care business (slide 77).

Unfortunately many providers report that they do not participate in the Child Care and Adult Food Program (slide 73). Supporting child care centers to participate in CACFP would increase child care revenue and improve child nutrition.