

Memo to: MDHS Early Childhood Care and Development
From: MLICCI and 174 Child Care Centers (see listing below)
Date: April 27, 2021
Re: Recommendations for Use of Federal Covid Child Care Funds and Input on the 2022-2024 CCDF State Plan



Mississippi Low-Income
Childcare Initiative

Mississippi is in receipt of over \$133 million in Covid relief funds and will receive \$519 million in additional covid relief funds for CCDF funded child care through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). These funds give Mississippi an unprecedented opportunity to serve more CCDF eligible children than our state has ever before been able to serve. Child care providers in MS' CCDF-funded Child Care Payment Program (CCPP) have ideas and recommendations about how these funds should be spent. Recommendations are included below.

In addition, as MDHS prepares the 2022-2024 CCDF State Plan, CCPP providers have ideas and recommendations about what this plan should include. Recommendations are included below.

MLICCI held zoom meetings with CCPP providers on March 13 and 15 to share information about federal CCDF Covid funding and the CCDF state plan process and to solicit input from providers on both to be shared with MDHS. MLICCI followed up with a zoom call on April 8 and follow-up phone calls to finalize recommendations. Altogether, as you will note below, 175 child care providers from all across the state of MS have signed on to these recommendations.

CCPP providers in MS, along with MLICCI, offer the following recommendations to MDHS for use of the federal CCDF covid relief funds and urge MDHS to include these actions in the 2022-2024 CCDF State Plan for MS.

Please know that throughout this document CCPP (Child Care Payment Program) is used to indicate the centers and children that currently participate in the MDHS CCDF-funded CCPP program. In the document below CCDF and CCPP are used interchangeably.

RECOMMENDATION #1: Increase the number of CCPP-eligible children served by CCPP

The ARPA funds include \$200 million for expanded assistance to eligible children in the CCDF program. Using MDHS' average annual reimbursement amount of \$480/month, this amount could extend services to an additional 35,000 children, more than twice the 31,605 MDHS reported serving last year. This would be extremely helpful in light of the MLICCI estimate that 112,000 children in MS meet CCDF/CCPP eligibility criteria.

This would allow existing CCPP centers to increase their enrollment to those parents whose children are on CCPP centers' waiting lists, need services, but can't afford to enroll their children without CCPP assistance. MLICCI's recent survey of CCPP centers shows they are under-enrolled on average by 30%, and that CCPP only makes up about 38% of their current enrollment. These numbers show both a great need for and the capacity for a significant increase in the number of CCPP eligible children served by existing CCPP centers.

RECOMMENDATION #2: Ease CCPP-Eligible Parents' Access to CCPP

- **Eliminate the child support requirement**
CCPP centers report this requirement is a deterrent to eligible parents who need CCPP in order to work. CCPP centers report this is a big obstacle even for parents who try to comply because the MDHS Child Support Division and the MDHS ECED Division don't communicate with each other to expedite parents' required documentation for CCPP. This is a major problem for most parents seeking child care because most parents on and seeking CCPP are single moms.
- **Speed up action on parents' CCPP applications.**
CCPP centers report that 60 days is too long, and it often takes 90 days. CCPP centers report this delay hurts eligible families who are waiting for CCPP applications to be approved.
- **Make CCPP pay stub requirement consistent with pay periods:**
CCPP centers report that the requirement for the most recent pay stub is impossible to meet if the applicant is paid weekly or biweekly and the application takes 60-90 days for approval.
- **Electronically acknowledge receipt of submitted documents.**
CCPP centers report that MDHS often claims no receipt of documents that have, in fact, been submitted, but there is currently no way to track or verify. When this occurs, parents have to start the process over even when they're done everything within the required timeframe. CCPP centers also report parents have been kicked off because they faxed documentation.
- **Expedite redetermination process and prevent interruptions in service due to redetermination:**
Many CCPP centers report redetermination problems. These result in parents losing their CCPP child care and CCPP centers losing eligible children, adversely impacting parents and providers financially, and adversely impacting children's early education.

RECOMMENDATION #3: Help Centers Recruit, Hire and Retain Qualified Staff

- **Help centers recruit and retain staff, and help centers pay higher wages and better benefits for staff.**

Centers report that low wages result in difficulty recruiting and retaining staff. Centers report that qualified workers leave child care centers for higher pay in preK, Head Start, or other industries.

- **Help centers offer health insurance benefits to staff**
Centers report wanting to offer health insurance to their staff, but being unable to afford to offer this benefit. Centers want MDHS to help explore solutions to this problem.
- **Help centers hire more staff**
Centers report this would help lower to teacher/child ratio; it would also help with transportation costs to pick up after schoolers; this would allow staff the flexibility to attend training and staff development; and this would help centers to hire support staff. Also, centers report needing to hire additional help to sanitize and daily clean their facilities during Covid.
- **Have MDHS recruit, train and do background checks on a pool of qualified candidates.**
Many centers report difficulty recruiting and retaining staff. This would help with recruitment and the front-end background check requirement. This could also help centers who need substitute teachers
- **MDHS should offer scholarships for college, so teachers and caregivers can afford it AS WELL AS AND TIED TO paying stipends or wage supplements, so teachers don't leave child care for higher paying jobs once they obtain higher education levels. Centers urge MDHS NOT TO offer scholarships UNLESS MDHS ALSO OFFERS stipends or wage supplements to support higher pay for those who get the scholarships.**
Centers want to support staff to get higher levels of education, but they need staff to stay in child care jobs which requires adequate wages which centers cannot afford without MDHS subsidy/assistance. Centers also suggest this assistance be tied to a requirement that staff who take advantage remain employed at centers as a requirement for receiving the stipends/higher pay.
- **Give centers money to offer staff hazard pay during the pandemic**

RECOMMENDATION #4: Support Child Care Centers' Financial Stability

- **Offer the booster shot again and increase the amount available to centers**
Many centers report how helpful the booster shot was, and how helpful it would be again especially in a larger amount.
- **Provide centers with Covid related supplies and sanitation**

A Step Ahead Learning Center	Lexington
ABC & Me Christian Preschool	Columbus
ABC Learning Center	Oxford
Agape Love Learning Center	Greenwood
Agape Christian Academy World	Jackson
All God's Children Learning Center	Gautier
Applegate Academy	Biloxi
Back to Basics Day Care	Cleveland
BeBe Kids Learning Center	Indianola
Big Minds, Little Hearts	Jackson
Blessed Beginners	McComb
Bobbie's Little Lambs Christian Center	Pearl
Boyd's Early Childhood Development	Jackson
Brickfire Project	Starkville
Bright Beginnings	Greenwood
Bright Minds Learning Center	McComb
Buck-a-roo	Indianola
Byram Learning Center	Byram
Calvert's ABC Pre-School Nursery Center	Aberdeen
Camp Care/HCHRS	Bay St Louis
Care Bears Child Development Center	Leland
Centreville Little Angels	Centreville
Charlie Brown Day Care	Greenville
Children's Educare DC/PC	Jackson
Children's Learning Center of Vicksburg, LLC	Vicksburg
Christian Academy for Children	Columbus
Christian Mission Learning Center	Jackson
Color My World	Tupelo
Creative Kids Academy Inc.	McComb
Creative Minds Learning Center	Jackson
Crowns & Tiaras Academy	Natchez
Divine Inspirations Learning Center	Gautier
Divine Preschool Academy	Gulfport

Eagles Nest Early Childhood LC	Canton
Edna's Daycare	Gulfport
Emmanuel Child Care Center	Jackson
Empowered for Life, Inc.	Nettleton
Enchanted Days Learning Center	Senatobia
Everlasting Love	Greenville
Faith Academy of Jackson	Jackson
Faithfully Yours Learning Center	Gautier
First Start Academy	Hattiesburg
First Steps LC	Ridgeland
Fun Time Pre-School	Clinton
Future Daycare	Crystal Springs
GBTC Child Care & After School	Jackson
Genesis Child Care and Learning	Verona
Global Connection Learning Center	Jackson
God's Helping Hands Learning Academy	Port Gipson
God's Little Angels	Greenwood
Growing Patch	Carthage
H & H Kidz Zone	Vicksburg
Hancock County Child Dev. Center	Bay St. Louis
Hancock County Stars-East	Kiln
Hansel & Gretel CDC	Natchez
Happy Smiles Day Care	Greenville
Happy Start Learning Center	Macon
Harvey's Academy of Care	Tylertown
Heavenly Angels Day Care Center	Port Gibson
Hoskins Learning Center	Batesville
Imaginarium Learning Center-NS	Drew
J.J's Development Center	Pearl
Jack & Jill Day Care Center	Greenville
Jamboree Child Development Center	Jackson
Jerry's Little Lambs Learning Lab	Jackson
Jones ECD Center	Jackson

Just for Kids	Biloxi
K's Kids Learning Center	Pearl
Kaleidoscope of Learning	Byram
Kangaroo Pouch Learning Academy	Jayess
Kiddie City Child Care Learning Center	Vicksburg
Kiddie Karrousel, Inc.	Fayette
Kiddie Kollege	Vicksburg
Kiddie Korner	Batesville
Kids are Kids Learning Center-NS	Brandon
Kids First Preschool	Okolona
Kids Landing	Tupelo
Kingdom Preschool	Pearl
Leaps and Bounds	Belzoni
Learning Depot Child Development Center	Ocean Springs
Lil Darling Child Care Center	Leland
Lil Tots Daycare Center	Gulfport
Lil' Wonders	Vicksburg
Lisa's Christian Learning Center	Columbus
Little Angels Day Care	Indianola
Little Blessings Daycare	Louisville
Little Blessings from Heaven	Terry
Little Children Christian Day/Night Care	Tylertown
Little Dreamers	Ridgeland
Little Eagles, Wees & Tots	Booneville
Little Humble Hearts Christian Academy	Ruleville
Little Kids Universie	Port Gibson
Little Learners' Daycare	Greenwood
Little People Day Care	Hazelhurst
Little People Learning Center	Moss Point
Little Saints Learning Center	Winona
Little Samaritan Montessori (Midtown Partners)	Jackson
Loving Hands Day Care	Greenville
Madonna Little Angels LC	Drew

Magnolia Kindergarten-NS	Batesville
Mary's Little Lamb Daycare	Moss Point
McCarty's Learning Center	Picayune
McKids Academy	Belzoni
MITI Kids, Horn Lake	Horn Lake
Mother Goose Christian Comm CC Ctr	McComb
Mother Goose Christian School	Jackson
Mother's Love Learning Center	Canton
Myers Childcare Center	Hattiesburg
N.E.E.D.S. II Child Care	Hattiesburg
Nala Child Care Cener	Guntown
New Horizons Ministry	Jackson
Northtown Child Development Ctr	Jackson
Once Upon a Lifetime	Greenville
Open Hearts Academy	Clinton
Opulent Life Kidz Kare	Holly Springs
Pat's Christian Academy, Inc.	Jackson
Perfected Praise DayCare (Nu Life Church)	Cleveland
Pickett Street LC	Greenville
Play Tyme at Adventure Land	West Point
Play-N-Learn	Greenville
Pooh Bear Daycare Center	Indianola
Precious in His Sight Daycare	Southhaven
Precious Moments Learning Dev Ctr	Greenwood
Precious Years	Foxworth
Prep Co Tutorial School/CCDirectors	Jackson
Railroad Center	Richland
Rainbow Kids Day Care	Greenwood
Rogers Child Care Learning Center	Lumberton
Saint Mary Academy	Tylertown
School of Champions	Itta Bena
Shining Star Child Care	Magee
Skate Odyssey of Olive Branch	Olive Branch

Small Beginnings	Jackson
Small Hands	Quitman
Smart Wonders-CDC and After Care	Jackson
Smiles Learning	Starkville
Sponge Bob Child Care	Indianola
Starting Point Academy	Jackson
Sunshine Day Care & Learning Center	Greenville
Surehouse Learning Center	Hattiesburg
T'Stines's Day Care	Greenville
Tattle Tales LC	Moss Point
Taylor Daycare & Learning Center	Waynesboro
Taylor's Playhouse II	Byhalia
Tender Care Preschool	Jackson
The Christian Learning Center	Madison
The Christian Mission Learning Center, Inc	Jackson
The Growing Tree	Jackson
The Learning Tree	Greenwood
The Mustard Seed	DIBERVILLE
The Potter's House Family Service Ctr.	Clinton
Therah's Child Care	Hattiesburg
Three Rivers Academy Preschool	Gulfport
Tiny Steps Academy	Gulfport
TJ Learning Center	Hattiesburg
TLC Academy & Learning Center, LLC	Greenville
TLC Learning Center	Tyler town
Toddler Town, Inc.	Greenville
Tomorrows Pride	Columbus
Ton's Creative Center	Jackson
Tonya's Learning Center	Waynesboro
Tots and Toddlers Child Development Center	McComb
Treasured Hearts Day Care	Greenwood
True Vine Christian Learning Center	Greenville
Tunjia's Little Ones	Hattiesburg

WBF Rainbow Learning Center, LLC	Jackson
We Care Daycare	Belzoni
We Care Learning Ctr Aftercare	Jackson
Wee Care Academy	McComb
Wee Kids Children's Ministry	Kosciusko
Wee Ones Child Care	Gulfport
West Kemper Kiddie Kollege	Dekalb
Westside ECD Center	Jackson
Wishing Well Learning Center	Verona