

DRAFT



# MISSISSIPPI EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM ASSET MAP

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES





# STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

# Health, Mental Health & Nutrition

**Mississippi promotes the health, mental health, and nutrition** of young children and families through a diverse set of programs and funding such as Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), home visiting, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Women, Infant Children (WIC) nutrition program and mental health supports through the Mississippi Department of Mental Health. Supporting the health and well-being not only of children but also their parents and caregivers is a critical component of an effective system of early childhood development.



## Strengths:

- 1. Most children in Mississippi are covered by health insurance.** As of May 2022, 426,027 children were enrolled in Medicaid and 41,547 were enrolled in CHIP. Approximately 5% of children under age 6 were not covered by health insurance in 2019.
- 2. Many families report having a positive experience with their child's health care services.** 93% of families who completed our survey indicated that they had a good to excellent experience with their child's health care services. In focus groups, families had great things to say about their child's pediatrician.
- 3. Access to the Healthy Families Mississippi Home Visiting Program has expanded.** The program now can serve 750 families. Two additional counties and the MS Band of Choctaw Indians have been added since 2020. Many families reported in the interviews and focus groups they would like to have more parent support and opportunities to learn about child development to make sure their child is on track, both of which are key components of the Healthy Families model. This program also provides support for healthy pregnancies and could help improve birth outcomes for both mothers and babies.
 

**“[Medicaid] sent us a letter, and they said due to COVID, he's automatically reinstated because he was on it before, so that was a lifesaver.”**

– MS PARENT



# 15.6%

of women ages 15-44 are uninsured, a significant **decline from 26.6%** in 2010.

## Maternal mortality rate

# 33.2

deaths per 100,000 live births. The mortality rate for **Black women is 3x the rate** for White women. 86% of pregnancy related deaths occurred postpartum, including 37% after 6 weeks.

# 11.8%

Low birth weight babies (**16.3% for Black or African American babies**)

## Health, Mental Health & Nutrition

(continued)

**4. Infants and postpartum women have good access to nutrition support through WIC.** WIC covers almost 100% of eligible infants and 92% of women in the first year after birth. WIC offers access to breastfeeding support 24 hours a day through an app that connects women to live lactation consultants. WIC now offers eWIC cards that allow families to purchase healthy foods at retailers near them.

**5. The Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH) and programs like Head Start are already helping families with children to connect to mental health care.** DMH offers mental health services specifically targeted to families with children, such as Certified Peer Support Specialists who are parents/caregivers with experiencing raising a child with an emotional, mental or behavior disorder, and programs that aim to keep children in a mental health crisis in their communities rather than placed in more restrictive, inpatient care. Head Start programs also support the mental health of children, families and staff including providing resources on child mental health, social-emotional well-being, and trauma. Head Start also has a 24-hour crisis and support hotline for caregivers which offers free counseling and resources on topics such as parent support, natural disasters, child abuse and domestic violence.

## Opportunities:

**1. Many postpartum women, parents and caregivers do not have access to health care.** Most women with low income are only eligible for Medicaid during pregnancy and for two months after birth. Other states extend eligibility to 12 months postpartum. Income eligibility requirements for Medicaid for most adults are extremely low (<\$382 per month or \$4584 per year for a two-person household). Without enacting Medicaid expansion, an estimated 110,000 uninsured adults, 28% of which are parents, fall into a “coverage gap” in which their income is too low to qualify for Affordable Care Act marketplace assistance but too high to be Medicaid eligible.

**“I have tried to apply for Medicaid. My kids are on Medicaid because they’re on child support and I’m a single mom and they get approved for Medicaid. I can’t. I’ve tried. [...] I’ve no health insurance, none whatsoever.”**

- MS PARENT



## STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES



Infant mortality rate is

**8.8** per **1000** live births,  
compared to 5.6 nationally

**19%**

of Adults living in households with  
children felt down, depressed or  
hopeless for more than half of the  
days or nearly every day over two  
weeks

**23%**

of children in MS experience  
food insecurity, compared to the  
national average of **15.2%**.

**2. Many parents and providers expressed a desire for greater mental health supports for children and families.** In our survey of Mississippi families, 13% of families reported seeking or receiving social-emotional, mental health or behavioral services; of these families, 61% stated it was a “big problem” to get the services they needed. Furthermore, many parents and providers who participated in focus groups stated that they would recommend additional funding be spent on both maternal and child mental health care.

**“[We need] more mental health services. [...] Especially in the last couple of years we’ve seen families go through a ton of trauma, and the education system isn’t necessarily being responsive to that.”**

– MS EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL

**“And when I had her, I had bad, bad, bad postpartum depression. [...] Once I get her breast-fed sometimes it’s one o’clock in the morning and I get her to lay down and try to go sit on the porch and cry my eyes out.”**

– MS PARENT

**3. Mississippi has one of the highest rates of food insecurity for children, yet many low-income children and families eligible for nutrition support through WIC and SNAP are not receiving it.** While coverage for eligible infants by WIC was nearly 100% in 2018, it is estimated that only 55% of eligible pregnant women, and less than half eligible toddlers and 4-year-olds were receiving WIC. Only 71% of eligible families were receiving SNAP in 2018, compared to 81% nationally and with 6 states in the 96%-100% range. Several families in the focus groups and interviews reported significant challenges with accessing SNAP services.



**4. Families have reported not receiving timely notifications for appointments to enroll in programs such as Medicaid and SNAP.**

**“I would get an appointment reminder after my appointment was supposed to have already happened, and that’s happened with, like, a Medicaid appointment and with food stamps before. Specifically with food stamps, we applied in January when I was looking for a job [...] I never got a phone call telling me, ‘You have an appointment.’ So then, they just dismiss the case, and we have to appeal it.”**

– MS PARENT