



# MISSISSIPPI SECAC MEETING MINUTES

**March 3, 2022**

9:30 am-12:00 pm

Two Museums

222 North Street, Jackson, MS

Recording of meeting available at: [MS SECAC 30-03-2022](#)

## I. Welcome

- Reminder there will be a public comment period towards the end of the meeting
- Reviewed meeting agreements
- Provided notice that this meeting is being livestreamed and recorded

## II. Introductions/Roll Call & Approval of Minutes

- Council Members Present: Chad Allgood, Dean Bobo, Kelly Butler, Susan Buttross, Jennifer Calvert, Michael Cormack, Jill Dent, Vicki Lowery, Julie Parker, Lori Rolison (Gloyd), Angela Rutherford, Andrea Sanders, Linda Southward, Tamara Smith, Lynda Stewart (representing Wendy Bailey), Nita Thompson,
- Council Members Absent: Travonda Morris, Stephanie Davidson, Melissa Parker, Tina Routh, Holly Spivey, Candice Taylor, Carey Wright
- Also in Attendance: Roberta Avila, LaTasha Hadley, Miranda Richardson, Nicole Banes, Callie Poole, Sujan Anreddy, Aisha Carson, Renard Elliot, Rebecca Klein, Katie Fischer, Emily Powers
- Meeting Minutes from the January 6, 2022 meeting were shared. Dr. Susan Buttross made a motion to approve the minutes. Michael Cormack seconded. All voted to approve the minutes.

### Updates on Continuing Topics: Child Support Enforcement Requirement for the Child Care Payment Program

- As it stands currently, there is a requirement for the Child Care Payment Program to cooperate with the Child Support Division
- Chad Allgood and Vicki Lowery have been doing research on this topic and also received information from the Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative and are in support of removing the requirement as part of the program.
- Chad Allgood proposed SECAC consider making an official recommendation to the governor to remove this requirement and opened the floor to comments and concerns:
  - Jill Dent: the Data Committee wanted to make the recommendation to the governor that they would like to see changed.
  - Tamara Smith: "I received a lot of information on the child support requirement and did some additional research on other states and [I] do recommend they remove away from that requirement. It would be so beneficial to families because one thing it does is it gets families to separate and that's not what we are trying to do. We want families to be together if they can and to be able to support their families and be self sustainable."
  - Kelly Butler: "Thank you to SECAC for putting this at the top of the agenda and I too am in favor of this vote."



- Julie Parker: "I am very much in support of this initiative and very pleased that SECAC is making it a priority."
- Jennifer Calvert: "I also support it. I think it's a good decision for us to make."
- Susan Buttross: "I will pile on. As we've talked to parents throughout the state it is clearly a barrier and a difficulty so we support removing it."
- Andrea Sanders: "In this particular program, the eligibility requirements already apply to working families and people pursuing a degree and particularly in my role as Commissioner of Child Protection Services, we're really focusing in the next 2-3 years on getting upstream from child abuse and really stabilizing families before that critical crisis occurs and/or stabilizing families quickly which is often a possibility once that first incident occurs, rather than pulling them in the system which is honestly never going to be a good substitute for families. I personally think the Child Care Development Fund offers some of the most potential for Mississippi of any government program. Getting children in good, quality child care early and allowing their parents the ability to work without fear of where their children are, without having to leave them with a 13-year-old brother because they don't have options, that's how to start to stop this cycle of violence within households."
- Vicky Lowry: The Division of Early Childhood Care and Development at MDHS has been tracking this issue and following the research and studies coming out recently, including those from the Urban League, Zero to Three and the National Conference of State Legislators and it certainly shows a trend away from this requirement in other states and for all the reasons shared today their division likewise supports making this recommendation to the governor to see the Child Support Cooperation Requirement removed so it's not a barrier to families who are trying to seek employment."
- Dean Bobo: "I am thankful that we are going to recommend removing this requirement for our parents."
- Jill Dent motioned they take a vote on making a formal recommendation to the governor's office of removing the Child Support Enforcement Rule as a requirement from the Child Care Subsidy Program. The motion was seconded from Kelly Butler. All voted in favor, none opposed. With a round of applause, the motion passed.

### III. SECAC Committee Updates

- Workforce Development & Retention Committee: Kelly Butler reported they had a good committee meeting. They discussed the need for better training and taking a look at formal early childhood education programs training and reached out to the Department of Education for assistance collecting materials from institutions of higher education that are training these individuals. Dr. Davidson from JSU is helping on that project. They talked about creating a hub as a catalogue of resources for providers across the state. Dr. Buttross has already lifted a set of modules. They have also started to identify mechanisms for better compensation and benefits with help from Tamara Smith. They are also talking about parents as a pool of candidates for child care, particularly TANF recipients. They are conducting a landscape analysis of the type of professional development available. They are also looking at research around quality systems. Their next meeting is in April—their homework is to look at existing professional standards in Mississippi to make recommendations. They are also coordinating with the asset map team to lift up specific ideas they would like to see incorporated.
- Early Intervention Committee: Julie Parker reported the committee met on February 10<sup>th</sup>. The State Office of Early Intervention leadership attended and provided an overview and about where early intervention has been in the last seven years and where it is going. Tanya Wear from the Mississippi Ready Nation Project also shared insight about her

program serving young children with disabilities. In this initial meeting they looked at the mission and goals for subcommittee and reviewed the 4 charges but the purpose was to provide a foundation where EI has come from, where it is today and the state office plans for the future. The asset map should consider standards for workforce development and how EI standards are being addressed in pre-service programming as well. Next meeting is April 7<sup>th</sup>—link will be posted on SECAC website. The conversation will focus on state plans collectively how members will have a voice. Matt Williams' public comment was helpful as well.

- Policy Accountability & Data Committee: Jill Dent reported that the group met on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. They spent a majority of their time discussing the Child Support Enforcement Requirement and the committee agreed about sentiments shared earlier in this meeting. They also discussed the longitudinal data system—looked at data in that system and will continue conversations about that and next steps to take.
  - Asset map and surveys: the group suggested that all the members receive a copy of the survey. Everyone was emailed the survey last week. Tamara Smith reviewed survey as a parent—40 questions felt too long. The survey says it will take 10-15 minutes but it took her closer to 20 minutes with her child nearby and noted many parents taking the survey will also be trying to get dinner on the table. Tamara would like to help distribute the survey to parents. Jill Dent noted the survey is comprehensive and is glad there are gift cards for those who respond. Susan Buttross noted trying to take the survey but getting stuck. The group asked if the survey can be shortened. Kelly suggested prioritizing the top 10 questions for respondents to answer or creating different optional sections for families to answer. Katie Fisher from Start Early noted trying to balance the broad scope of SECAC including the wide range of programs for birth to 8 and trying to be inclusive of all families—this resulted in a longer survey. There was an effort to keep it multiple choice and eliminate open-ended questions. There are two options: keep distributing the current survey as it is already out in the world (there were five respondents to date) or pause and shorten the survey. If the survey is paused, the asset map will be delayed. SECAC members would like to take a deeper look at the survey and give more formalized suggestions to shorten it. Because the asset map was a directive from the governor's office and the goal is to obtain good data and good information, Andrea and Chad will talk to Holly about next steps with a quick turnaround.
- Family Support and Access Committee: discussed improving access to information—the group is looking at Help Me Grow and what other states are doing as to not reinvent the wheel. The committee would like professional learning about mechanics and policy of CCPP so Vicki is coordinating with staff to arrange that. The committee can also help Vicki's office once data is presented.
- None of the committees had any further questions for discussion.

#### IV. Regional Early Childhood Advisory Councils

- Desire to increase access to SECAC and create a broader way to engage with stakeholders from around the state—regional councils could serve as feedback loops to the council.
- For the age range, Chad Allgood recommended birth-12 which is the age range served by child care. We undervalue how much after school programs impact children's lives.
- Michael Cormack represents K-12 and asked if there is an opportunity for SECAC to bring in other school district members, and whether there is a state that has adopted a regional model we could learn from.
- Angela Rutherford asked if SECAC members are standing this up or is there someone on the ground in each region.
- Chad Allgood noted it may work well to have a SECAC liaison to work with someone outside the council to do the long-term work. Andrea Sanders said we would like more engagement across the state and could have a formalized townhall in different regions. The more open, transparent and accessible, the quicker we can get to the work.



- Tamara Smith: this is an opportunity for parents to feel valued and heard.
- Angela Rutherford: this is a great avenue to explore—their committee can develop a system like this to build those hubs for families and providers.
- Chad Allgood: Head Start needs to be at that table because they have such an expansive way of serving families and we can learn a lot from them about how to serve families.
- The Bylaws Committee plus a few SECAC volunteers can do some initial research into other states who have something similar in place and can report at the next meeting what this may look like. Julie Parker and Michael Cormack volunteered.

## VI. Asset Mapping Update

- Introductions from Start Early and Fahrenheit: Aisha Carson and Renard Elliot from Fahrenheit will be supporting some of the communications and meeting notes and Rebecca Klein, Katie Fisher and Emily Powers from Start Early are assisting with the parent & provider surveys, focus groups, asset map and strategic vision.
  - Family & Provider Survey: The focus groups are happening now so we will revisit plans for them to take the survey.
  - Family & Provider Focus Groups & Interviews: the first provider focus group convened and we are starting to hear about experiences on the ground. MELA is recruiting and hosting in different regions around the state, including child care deserts. Participants in focus groups will receive compensation for their time. Please share any additional survey results or information you think would be helpful for the asset maps. The asset maps will also include Program Profiles—it will be helpful for SECAC to fact check and provide additional information. For the mini program profiles highlighting a handful of programs across the state, the group confirmed Gilmore and MS Building Blocks no longer exist. Families as Allies is active offers services through grant. Recommendations to add to the list: Family 2 Family Health Information Center at University of Southern Mississippi's Institute for Disability Studies and MLICCI's Employment Equity for Single Moms (EESM) program.
- Mississippi Thrive's Resource Maps: At the last meeting, SECAC discussed having a literal map of resources and that this already exists. Callie Poole with Mississippi Thrive presented the resource maps on their website. MS Thrive originally had a 3-year grant but has continued to receive funding. The push is to make the map sustainable. A part-time or full-time employee could update and maintain the resource maps, with technical support from Dr. Anreddy as needed. They are in the process of adding resources to these maps and ensuring resources are available in different languages. If anyone has anything to add to the resource maps they can contact Mississippi Thrive. Kelly Butler asked how Mississippi Thrive's map interfaces with the SECAC asset map—the governor wants to know about fiscal resources that flows into the state. It's important to make sure this work is not replicated, and ultimately there is one place for people to go to for resources.

## VII. Public Comments

- Chad Allgood asked if there were any public comments.
- One person provided comments in-person and two people provided comments on Zoom.

Delores Suel, President of the Child Care Directors' Alliance, said, "I would first like to say hello. I am the owner of Prep Co Tutorial Schools in Jackson and I am also President of the Child Care Directors Network. I would like to really thank the council for making the recommendation of removing the child support requirement. It has been a deterrent to many parents that were eligible for the program but could not receive the certificate. I notice you're doing a lot and I'm really happy of what I've heard today. I can see progress and I am really saying that from my heart but I do have concerns about the data you're asking for in many respects. I looked at the survey and it was long for parents it was long for me and I read everything. I called Tamara and I said it's a little long. There are many of us who don't have degrees and there are many parents who don't

*have as much as a high school education and have trouble helping their kids with their homework so we have to think about those things and do what we can. But be mindful when you're getting surveys that you are mindful of asking for private information. That is a pet peeve of mine and a concern and I think we're asking for a little too much private information. I ask that anything you do that you use identifiable numbers. It is very important because once the information is provided under the Privacy Act you can request it. You can say you won't give it out but under the Privacy Act and I've done some research on it you can request it and it's available. So we have to look at the different laws that apply and sometimes we don't realize they apply when we're making these decisions. On the advisory committee, it's been a recommendation of mine forever and Andrea can attest to that I would recommend that from the regions, you ask for recommendations for people to serve from those communities that people in that community know will do the work. Some of us just want to put things on our resume, but if you know a person that is really going to work I think some of the recommendations need to come from the community. I say the SECAC members should not be on everything. I say we probably need one person to serve in the areas but look at the community so you can get true information from people that are willing to serve and that are in support of children."*

*Carol Burnett, Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative said, "Hello everyone. I am Carol Burnett with the Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative and I also want to thank the members of SECAC for making the recommendation to remove the Child Support Requirement out of the Child Care Subsidy Program. You all know that we have worked on that for a very long time. I want to say a couple of things about how doing that is going to help with regard to achieving I think the governor's and other state leader's workforce goals specific to moving more people into the workforce and improving Mississippi's labor force participation rate. The state we owe a plan—the Workforce Investment Opportunity Act statewide plan is being written now it is due to be submitted by March 15<sup>th</sup>. That plan identifies single parent headed families as the largest number of families in Mississippi with barriers entering the workforce. Removing this Child Support Requirement is going to help that problem a lot. The WIOA plan identifies the need for child care as a primary need among our state's low-income working families who the child care program serves. I want to lift up a couple of things about the child care program that I think are helpful to making a workforce argument. One is that DHS reports last year there were over 35,000 children served in the child care subsidy program which is quite a large number, and the eligibility for child care is higher than most program. Child care is not TANF but eligibility goes up to 85% of the state's median income so a mom and a child can be eligible up to the mom's income of \$38,000 a year. If she has two children she can be eligible up to \$47,000 a year. Now the voucher she has if she earns more she pays more because it goes by a sliding fee scale that DHS sets up but all of those components of it in addition to the fact that parents have to meet a work requirement are all things that make it a very important workforce support and I believe those arguments would really be helpful to cite as you make your recommendation to Governor Reeves in support of removing the Child Support Requirement because those all speak to the ways it helps achieve the goal of increasing our state's workforce participation rate so thank you very much for taking that action today."*

*Roberta Avila said, "Thank you this is Roberta Avila. Can you hear me? Ok great. I coordinate the Child Care Leadership Team for the Child Care Initiative and I thank you for this opportunity to comment. First I want to thank all the SECAC members for their volunteer work on this council to create a renewed vision for the early childhood system. I think that is an awesome goal. I have two recommendations to SECAC and first I just want to thank you, thank you for moving forward with the recommendation to Governor Reeves to remove the Child Support Requirement. Making this recommendation will allow all parents who want to work to access affordable and safe child care while they support their family. My first recommendation is along those same lines. I ask the council continue to learn all you can about the other barriers to families who want to access the Child Care Payment Program. After my comments I will put these links in the chat so you can access them to see these other barriers. The first link I am going to give you is the Child Care Initiative's 2021 Survey of the Child Care Payment Program and we interviewed child care providers and you'll see those comments in that survey. Another link I am going to put in the chat is the Mississippi*



*Department of Human Services 2021 Annual Report and when you click on that that link you can go in as well as to MDHS. But I want to reference page 16 on the number of children served in CCPP and also in that same report on Table A it shows respondents are reporting to barriers to accepting children receiving subsidies through the CCPP and some of the comments made were that paperwork is too difficult. I ask that we continue to look at ways to make it easier for parents to apply for CCPP. That report also states that addressing barriers through further education, subsidy rate adjustment, and streamlining enrollment and compliance processes could improve the participation. The second recommendation is that we ask that you recommend that DEECD serve more children in the Child Care Subsidy Program. We ask that you use the American Rescue Plan Act, the ARPA money to serve more kids. As you know, there are two buckets of money through ARPA. \$390 million has been allocated for the Child Care Strong Grants which has been implemented and child care providers are now utilizing those funds and then the state also received \$200 million to expand the Child Care Payment Program. These are child care development funds. CCD funds are discretionary funds. After the state has used the quality set aside for CCDF the remainder of those funds could be used to increase the number of children served. We understand that none of the funds in the second bucket—the \$200 million—have yet been spent. The money was received in 2021 and it needs to be obligated by September 30, 2023 and spent by September 30, 2024. By the Child Care Initiative’s calculation, DEECD is only serving about 30% of eligible children leaving about 70% of kids unserved. These are children 0-12 and of course this includes children in the after school programs that Chad mentioned are a very important population to be served. In our calculation of the number of unserved, we use the lowest number of ineligible children who could be served. That is families who are income-eligible up to or below 85% of the family median income and families that meet work requirements which is working 25 hours or more. We took a generous and conversative approach to calculate the number of unserved children and by our calculation there are 121,000 eligible children. In DHS’s 2021 annual report on page 16 they state that CCPP is serving 35,000 children. So using DEECD’s numbers of children served and our calculation of the number of children eligible, DEECD is only serving 29% of the eligible population. So I’ll put in the chat where you can review the MDHS 2021 report on number of children served. We used their number. We are in a moment where we can expand the Child Care Payment Program, and we see other states that are doing that during this time, like Georgia. Given the large unmet need in our state and addressing the issues using CCDF funds will make the CCPP more sustainable. Mississippi DHS has \$200 million and Health & Human Services is encouraging states to advertise the program and to do outreach. Thank you again for this opportunity to make comments and thank you so much for the recommendation to end the Child Support requirement.”*

## **VIII. Closing Remarks and Adjournment**

- Start Early will compile comments regarding the child support requirement recommendation to draft a letter from SECAC that incorporates those comments with an ask that everyone signs that letter. DocuSign should be sufficient.



## Appendix A. Zoom Meeting Chat Log

09:35:42 From Felicia Thompson to Everyone:

Nita Thompson is signed in as Felicia Thompson

09:36:23 From Lynda Stewart to Everyone:

Good morning! I'm Lynda Stewart from DMH here for Wendy Bailey.

09:45:12 From Jennifer Calvert to Everyone:

yes

09:45:15 From annie bobo to Everyone:

YES

09:45:15 From Michael Cormack Jr. to Everyone:

Yes

09:45:17 From Lynda Stewart to Everyone:

Yes

09:49:08 From Patrina to Everyone:

Patrina Dace

09:50:13 From Katie Fisher to Everyone:

Hi, everyone! Could I request for the people in-person to say their name before they make their comment? It helps for the minutes, thank you!

09:52:00 From Katie Fisher to Everyone:

Thank you very much!

09:53:56 From Katie Fisher to Everyone:



We got them - thanks!

09:56:02 From Felicia Thompson to Everyone:

y

09:56:10 From Michael Cormack Jr. to Everyone:

Yes

09:56:11 From annie bobo to Everyone:

YES

09:56:12 From Jennifer Calvert to Everyone:

yes

09:56:28 From Lynda Stewart to Everyone:

Yes

09:56:33 From iPad (2) to Everyone:

Yes

10:39:07 From Katie Fisher to Everyone:

Can whoever is the host of the meeting let Rebecca Klein out of the waiting room?

10:51:13 From Michael Cormack Jr. to Everyone:

I'm happy to assist with this effort.

11:05:47 From Kelly Butler to Everyone:

That is correct. MS Building Blocks no longer exists.

11:07:02 From Callie Poole, Mississippi State University SSRC to Everyone:





I am not a SECAC member so not sure if I'm supposed to say anything yet? :) but you might want to include Family 2 Family Health Information Center at University of Southern Mississippi's Institute for Disability Studies?

11:20:51 From Callie Poole, Mississippi State University SSRC to Everyone:

I think it could work with one person's part time salary providing updating & maintenance to the resource maps, with technical support from Dr. Anreddy as needed.

11:30:03 From Carol Burnett to Everyone:

Carol Burnett public comment

11:30:08 From Roberta Avila to Everyone:

Roberta Avila. Public comment. MLICCI

11:34:03 From Stacy Callender, MSDH to Everyone:

I wanted to make a comment about the public notice of meetings. When I tried to link from the website, I was required to enter the meeting code. If this meeting is to be publicly accessible, the full link will need to be posted.