**SECAC Draft Recommendations**

**September 1, 2022**

**PLEASE NOTE: These are draft recommendations currently being developed by MS SECAC committees for the MS SECAC Strategic Vision. Please visit ThoughtExchange at mssecac.org or by scanning the QR code to rate these ideas and to share your own ideas.**

**Workforce Committee**

**SECAC Strategic Vision Recommendation #1**

**Issue:** Compensation is too low to attract and retain professionals in the childcare field.

**Actions** (*what is recommended or planned, what requires a legislative solution, what is already underway, what is complete)*:

1. Design a portfolio of business model *options* for childcare centers that could incentivize larger organizations (businesses, universities, community colleges, United Ways, churches) to partner with the centers for mutual benefit (such as becoming a site for those organizations’ staff to send their children), thus creating greater stability for compensation and employee benefits for the centers and also become a reliable provider of childcare to the “host” organization’s employees and stakeholders. These models could include tax credits to businesses the provide specific childcare center supports. These would be opt-in models, as some centers may not want to relinquish independent ownership.

2. Establish a professional standard for a graduated compensation grid tied to education and years of experience.

3. Establish a licensure board and process for early childcare providers to elevate and standardize the profession:

* Option 1: Consider moving licensure of childcare professionals to the MS Department of Education (MDE) to enable alignment of compensation and training with other educators for a more seamless pipeline, while leaving licensure of centers with the MS Department of Health.
* Option 2: Create and locate licensure board for professional standards within a newly created Division of Early Childhood within the MS Department of Health, which would also be responsible for existing DHS licensing of childcare centers. (See Recommendation #2, Action #3 below)
* Option 3: Establish licensure of professionals at MDE; retain licensure of centers at DHS.

4. Publish a legislative briefing on compensation strategies from comparable wage states (Arkansas, Tennessee, Louisiana, North Carolina, West Virginia), including comparisons to other low-wage jobs that have fewer human consequences yet exceed childcare workers’ compensation: Fast food restaurant crew ($7.25-13.00); Catfish gutters ($11-14.03); Airport luggage handlers ($12.96-15.32); Trash collectors ($14.00-18.78).

**SECAC Strategic Vision Recommendation #2**

**Issue:** Professional development and training for childcare providers and licensed professionals is not standardized, well-coordinated, publicized, or easily accessed.

**Actions:**

1. Appoint a qualified task force to establish professional licensure standards (not the same as center/facility/curriculum standards) for childcare providers.

* Create a statewide clearinghouse of sources of professional development opportunities.
* Consider housing PD resources at the licensure board (see Recommendation #1, Action Item #3).

2. Incentivize childcare professionals to seek minimal level of training until more rigorous licensure requirements can be executed.

* Create a childcare workforce data base to enhance recruitment efforts and standardize training expectations.
* Identify most appropriate fiscal agent for coordinating and monitoring payments related to continuing education of providers.

3. Improve state support of childcare services and professionals to improve quality of care that leads to better outcomes for children and favorably impacts the state’s economy.

* Establish a division of Early Childhood Services within the Department of Health to support coordination of efforts that will maximize Mississippi’s competitiveness for federal childcare dollars. This division could also serve as the fiscal agent for coordinating and monitoring funding streams specific to early childhood professionals and providers.
* Consider existing funding sources such as MS Lottery.

**Family Support and Access Committee**

**SECAC Strategic Vision Recommendation #1**

**Issue:** Parents and providers report barriers for applying to the Child Care Payment Program (CCPP) including meeting work requirement prior to enrollment, difficulty completing paperwork, and the Child Support Enforcement Requirement.

**Actions:**

1.SECAC voted to recommend to Governor Reeves to remove the Child Support Enforcement Requirement. 

2. The Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Early Childhood Care and Development is working to move a recommendation forward that would add a job search period of 90 days for parents during the initial application process.

3. SECAC can utilize family and provider feedback from surveys, interview, focus groups, SECAC Town Hall, as well as other methods to make recommendations to the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Early Childhood Care and Development for ways to streamline the paperwork process. 

4. Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Early Childhood Care and Development secured technical assistance from ECE-RISE to determine support identification of child care deserts and to determine methods for addressing those areas where child care deserts exist.

5. SECAC can work with external entities to develop a “percent eligibility” formula to ensure a consistent measure of this important data point. 

6. Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Early Childhood Care and Development has completed recent upgrades to the CCPP application process that allows parents to more easily upload documents. The system is available for parents to use via smart phone, tablet, or desktop computer. This process launched on July 13, 2022, and any further updates will be emailed to parents, and providers, as well as posted to the MDHS-DECCD website, and social media platforms. In addition, MDHS-DECCD is currently working with ITS to amend the online application process to allow MDHS-DECCD to obtain email addresses of applicants first. This change will allow MDHS-DECCD to communicate with applicants who have not submitted their application, before it is listed as abandoned. MDHS-DECCD anticipates the online application process will be updated by January 2024. MDHS-DECCD will continue to provide updates as this process develops.

**SECAC Strategic Vision Recommendation #2**

**Issue:** Parents of young children need a well-organized, community-based system of support to access resources and services to support their children’s development.

**Actions:**

1. SECAC can research existing community models across the United States (Help Me Grow, county-level children’s councils, etc.) that have proven results and create a system for reporting the components of those models in a clear and efficient manner. 

2. SECAC can engage in peer learning visits with other states (Alabama, Georgia, Arizona, Utah etc.) with existing well-organized community-based models that produce positive outcomes for families and children. 

3. SECAC can use these learning exchanges, as well as other research and data, to create a menu of options for creating a cohesive and aligned system of support in each county and/or community that ensures families receive the resources and services they need. 

4. Not sure—SECAC can explore a state agency model focused on Early Childhood (Alabama’s Department of Early Childhood Education).

**Early Intervention Committee**

**SECAC Strategic Vision Recommendation #1**

To address the need to increase outcomes for timely services, transitioning and ultimate outcomes by changing the current hiring criteria for Special Instructors to include professionals with a child development degree (153 license) thus allowing for more professionals to be eligible for this role.  Emerging professionals with a bachelor’s degree have been well-trained in child development with a specific emphasis on birth to 5, using a family centered approach. The addition of these professionals could potentially increase special instructors significantly because multiple institutions of higher education offer this degree in different regions of the state.

**SECAC Strategic Vision Recommendation #2**

More training for community-based early care and education providers is needed to provide support for referrals and evidence-based instructional practices. A recommendation that Part C and 619 staff provide training opportunities to childcare providers to increase their capacity to include children with disabilities in their programs and address the importance of service provision in natural environments.