



Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care: Action Plan to Improve Access to Child Care Assistance for Low-Income Families in the South

Survey Results on the Status of Implementation Efforts September 2002

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Goal 1 - Federal, State, Local and Private Funds Should Be Sufficient to Meet 100% of Need for Direct Child Care Assistance, Based on Initial Eligibility Levels at 85% of the State Median Income. Redetermination Levels Should Allow Families to Retain Child Care Assistance Until They Reach 100% of State Median Income.

(Action Step 1.1) - Educate federal and state policymakers on the need for action.

2002 Response:

The legislature approved the transfer of an additional \$8 million in funding for child care.

2001 Response:

Executive management has been meeting with State Legislators and the Governor providing them with information that supports the need for additional resources specifically devoted to child care services and quality. Particularly when it comes to increasing state funds for child care services. Elected officials are beginning to embrace the need for additional services and have approved the establishment a statewide Pre-K initiative.

(Action Step 1.2) - Educate the business community on the need for leadership in achieving state, federal and community resources to meet 100% of need.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 1.3) - Increase federal funding for the Child Care and Development Fund to fulfill current policy allowing federal matching funds for child care assistance up to 85% of the state median income.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 1.4) - Increase state funding to provide child care subsidies to all eligible families who seek child care assistance.

2002 Response:

The available funding has increased to the point that LA no longer has waiting lists for eligible child care program applicants.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 1.5) - Mobilize federal, state and community resources in support of families who need child care assistance.

2002 Response:

The agency is now collaborating with the school systems to develop a new program to serve school aged children before and after school. In addition, DSS convened meetings of all stakeholders to determine how expenditures of the additional child care funding would be made. Also, DSS has reinstated the Child Care Advisory Committee. Finally, DSS has contracted with various entities to provide public awareness, parent education, and parent/child enrichment.

2001 Response:

Regarding the mobilization of resources will reflect the establishment of our Wrap Around Child Care Program in partnership with certain Head Start programs to provide full day/full year services for needy families.

Goal 2: States and Communities Should Broaden Their Child Care Eligibility and Subsidy Policies to Meet the Economic, Work and Education Needs of Families

(Action Step 2.1) - Establish co-payments not to exceed 10% of gross family income.

2002 Response:

Co-Payments were recently reduced to meet the expectation of not exceeding 10% of gross family income.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 2.2) - Provide child care assistance to students who qualify under the income guidelines.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

Presently allow students to obtain child care. However, must be in some activity for at least 20 hours per week. Program allows students to receive child care assistance as long as the students are attending an educational program for a minimum average of 20 hours per week or engaged in some combination of employment/job/training/school for a combined average of at least 20 hours per week. Policy effective 1993.

(Action Step 2.3) - Explore broad use of income exemptions to address affordability of child care.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

Program considers gross earnings from all sources of employment, and the profit from self employment and unearned incomes types. The program does not consider other types of resources when determining eligibility. Policy effective 1993.

(Action Step 2.4) - Eliminate asset testing (e.g. automobile or savings account) from criteria for child care assistance.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

We do not do asset testing.

(Action Step 2.5) - Index income eligibility levels for inflation.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

N/A

Goal 3: Outreach Initiatives Should Be Designed and Aggressively Implemented to Assure That Families Have Accessible and Easy-To-Understand Information on Child Care Assistance and Are Provided Assistance in Applying.

(Action Step 3.1) - Provide information on child care subsidies through multiple sources, venues and the media.

2002 Response:
This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

Currently providing this service.

(Action Step 3.2) - Ensure that information is accurate, family friendly, employer friendly, culturally sensitive and provided in multiple languages, as appropriate.

2002 Response:
DSS has contracted with a firm to produce extensive informational material and to ensure widespread dissemination of this material..

2001 Response:

Making efforts to provide outreach initiatives that are sensitive to the needs of families.

(Action Step 3.3) - Present information in a manner that would remove the stigma associated with receiving subsidies.

2002 Response:
The contract mentioned in Action Step 3.1 will incorporate these goals.

2001 Response:

Working with all parties to ensure that we do not present information in a manner that maybe received as demeaning.

(Action Step 3.4) - Provide literature and assistance to help parents make informed provider choices.

2002 Response:
This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

Are providing this assistance via out R/Rs.

(Action Step 3.5) - Coordinate ongoing and strategic outreach activities among common organizations and providers.

2002 Response:
This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

Contracted Resource and Referral agencies provide this service for us. The three contracted R/Rs are Agenda for Children which covers the Orleans and Thibodaux Regions, Partnership in Child Care, Baton Rouge and Acadian regions and, NSU Child and Family Network, Alexandria, Shreveport and Monroe Regions. We have contracted with these agencies since 1993 as part of our quality component under CCDF.

(Action Step 3.6) - Offer cross-training and information to providers, community organizations, faith organizations, and state agencies to inform them about child care assistance programs and how to assist families in filing applications.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

Already doing this. Provide brochures and applications to Resource and Referral agencies, child care providers, Housing Authority agencies, Head Start centers and any other entities that wish to have this information available to give to interested individuals. We only provide information not training of outside sources. Brochures and applications have been distributed to other entities since 1996.

Goal 4: The Child Care Application and Redetermination Processes Should Be Uncomplicated and Family Friendly.

(Action Step 4.1) - Simplify applications for child care assistance.

2002 Response:

The application for child care assistance is revised as needed to make it user friendly. The application is three pages front/back. We have also placed the application form on the Internet to improve access.

2001 Response:

(Action Step 4.2) - Allow filing by mail, phone, fax or internet.

2002 Response:

Filing by mail is currently occurring. Participants may hand deliver or mail applications to the parish office where the participants reside. Participants are allowed to fax application. Procedure in place since 1993. We have begun to accept and process faxed and mailed applications.

2001 Response:

Allow filing by mail is currently occurring.

Participants may hand deliver or mail applications to the parish office where they (participants) reside. Participants are allowed to fax application, but the application is not processed to completion until the application with “authentic” is received by the local office. Procedure in place since 1993. we will soon process faxed and mailed applications the same.

(Action Step 4.3) - Minimize requests for documentation at initial application and utilize documents already on file.

2002 Response:

This procedure is now in place.

2001 Response:

Working toward making this change in 2002.

(Action Step 4.4) - Provide applications at multiple sites.

2002 Response:

This is currently occurring. Applications are provided at 70 parish offices throughout 64 parishes. Some parishes have more than one office.

2001 Response:

This is currently occurring. Applications are provided at 70 parish offices. Some parishes have more than one office.

(Action Step 4.5) - Offer non-conventional hours of operation for eligibility offices and provide toll-free phone lines to include evening and weekend hours.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 4.6) - Explore presumptive eligibility or otherwise provide immediate eligibility contingent upon final approval.

2002 Response:
Policy is in place to address this issue.

2001 Response:

Recently implemented policy to address this issue.

(Action Step 4.7) - Eliminate requirements for a face-to-face interview both for initial application and for redetermination.

2002 Response:
This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

This was never a requirement.

(Action Step 4.8) - Provide consultation on making appropriate choices when excessive requests for provider changes are filed.

2002 Response:
This information has not changed

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 4.9) - Establish a 12-month redetermination period where there are no changes in income or job status.

2002 Response:
12 month certification redetermination periods have been implemented

2001 Response:

Currently reconsidering changing back to 12 month redetermination period.

(Action Step 4.10) - Continue eligibility for full subsidy for 12 weeks if family loses employment but can document that a job search is underway.

2002 Response:
This information has not changed, however, we have contracted with an entity to provide pre-employment child care while clients are preparing for the workforce or for additional education.

2001 Response:

This issue is currently under discussion for possible implementation.

Goal 5: Establish a Coordinated, Seamless Eligibility System So That Funding Sources Are Invisible to Families and Support Continuity of Child Care.

(Action Step 5.1) - Eliminate the need for families to reapply when eligibility categories change by automatically searching to exhaust all eligibility categories before closing cases.

2002 Response:

We are currently in the process of providing information on all resources for contacting our parish offices for any of the benefits offered.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 5.2) - Explore the potential for policy and procedural changes to achieve linkages with or combined applications for child care assistance, Head Start, Pre-K and Title I.

2002 Response:

We are working on establishing such linkages through on-going meetings with appropriate agencies.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 5.3) - Continue eligibility in programs with multiple funding sources to assure continuity of care in the event that eligibility has expired or terminated in one program.

2002 Response:

We have transferred TANF funds to child care maximize the use of funding to increase the number of children served and eliminate waiting lists.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 5.4) - Work collaboratively with all public and private programs and funding sources to assure that children receive stable and consistent early child care services.

2002 Response:

The agency continues to work towards the establishment of the statewide Pre-K initiatives with various entities (Department of Social Services, Department of Education, Catholic Diocese of New Orleans), and various public school systems collaboratively to ensure that this program is successful. Initiated in Summer of 2000 with actual Bill approved in Spring 2001 and the program implemented January 2002. This effort has been a success and the agency is on target. We anticipate greater participation from the school system with this project.

2001 Response:

With the establishment of the statewide Pre-K initiative, various entities: Department of Social Services, Department of Education, Catholic Diocese of New Orleans, and various public school systems have been working collaboratively to ensure that this program is successful. Initiated in Summer of 2000 with actual Bill approved in Spring 2001 and the program implemented January 2002.

Goal 6: Establish Customer Service Outcome Goals and Set Standards to Ensure that All Families are Treated With Dignity and Respect and Are Served in an Efficient Manner.

(Action Step 6.1) - Provide professional and well-trained eligibility staff who are culturally and linguistically sensitive.

2002 Response:

All OSF staff have received intensive statewide case management training and we intend to continue with this training.

2001 Response:

We feel that the present as well as past eligibility staff provide professional services to those that seek assistance. Sensitivity training was provided in certain areas of the state in 2001. We are now discussing the possibility of offering Diversity Training to staff.

(Action Step 6.2)- Facilitate quick eligibility determination through reasonable caseloads and/or administrative structure.

2002 Response:

Child care eligibility processing is now located in 70 offices throughout 64 parishes. Eligibility is determined in no more that 29 days.

2001 Response:

Child care eligibility processing is now located in all 64 parishes. The rollout of child care eligibility to all parishes in 1999 and concluded in 2000.

(Action Step 6.3)- Conduct periodic, independent and thorough consumer satisfaction assessments, assuring the confidentiality of information collected.

2002 Response:

A contract with Southern University to conduct a Child Care Survey was completed in 2001. This survey provided us with information regarding participants' satisfaction with the Child Care Assistance Program as well as how they feel about the state of child care in Louisiana.

2001 Response:

In 2001 contracted with Southern University to conduct a Child Care Survey, which was completed also in 2001. This survey provided us with information regarding participants satisfaction with the Child Care Assistance Program as well as how they feel about the state of child care in Louisiana.

(Action Step 6.4) - Provide adequate support for child care resource and referral services.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

Since 1993 have contracted and provided whatever resources that we had availability to the three Resource and Referral agencies mentioned at 3.5 of this survey. We have had a good working relationship with the R/R agencies.

Goal 7: Design the Subsidy System So That Rate Structures Assure That Families Receiving Child Care Assistance Have Access to All Types of Child Care and Disallow Charges Above Established Co-Payments.

(Action Step 7.1) - States should cap reimbursement rates at no less than the 75th percentile based on a market rate survey conducted every two years that accurately reflects the price of all types of care in communities across the state.

2002 Response:

We expect to implement a rate increase this state fiscal year. A market rate survey is being conducted for rates covering the 75th percentile of the various providers surveyed.

2001 Response:

Will implement rate increase in Fall 2002. We conducted a market rate survey in May 2001 and rates covering the 75th percentile of the various providers surveyed.

(Action Step 7.2) - Establish and evaluate reimbursement policies that encourage provider participation and are responsive to family needs.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

Periodically re-evaluate reimbursement policy to ensure providers participation and the needs of families.

(Action Step 7.3) - Prohibit providers from charging above the established co-payments.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

Policy in place that addresses this issue. The child care provider agreement states that the provider must not charge any more or less than the amount shown on the certificate in order to become or remain an eligible Child Care Assistance Program provider. Provider must charge parent/guardian the difference between the total charged and the Agency payment.

Goal 8: Create Partnerships With Employers to Expand Child Care Assistance for Working Families.

(Action Step 8.1) - Educate employers about the bottom line benefits associated with public and private child care assistance.

2002 Response:

The State's Vision 2020 agenda provides for a better educated workforce to meet the challenges of the future. DSS, through its contacts with the LA Association of Business and Industry, the Council for a Better LA, and the LA Workforce Commission, must educate these entities of the role and importance of a workforce that also has accessible and high quality child care available. The lack of such child care would negate.

2001 Response:

(Action Step 8.2) - Enlist business leaders to champion the involvement of southern businesses and to serve as mentors to other businesses.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 8.3) - Provide information to employers on all available tax benefits related to child care assistance, including deductions for donations to tax-exempt child care organizations, capital costs for constructing a child care center and establishing a pre-tax dependent care assistance plan.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 8.4) - Facilitate collaborative initiatives that enable employers to share ideas as well as pool their resources to address child care needs.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 8.5) - Provide matching funds or other tax or financial incentives for employers to invest in child care.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 8.6) - Establish incentives for employers to create child care benefit programs for their employees or to contribute to child care purchasing pools in their state or community.

2002 Response:
This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 8.7) - Reduce the administrative burden on employers participating in any joint public/private child care assistance program.

2002 Response:
This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

N/A

Goal 9: Provide Child Care Assistance to Working Families Through Federal and State Tax Laws.

(Action Step 9.1) - Make the federal child dependent care tax credit refundable.

2002 Response:
This information has changed.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 9.2) - Establish refundable child and dependent care tax credits in states with income taxes.

2002 Response:
The legislature passed though has not yet funded a tax credit for persons paying child care. The bill provides for refundable credit based on the Federal earned income credit and is further based on the number of children in the home. Once funded, the state will encourage use.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 9.3) - Raise federal and state child care tax credit expense limits to accurately reflect the price of quality care.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 9.4) - Index for inflation the state and federal child and dependent care tax credit income eligibility and expense limits.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 9.5) - Ensure that child and dependent care tax credits are clearly identified and easy to claim by filers using either the short or long form.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

N/A

(Action Step 9.6) - Encourage the use of effective state tax strategies to provide financial support for child care.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed. See Action Step 9.2.

2001 Response:

N/A

Goal 10: States Should Have Effective, Coordinated Systems to Guide Child Care and Early Childhood Policy Decisions and Direct Use of Resources.

(Action Step 10.1) - Facilitate greater coordination in eligibility policies across child care and early childhood education programs at state and local levels.

2002 Response:

We are currently coordinating eligibility requirements with the Pre-K, Head Start and Public/Private School Systems.

2001 Response:

With the implementation of the Wrap Around Child Care Program in 2000 we have tried to coordinate eligibility requirements with Head Start and in 2001 with Pre-K. programs.

(Action Step 10.2)- All southern states and the District of Columbia should participate in a collaborative effort to develop and collect common data elements across states.

2002 Response:

We are currently coordinating eligibility requirements with the Pre-K, Head Start and Public/Private School Systems.

2001 Response:

N/A