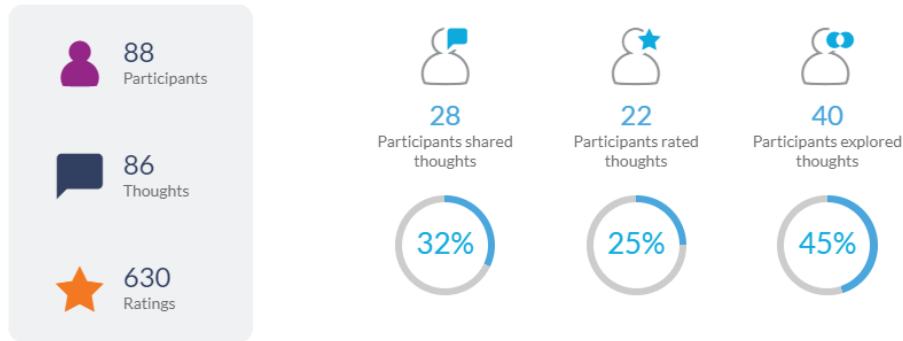


# SECAC ThoughtExchange Summary

## Overview of ThoughtExchange Participation



Of the 88 people who participated in ThoughtExchange:

- 34% are direct providers of early childhood programs/services
- 26% are parents or caregivers of young children (ages 0-8)
- 22% are advocates
- 19% are SECAC members
- 16% are interested community members
- 7% are professional development providers/higher education
- 4% are state or local government agency staff

## ThoughtExchange Results

You can view the full results [here](#). They have been organized below by committee subject matter (and duplicate/similar ideas were combined). Ideas are listed from highest rated to lowest rated. The ideas in **blue** were those shared by SECAC committees, while the ideas in **black** came from members of the general public.

### Workforce Committee

- **SECAC should encourage the state to pursue a way to support increases to child care teacher pay tied to retention.** *Child Care providers have struggled to retain their best teachers long before the pandemic because pay is low and there are rarely benefits.*
  - **Raise the professionalism and funding for early educators so we can retain staff.** *The pay is too low to make early childhood education a career. Employees move on to better paying positions after centers invest in their PD and training.*
- **Publish a legislative briefing on compensation strategies to highlight disparities in child care provider wages.** *Professionals charged with taking care of our youngest citizens earn wages that are less than catfish gutters, luggage handlers and fast food servers.*
- **Create a recruitment and retention plan for teachers and caregivers. Enhance or expand local early care and education programs and services.** *When teachers leave it hurts the children and*

costs more money to train new teachers that end up leaving before they can apply what they've learned.

- **Raise salaries for child care teachers and add supports.** *This is important because even if you pay teachers more they still need additional supports otherwise they will leave the field.*
- **Consider establishing a professional standard for graduated compensation grid tied to education and years of experience.** *Elevate the profession to be in line with other educators.*
- **Create workforce registry that tracks credentials for all early childhood professionals (as well as professional development information).** *To strengthen the recruitment/retention of high-quality personnel in early childhood centers.*
- **Create a statewide clearinghouse & repository of PD opportunities; establish a Division of Early Childhood Services for better coordination & oversight.** *Professional development and training for childcare providers and licensed professionals are not standardized, well-coordinated, publicized, or accessible. Ensure PD/training for child care providers and other licensed professionals is more standardized, coordinated, publicized and easily accessed.*
- **Appoint Working Group to evaluate statewide PD offerings and complete review of EC programs and design standard curriculum for pre-service programs.** *To strengthen recruitment/retention of high-quality personnel in early childcare centers.*
- **Design a graduated compensation rating system that accommodates and compensates for experience to ensure pay equity for this profession.** *To strengthen the recruitment/retention of high-quality personnel in early childcare centers.*
- **Bring early childhood professionals into the state retirement system and investigate the feasibility of state insurance pool for EC professionals.** *To strengthen the recruitment/retention of high-quality personnel in early childcare centers.*
- **Create credentialing requirements for early childcare professionals to align with the licensure of other educators.** *To strengthen the recruitment/retention of high-quality personnel to ensure uninterrupted services in early childcare centers.*
- **Establish licensure board for child care.** *A licensure board for early child care provides could help elevate and standardize the profession.*
- **Ensure that Early Learning Guidelines are current and reviewed every five years.**
- **Develop a committee to research possible alternatives to a "quality rating system."** *To ensure implementation of minimal standards that are meaningful without being burdensome to childcare centers.*
- **Design a portfolio of business model options for childcare centers that could incentivize larger organizations to partner with centers for mutual benefit.** *Would create 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.*
- **Enlist marketing/comms interns from university programs to design statewide recruitment/ad campaign with goal of reducing vacancies by 25% in early childhood.** *To strengthen the recruitment/retention of high-quality personnel in early childcare centers.*

### **Family Support & Access**

- **Remove the Child Support Enforcement Requirement from CCPP.** *The child support requirement in CCPP is a barrier to CCPP access for single moms who need CCPP most.*

- **Allow upfront job search in CCPP.** *Parents need CCPP child care in order to search for a job.*
- **Easy and accessible system to apply for services.** *Not all families have access to IT or understand how to use.*
- **Optimize the Child Care Payment Program (CCPP) online application through smartphone usage.** *To reduce/remove barriers for applying to CCPP.*
- **DECCD should commit more staff to help support parents to make it through the CCPP application process.** *Too many parents end up without CCPP despite being eligible for and needing CCPP because they can't navigate the online application process without help.*
- **The Mississippi Department of Human Services needs to use TANF funds to increase the number of children served by CCPP.** *Low-income working single moms need affordable child care.*
- **Identify child care deserts and determine methods for addressing those areas where child care deserts exist.** *To reduce/remove barriers for applying to CCPP.*
- **Consider existing funding such as MS lottery to improve state support of child care services and professionals.** *This will lead to better outcomes for children and favorably impact the state's economy.*
- **Make CCPP paperwork easier.** *SECAC can use feedback from families/providers from surveys, Town Hall, etc. to make recommendations to DECCD for how to improve & simplify paperwork.*
- **Creating a refundable Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit.** *This will encourage parents to remain in the workforce.*
- **Active, statewide use of research-based programming that strengthens parents' knowledge of child health, development, and learning.**
- **Explore a state agency model focused on Early Childhood (Alabama's Department of Early Childhood Education, New Mexico, Colorado, etc.)**
- **Explore innovative funding mechanisms to address gaps in service and/or comprehensive support for families and children.**
- **Research existing community models across the United States (Help Me Grow, county-level children's councils, etc.) that have proven results.** *To ensure a well-organized, community-based system of support for families of young children to access resources/services.*
- **Create county or regional parental councils where parents are given a "voice" in decision making at the state level, as well as the local level.**
- **Utilize the quality care and education rating system as a mechanism to develop a list of parental "look fors" to understand the characteristics of quality child care.**
- **Create "menu" of resources/supports available to families in each community.** *Parents of young children need a well-organized, community-based system of support to access resources & services to support their child's development.*
- **There should be more alignment between CCPP and WIOA and AccelerateMS workforce programs to help parents move into higher paying jobs.**
- **Provide opportunities for parents of young children to develop parent leadership skills to become effective advocates for quality care/education.**
- **Engage in peer-learning research with other states that have well-organized, community-based models that connect families to resources/services.**
- **Use the MS Department of Education's family and parent resources, as well as other tools to promote family/child interactions**
- **Use different funding streams to expand home visiting programs.**

- **Work with external entities to develop a “percent eligibility” formula to ensure a consistent measure of this important data point.**

### **Early Intervention/Special Education**

- **Provisions for all children to have developmental screenings.** *The earlier delays are detected and treated, the better the outcome for the child.*
- **Special needs assessments and early intervention support.** *More and more children have social emotional and behavioral needs. There are not enough staff to help us in the facilities dealing with these children.*
- **A recommendation that Part C and 619 staff provide training opportunities to child care providers.** *To increase their capacity to include children with disabilities and address the importance of service provision in natural environments.*
- **Child care providers and families need help supporting children with special needs.** *We have training, but we need financial support to hire bodies. Children with special needs often need additional support to thrive, including 1:1 aides to help navigate language and behavioral challenges.*
- **Find a way for more early intervention services that are provided in natural environment (e.g. at home) to be reimbursable.**
- **Ensure all required early intervention services are covered and reimbursable through the Medicaid State Plan.** *Services not covered by Medicaid must be provided at the full state expense, instead of the match rate/ This change would increase service reach.*
  - **Medicaid should adopt a state-defined modifier for all services provided under Part C as part of an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).** *This would enable better accounting of all Medicaid expenditures for early intervention services.*
  - **Recognize the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) under early intervention is recognized as the Medicaid Plan of Care.** *This would significantly reduce duplication of services and efforts, while reducing paperwork.*
- **Hire a full-time Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Coordinator to support training of those who work with children with disabilities.** *To provide more training for community-based EC providers, early intervention providers, and health-related professionals.*
- **Include professionals with a child development degree (153 license) to be eligible for the special instructor role.** *Emerging professionals with a bachelor’s degree have been well-trained in child development with a specific emphasis on birth to 5, and families.*
- **Ensure primary care practices conduct at least two social-emotional screens for children between ages 0-3 without supplanting developmental screening.**
- **Increase the use of the model of an early intervention pro serving as a primary service provider, or family's main contact for all EI services.** *Helps provide a consistent experience with the family and coordination of their services, which enhances child outcomes.*

### **Health, Mental Health & Nutrition**

- **Establish WIC Certification Days at daycare centers.** *To increase awareness of, access to, and enrollment in the WIC nutritional program.*
- **Encourage screening for pregnancy-related depression and anxiety in mothers occurs as part of well-child visit or new mom's healthcare follow-up.**

- **Establish a pilot program to implement Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) at all 13 Community Mental Health Centers.** *To expand the availability of this type of therapy statewide which is currently only in the Community Mental Health Center in Regions 9 and 6.*
- **Expand pilot initiated in School Safety Act of 2019 to include selected Head Starts and private preschools/daycares.** *To implement an evidence-based curriculum that provides students with skills to manage stress and anxiety.*

**Additional Comments:**

- **SECAC should engage with parents and seek family input to statewide plans.**
- **Connect all groups across Mississippi to work together for early childhood.** *Too many processes and ideas are top down instead of bottom-up solutions from providers and families; so much recreates existing plans.*