

**APPENDIX A
ALABAMA**

**Survey Results on the Status of State Implementation Efforts
October 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003**



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
Current Report Period: October 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003**

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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.

2003 Response:

In addition to the Alabama Partnership for Children, several advocacy agencies in Alabama have included the need for additional child care funding as part of their message to policymakers.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

Many national organizations including the Education Commission of the States (ECS) are providing the State of Alabama technical assistance on early care and education policy issues. Through a two-year ECS public policy institute on early learning, we are educating state policy makers on the need for action. The advocacy community is working with state agency representatives, the Alabama Partnership for Children (APC) and the business community to coordinate our efforts on early care and education issues and to ensure that we are delivering a consistent message to federal and state policy makers.

(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.

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

The Alabama Partnership for Children is working with business, state and nonprofit entities to implement Alabama's strategic plan for children. The business community through APC leads the effort to maximize federal, state and community resources.

(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.

2003 Response:

Not applicable to states.

2002 Response:

N/A

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.

2003 Response:

The Department continues its efforts to investigate possible alternate state funding sources that can be used as federal match.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

In September 2001 the Department created the staff position of Special Projects Coordinator within the child care program. The Special Projects Coordinator functions to research and seek alternative sources of funding for child care including seeking additional sources of state funding. The position will be filled effective January 2, 2002.

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

2003 Response:

In January the Child Care Advisory Committee presented a report of recommendations to the Department concerning child care issues. The Committee is in the process of prioritizing those recommendations and setting an implementation schedule.

2002 Response:

Created the Child Day Care Advisory Committee. This is a 20 member core committee consisting of:

- Professionals from child care and early education;
- Health professionals;
- Representatives from State agencies that provide services to children and families;
- Child and family advocates;
- Business leaders;
- Parents; and
- Providers

The Committee's charge is to serve as a "sounding board" and to provide input into a variety of child care issues and programs. The Committee will serve in an advisory capacity, providing discussion, insight, problem solving and a broad perspective for informed policy decisions.

2001 Response:

The Alabama Partnership for Children (APC), a 501(c)3, has been established to assist the State in full utilization of available resources for children by providing a state structure for public/private partnerships. The APC will initially allow us to bring business together with State Agencies and communities to improve coordination of services and maximize utilization of resources as well as bring new resources to Alabama. Child care assistance is a tremendous issue for families with young children and we plan to help with coordination and resource development through this new nonprofit.

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.

2003 Response:

Through continuation of the 2002 reduction, co-payments for parents continue to average less than 10% of gross income.

2002 Response:

In January 2002 the Department implemented its proposal to reduce co-pays for parents with two or more children in care. Through this effort the average co-payment paid by parents has been reduced to 6.1%.

2001 Response:

The average co-payment paid by parents is 8.8% of the gross income. Plans are underway to reduce co-pays by allowing a discount for the second and any subsequent children.

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

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

Participation requirements were reduced to an average of 15 hours per week to allow for more participation of students. In addition, full-time students are deemed to meet the participation requirement.

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

2003 Response:
No new information.

2002 Response:

The Department exempts child support lump sum income that is received as the result of a federal or state tax intercept of the non-custodial parent.

2001 Response:

Currently there are no specific income exemptions in place. However, the need for exemptions of some income is being explored.

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

2003 Response:
There are no asset testing requirements in place in Alabama for eligibility of child care assistance.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

There are no asset testing requirements in place in Alabama for eligibility of child care assistance.

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

2003 Response:
Not applicable.

2002 Response:

N/A

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.

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

Information on eligibility for child care subsidies in Alabama are readily available through printed materials from any of the 12 Child Care Management Agencies (CMA) throughout the state and from DHR staff in any of the 67 county DHR offices. In addition CMAs distribute child care eligibility information from resource van visits. General information and some statistics are also available on the Department's web site.

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

2003 Response:

Spanish version of standard subsidy forms was made available throughout the state.

2002 Response:

Plans are being implemented to make some standard subsidy forms available in Spanish throughout the state.

2001 Response:

Application information from each of the 12 Child Care Management Agencies (CMAs) is reviewed during programmatic monitoring for content. Regions that serve multi-language populations have some information available in Spanish.

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

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

In our experience this has not been a tremendous issue in Alabama. The process of payment for subsidy and the parents sharing in the cost makes it more difficult for families to be identified as receiving assistance.

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

2003 Response:

Information on choosing quality child care, resource and referral services and parent assistance is provided by the 12 Child Care Management Agencies. In addition, other private and public non-profit agencies that administer quality enhancement services for the Department also provide literature and assistance to parents.

2002 Response:

In addition to the Child Care Management Agencies, other private and public non-profit agencies for quality enhancement activities provide information on choosing quality child care.

2001 Response:

Each of the 12 Child Care Management Agencies maintains a Resource & Referral (R & R) for all licensed and approved exempt providers within their region. The list is made available to each applicant and recipient needing assistance in selecting a child care provider. In addition, pamphlets on choosing child care applicable to a child's age level are provided to parents.

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

2003 Response:

The Department instituted quarterly meetings among all 22 agencies that perform Quality services for the Department to encourage collaboration and sharing of ideas and goals.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

Communication and coordination is being stressed through quality child care initiatives of the Department of Human Resources, the Department of Children's Affairs, and the Alabama Partnership for Children. The Governor appointed a Commission on Early Learning headed by twelve of Alabama's most prominent business leaders to develop a plan for early learning. This Commission made several recommendations in the area of coordination of services.

(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.

2003 Response:

Department conducts quarterly orientation training for newly licensed child care providers. Included in this training are information eligibility requirements and application procedures for participation in the child care subsidy program. Providers are encouraged to share the information with parents in their various programs.

2002 Response:

In addition to information shared by Kid and Kin program, Child Care Management Agencies share subsidy program information with providers. Effective August 1, 2002 a Provider Guide was established for all providers that participate in the Subsidy Program. The Provider Guide is given as a resource of information about the Subsidy Program and helps providers who participate in the Program understand the rules of the Program.

2001 Response:

Through the Kids and Kin Program in partnership with VOICES for Alabama's Children, community and faith-based organizations are helping to identify informal relative care child care providers. These providers are being mentored by child care partners who assist them with all types of resources including information about the subsidy program. They help the relative caregivers work through the paperwork and resources associated with accessing the program. In 2001 several trainings were held for faith-based providers on the States licensing regulations. Subsidy Program information was shared with providers at these training.

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.

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

The application process completed by parents has been simplified to a one-page document.

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

2003 Response:
No new information.

2002 Response:
No new information.

2001 Response:
Currently a parent can apply for the waiting list either in person, by phone or by mail.

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

2003 Response:
No new information.

2002 Response:
No new information.

2001 Response:
Applicants are not required to submit duplicate copies of birth certificates, personal IDs, etc., which are already on file from a previous application. Further, income and other documentation provided on client referrals from the TANF, Protective Service and foster care units are deemed to be sufficient without requiring additional verification from the parent.

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

2003 Response:
No new information.

2002 Response:
No new information.

2001 Response:
Applications are provided at each main location and satellite offices of the 12 CMAs in Alabama, as well as at each county DHR 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.

2003 Response:
No new information.

2003 Response:
No new information.

2001 Response:
Some of the CMAs in Alabama, especially in urban areas, have extended hours of operation 1-2 nights per week for applying for services and conducting interviews to determine eligibility.

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

2003 Response:
No new information.

2002 Response:
No new information.

2001 Response:
N/A

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

2003 Response:
No new information.

2002 Response:
No new information.

2001 Response:
A face to face interview is not required for client cases referred from the protective service, foster care, or TANF agencies.

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

2003 Response:
No new information.

2002 Response:
No new information.

2001 Response:
Staff at each CMA provides individual consultation to parents when frequent changes of providers are made.

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

2003 Response:
No new information.

2002 Response:
No new information.

2001 Response:
All certification periods are set at a maximum of six months.

(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.

2003 Response:
No new information.

2002 Response:
No new information.

2001 Response:
Eligibility can continue for an additional 10 days and up to 20 after the loss of employment, if the parent reports the change in circumstances within 10 days of the occurrence.

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.

2003 Response:
No new information.

2002 Response:
No new information.

2001 Response:
The Department's only funding source for child care is CCDF. Some CMAs receive local funding for subsidized care. Parents that are ineligible for CCDF subsidy and eligible for local funding subsidy are automatically changed to the new funding category without the need to reapply.

(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.

2003 Response:
No action taken.

2002 Response:
N/A

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.

2003 Response:
No new information.

2002 Response:
No new information.

2001 Response:

Some of the CMAs have local funding sources available to provide childcare for higher income caps. Thus, some families who become ineligible for CCDF due to excess income can continue receiving local subsidies.

(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.

2003 Response:

The Department continues its collaborative work with state agencies such as the Department of Education, Department of Postsecondary Education, Department of Health, and Department of Children’s Affairs and has encouraged collaboration among agencies that partner with the Department to deliver child care services. In addition, the Department collaborates with private agencies on issues that affect child care.

2002 Response:

In March 2002 the Department formed the Child Day Care Advisory Committee. This committee made up of a wide range of public and private agency members, community and business leaders and providers advises the Department on issues relevant to early care services.

2001 Response:

The Department works collaboratively with the Department of Children’s Affairs, Head Start Collaboration Office and other state agencies that deal with early care issues. In its RFP for quality services, the Department stressed the importance of each funding agency collaborating with state and local early care service providers and resources in their area. Part of the evaluation of submitted proposals focused on the strength of the agency’s collaborative efforts.

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.

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

Alabama contracts with 12 public and private non-profit agencies that provide eligibility determination for child care services. The Department provides policy guidance and technical assistance to caseworkers. Workers in a limited number of areas are bilingual.

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

2003 Response:

Department experienced an increase in the number of families receiving child care assistance. However, eligibility caseloads remain at less than 250 per worker.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

Eligibility caseloads average less than 250 cases per worker.

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

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

A pilot project to survey client satisfaction is being conducted in one Child Care Management Agency region.

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

All child care quality enhancement partners work collaboratively with CMAs who provide resource and referral services for the State.

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.

2003 Response:

The Department is conducting a new Market Rate Survey for 2003.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

The Department concluded its market rate survey in July 2001. New rates based on the survey were effective October 1, 2001. The new rates represent an overall 10.3 percent increase from previous rates.

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

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

Providers are reimbursed for up to five (5) days per month regardless of the nature of the absence. In addition, providers are allowed 12 reimbursable closure days and 5 reimbursable days for emergency closures, due to illness, death of an immediate family member or inclement weather. Revised chronic absenteeism policy to allow for up to 10 reimbursable days per month when child's absence is due to a documented illness.

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

2003 Response:
No new information.

2002 Response:
No new information.

2001 Response:
N/A

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.

2003 Response:
No new information.

2002 Response:
No new information.

2001 Response:
The State and advocacy communities are working with the business community on the importance of quality child care for all children. Economic indicators tying quality child care to economic and workforce development are being designed with the support of the Education Commission of the States.

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

2003 Response:
The Alabama Partnership for Children completed the Child Care Workforce Study. The study results will be shared with the business community to encourage their support for benefits and other financial incentives to child care providers.

2002 Response:
Business support is an ongoing project of the Alabama Partnership for Children.

2001 Response:

Business helped developed the strategic plan for early care and education in Alabama. We are working through the Alabama Partnership for Children to educate and develop more business support for early care and education issues.

(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.

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

Many advocacy organizations are trying to raise the dependent child care tax credit. We also are working to bring the earned income tax credit to the national federal level.

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

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

In addition to the Employer Child Care Alliance the work of the Alabama Partnership for Children and the Child Day Care Advisory Committee involves business in the issues related to child care.

2001 Response:

The Department's Quality Enhancement partnership with the Employers Child Care Alliance in Opelika, AL enables employers to share ideas as well as pool their resources to address child care needs.

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

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

Through a Ford Foundation Grant called Healthy, Wealthy and Wise, VOICES for Alabama's Children is focusing on tax and financial incentives for employers to invest in child care.

(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.

2003 Response:

This is beyond the scope of the Department of Human Resources.

2002 Response:

N/A

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

This is beyond the scope of the Department of Human Resources.

2002 Response:

N/A

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.

2003 Response:

Not applicable to states.

2002 Response:
No new information.

2001 Response:
For all Action steps under Goal 9, the Ford Foundation grant to VOICES for Alabama's Children is allowing our State to explore tax friendly policy for child care.

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

2003 Response:
No new information.

2002 Response:
N/A

2001 Response:
The Ford Foundation grant to VOICES for Alabama's Children is allowing our State to explore tax friendly policy for child care.

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

2003 Response:
No new information.

2002 Response:
No new information.

2001 Response:
The Ford Foundation grant to VOICES for Alabama's Children is allowing our State to explore tax friendly policy for child care.

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

2003 Response:
No new information.

2002 Response:
No new information

2001 Response:

The Ford Foundation grant to VOICES for Alabama's Children is allowing our State to explore tax friendly policy for child care.

(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.

2003 Response:

This is beyond the scope of the Department of Human Resources.

2002 Response:

N/A

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

This is beyond the scope of the Department of Human Resources.

2002 Response:

N/A

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.

2003 Response:

No action taken.

2002 Response:

N/A

2001 Response:

N/A

(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.

2003 Response:

We participate in the surveys conducted by the Southern Institute on Children and Families.

2002 Response:

N/A

2001 Response:

N/A

**APPENDIX B
ARKANSAS**

**Survey Results on the Status of State Implementation Efforts
October 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003**



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
Current Report Period: October 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003**

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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. Re-determination 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.

2003 Response:

During the 84th Regular Legislative Session, Act 1332 was passed which creates the *Better Chance for School Success Program* under the *Arkansas Better Chance Program*. This program is defined as a developmentally appropriate early care and education program for children ages three and four whose family income falls below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. The local school district is required to work with the Department and their local community to establish, promote, and assist in the development of a program if the following conditions exist:

1. The school district has 75% or more students scoring below proficient on the primary benchmark exams, or other exams designated by the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) in the preceding two years, or
2. The school district has been designated by the ADE as being in academic distress.

Any licensed early childhood program accredited by the Department of Human Services and quality approved by the ADE may apply for funding. Parents are not mandated to send their children. If new monies become available in the fall session then priority consideration will be given to those school districts meeting the conditions above. If new monies are not appropriated, there is nothing in the bill that will change the priority of funding for the current ABC programs. There is an \$80 million appropriation bill filed to support this Act.

2002 Response:

The State Board of Education charged the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, the administering agency for the ABC program, to study and make recommendations regarding the cost, quality and rate structure for the current program. A task force comprised of early childhood professionals, public school personnel, Legislators and parents spent eight months reviewing data and program issues and made recommendations to the State Board of Education in February 2002.

The Board approved a new ABC Core Quality Model for all pre-K programs that sets a reimbursement rate of \$4,995.85 per child for the center based model and \$1648.05 per family for HIPPY and PAT.

There are two groups commissioned through legislation in Arkansas (Blue Ribbon Commission and the State Board Advisory Committee) studying the public education system as a result of the ruling by Judge Collins Kilgore in the Lakeview School District, No. 25 of Phillips County, et al vs. Mike Huckabee, Governor of the State of Arkansas, et al. that stated the school funding system now in place in the State of Arkansas is inequitable and inadequate under the Constitution. Judge Kilgore, in his opinion, stated that in order to provide our children with an adequate education as required by the Constitution the State must provide programs for those children of pre-school age that will allow them to compete academically with their peers. He went on to say that the urgency of this need equals that of the deficiency in teacher salaries.

The Next Step Plan by Governor Huckabee includes recommendations for early care and education. He wants to assure access to Head Start, ABC or other education-based quality pre-school programs.

Also, both Legislative groups studying the issues have made recommendations that a program of early childhood education shall be available for all four-year old children in Arkansas.

Now the House and Senate Education Committees will begin the work of analyzing the recommendations and deciding the funding priorities.

2001 Response:

Governor supported low-income working families by placing \$1 million in each year of the biennium for direct services. A TANF transfer of \$12 million will occur by October 1, 2001.

Act 1841 - The Child Care for Working Families Act. This places a 3% tax on beer to be used for two areas. The state pre-k (ABC) programs will receive 80% of the revenues. Direct services for low-income working families will receive 20% of the revenues. The estimated revenue is \$6.5 million in SFY 2002 and \$9.7 million SFY 2003.

Act 1271 established the Early Care Foundation, which will accept and match contributions from private business and individuals for child care. The Department of Human Services will provide \$1 million in match funds over the next two years to initiate this project.

We are currently working with Joint House and Senate Education Committees in an interim study. The first addressed early care and education policies and general questions. This study will address early care and education funding. We have provided our Federal Congressional Leaders with data and recommendations.

(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.

2003 Response:

In March of 2003 the Governor presented the first ever Arkansas Governor's Family Friendly Employer Awards. He believes that business and government together can be partners with families in the challenging task of raising children. Following is a list of the award winners by category:

Large employer

- Baptist Health-Diamond Recipient, Gold Winner
- Acxiom Corporation, Silver Winner
- University of Arkansas, Bronze Winner

Medium employer

- DaySpring Cards, Gold Winner
- US Able Life Insurance, Silver Winner
- Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care, Silver Winner
- Rich Mountain Community College, Bronze Winner

Small Employer

- I.C.E. Inc., Gold Winner
- Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund, Silver Winner
- Tripp's Total Travel Management, Bronze Winner

Entergy, the state's largest utility company, endorsed high quality early childhood education as an investment in the future, especially for low-income children who face additional hurdles in overcoming the educational and employment disadvantages that poverty brings. They published a report, *The Economics of Education*, which documents a study of Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. The report conservatively estimates a \$9 return for every \$1 invested in early childhood education.

The Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce and Affiliated Industries Association drafted a very strong recommendation that supports the finding of The State's Blue Ribbon Commission on Education. They specifically recommended that the state provide quality preschool education for three and four-year olds in families with incomes less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.

A partnership with the Arkansas Department of Economic Development for distribution of \$1million in Community Development Block Grant funds for renovation/construction of child care facilities places the Division in a position of assisting county and local governments during planning stages of determining whether child care is necessary in the community. This involves local business leaders and establishes a strong public-private partnership.

Local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CHILDREN of North Central Arkansas and REACH of NE Arkansas) both have active outreach and cooperation from the business community. Both receive financial backing and have business and Chamber of Commerce representatives serving on their Boards. These CCR&R's receive support both financially and from CEO levels to continue the work of the R&R locally.

Child Care Resource and Referral agencies also collaborate with local United Way organizations to support Success by Six projects. Two agencies have been recipients of the Success by Six projects; one is a current site.

Funding from private foundations has extended the Division's ability to promote home visiting programs through the *Parents As Teachers* Program. Foundation funding supported the program for the past two years. Additionally, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation has provided a planning grant to be used for a comprehensive systems plan for development of a scientifically based research project to study the effects of early care and education interventions in the state.

2002 Response:

One of the recommendations of The Arkansas Corporate Champions for Children Task Force was to establish the Governor’s Family-Friendly Employer Award, which will recognize employers who have established policies and practices that address the growing concerns of employees trying to balance work and family life. In addition, the campaign will distribute business-oriented child care resource guides and information on programs and policies considered best practices to use as models for replication. The recommendations for implementation have been completed and we are in the process of establishing the Advisory Committee to oversee the process of selection. The award ceremony is scheduled for March 2003.

There are also business leaders that have served on both groups studying the public education system in this state.

2001 Response:

Act 1271 established the Early Care Foundation, which will accept and match contributions from private business and individuals for child care. The Department of Human Services will provide \$1 million in match funds over the next two years to initiate this project.

The Division in conjunction with the Governor’s office will develop an initiative with faith based community leaders to encourage participation in child care in their local communities. The first organizational meeting in October 4, 2001.

The Arkansas Corporate Champions for Children Task Force made recommendations to the Governor before the 2001 Legislative session. As a result ACT 1271 was passed, that established the Foundation for Early Care and Education. This foundation will accept and match contributions from private business and individuals for child care. Foundation resources will be used to enhance quality, affordability, and availability of child care and early education for children in the state.

(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.

2003 Response:

During the 2003 Legislative session, special language was passed that requires that \$12 million in TANF funds be transferred to support child care subsidies. The waiting list for low-income families is 600 families. During the fall 2003 Special Session we are hopeful that state general revenue will be added to serve three and four year olds up to 200% of the FPL. We are still serving families at 60% of the state median income. However, we do plan to raise reimbursement rates to meet the current 75% level of the 2003 market rate survey.

2002 Response:

Because of the Governor’s additional \$1 million in SGR, TANF transfer and beer tax revenues we have drastically reduced our waiting list from 4,631 to 894 families as of August 2002. We are still serving families at 60% of the state median income.

2001 Response:

Although we have received an increase in Federal funding for the CCDF Block grant it does not allow us to raise our eligibility level to 85% of the state median income. We are currently serving families at, or below 60% of the state median income with a waiting list of 4,631 families.

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

2003 Response:

Act 272 was passed in the 2003 Regular Session. It extends the current 3% excise tax on retail beer sales until June 2005. The revenues (20%) generated from this tax are utilized for eligible low-income working families who seek child care assistance. Please refer to response in 1.1 as well.

2002 Response:

Because of the Governor's additional \$1 million in SGR, TANF transfer and beer tax revenues we have drastically reduced our waiting list from 4,631 to 894 families as of August 2002. We are working to eliminate the waiting list for services.

2001 Response:

State funding was increased this year through two new sources. The Governor supported a \$1 million increase in funding in 2002-2003 to address child care accessibility for low-income working families. Secondly, Act 1841, The Child Care for Working Families Act, was passed that placed a 3 percent retail excise tax on beer. Revenues from this tax are dedicated to child care and early childhood education. The tax is expected to generate \$6.6 million during FY 2002 and \$9.7 million in FY 2003.

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

2003 Response:

Beginning in September 2003 the plan to reform K-12 Education in Arkansas will be developed and Legislation passed to implement changes. One of the bills introduced is the \$80 million Appropriation Bill that supports Act 1332 - The Better Chance for School Success Program. This program is defined as a developmentally appropriate early care and education program for children ages three and four whose family income falls below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. Please refer to 1.2 as well.

2002 Response:

All forces are mobilized in this state around early care and education due to the tremendous impact of the Lakeview lawsuit. "Speak Up Arkansas" Forums held in all 75 counties in Arkansas enabled communities to give their input regarding the recommendations by the Blue Ribbon Commission. Early care and education was a top priority in most counties across the state.

2001 Response:

Kids Count Coalition, sponsored by Arkansas Advocates, successfully energized and empowered providers and parents during the last session and they were a large reason that numerous child care bills were passed. Kids Count provided training at the local level on “how to tell the story” and set up an information network to keep everyone on the same page. This is a strong group that will move forward in the 2003 session.

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.

2003 Response:

We are looking at our co-payment structure at this time. Only 6-7% of Arkansas families pay any percentage of the cost of care.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

Only 6-7 % of the families pay a co-payment in Arkansas.

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

2003 Response:

Changes have been made to the State Plan that gives students the same priority as working families. Previously, they were the lowest priority.

2002 Response:

Because of the Governor’s additional \$1 million in SGR, TANF transfer and beer tax revenues we have drastically reduced our waiting list from 4,631 to 894 families as of August 2002. Students are receiving services.

2001 Response:

All students (vocational, 2 yr., 4 yr., etc.) qualify in this category with High School students given top priority. Changes were made in the approved State Plan, which reduce the number of required college hours from 15 per semester to 12. As TANF transfer money becomes available, these families will receive services.

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

2003 Response:

No changes have been made in this category. All previous exemptions are still in effect.

2002 Response:

TANF cash assistance is not counted as income. The definition of “work” has been reduced from 35 hours to 32 hours per week.

2001 Response:

Each adult household member who is employed at least 35 hours per week will have a \$100.00 work related deduction made from their gross income to account for withholding and other mandatory work-related expenses.

A Casehead receiving SSI is disregarded.

Other miscellaneous income such as bonuses, income tax returns, insurance settlements, etc. are disregarded.

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

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

We have eliminated the asset test.

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

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

The sliding fee scale was adjusted to reflect the current level of 60% of the state median income.

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.

2003 Response:

We continue to utilize the methods described last year to reach eligible families. The last two months we've received an average of 1,200 new applications.

2002 Response:

We have utilized many outreach avenues to reach eligible families. Television commercials have run on the importance of quality and literacy for young children. Easy to understand brochures have been made available in communities, large group sessions have been held to explain the eligibility system. Public service announcements have been completed in some counties. Now that money is available for low income working families, we are receiving between 700-800 new applications on a monthly basis.

2001 Response:

Applications placed on-line now for use by parents.

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

2003 Response:

We have expanded the Nuestra Familia project for two more years. Communities with high concentrations of non-English speaking families will be empowered to establish networks of community resources. The evaluation of this project was excellent. We received Appropriation authority for translation services in the 2003 Regular Session. Licensing regulations and applications will be given top priority for translation.

2002 Response:

Our Nuestra Familia project designed to focus on cultural differences and how to work with children in the classroom has been piloted and is now being implemented in communities across the state. Communities with high concentrations of non-English speaking families will be empowered to establish support personnel to serve as resources in the community. We are also incorporating an evaluation component of this model involving parents.

2001 Response:

On September 18-20, 2001 our first ESL Academy for Pre-school teachers will be held in conjunction with the State Department of Education. The participants from local communities will be discussing cultural sensitivity and how to engage parents in the local community. Also, utilizing technology to "get the word out" about services we offer will be a strong component of the training.

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

2003 Response:

Resource and Referral Agencies work with parents to locate child care settings most appropriate for their needs. They also help parents applying for assistance. Our state workers have conducted weekend and evening interviews in order to accommodate work schedules.

Family Connection Packets (based on the Early Childhood Frameworks) are now distributed to every parent, through all Licensed and Registered Child Care Facilities as required by Act 825 passed in the 2003 Regular Session. The intent is to make sure that all parents see the Readiness skills necessary for Kindergarten success. Family Connection Packets based on the Infant-Toddler Frameworks are being printed and will also be distributed to parents.

2002 Response:

Family Connection Kits are available for child care programs linking child care activities to family activities. This kit addresses the early childhood framework/early learning guidelines. Materials are available to all parents in our state.

2001 Response:

We have developed child care information pamphlets for parents regarding all the services offered through the Division. Through the resource and referral agencies information is also given out in a manner that removes the stigma. We have also just completed a Customer Satisfaction survey with parents and providers that strongly supports the fact that parents are treated with respect when dealing with DHS and that they are getting their needs met.

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

2003 Response:

The Parent's Guide to Child Care is available in all DHS offices throughout the state. Resource and Referral Agencies assist parents in making informed provider choices. Parents may also access facility information by contacting the Licensing unit or visiting the web site.

2002 Response:

The Division issued a "Parent's Guide to Child Care" which is distributed by eligibility specialists throughout the state. The guide gives basic information on types of care available, subsidy opportunities, and what to look for in high quality care settings.

2001 Response:

Please see response to action step 3.3.

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

2003 Response:

Voluntary provider training regarding the new Provider Participant Voucher Agreement was conducted in 20 sites across the state this year for the first time. These meetings were held weekends and evenings. Positive feedback was received from the providers and many of the questions regarding the contract with the State were answered.

Special Nutrition Programs have completed community outreach meetings in several strategic places across the state where there are no providers signed up for the food program. A survey was conducted in coordination with Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families to determine why more providers do not participate in the USDA program. A plan was developed to increase participation in areas of low or no participation.

The Nutrition Advisory Council was re-established with representatives from several Agencies working as participants. There are several goals of this group including coordination, outreach, nutrition, obesity prevention and increased participation in the SNP programs that reimburse providers for food costs.

Through consultation with the Transitional Employment Board (TEB) discussion has begun regarding how parents access child care services. Plans are being drafted for better utilization of the "One Stops" across the state. These were Federally mandated offices originally set up outside the DHS offices where parents needing assistance could locate all of the services for which they qualify. We will determine if parents can be better served by housing staff in those locations. The correlation between workforce issues and child care is high so this could be a good solution for our staffing issues.

2002 Response:

Training is provided regarding Division services at training conferences and Professional organizational meetings across the state. Town meetings will be held across the state to discuss eligibility issues and the upcoming proposed legislative agenda. Coordination within the Division has increased participation in both the child care assistance program and the USDA Food Program.

2001 Response:

Within the division we have developed a new policy that states that when any application from a new provider comes in that information will be forwarded to the unit administrators and someone will be designated to call the providers and let them know what services are

available through the division.

I am also attending all of the Governor's Forums across the state where issues surrounding child care usually come up. I will be able to readily give the participants contact information. We are also participating in the Arkansas Department of Economic Development forums across the state. The message that child care is a workforce issue is the top priority.

(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.

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

Training is offered to major organizations and communities (including for-profit, non-profit and faith-based) across the state regarding information and assistance for parents related to the subsidy program. Division staff served on a panel at the Community Action Agencies Conference to discuss all services provided by our Division. The Director of the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education meets monthly with the Head Start Directors and is a member of the state-wide Faith Based Initiative sponsored by the Governor's office.

2001 Response:

See see responses to action steps 1.2 and 3.5.

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.

2003 Response:

Parents may apply by internet, fax, phone or mail. Face-to-face interviews are not required at re-determination time. The application has been simplified and coordinated with the TEA application so that there is less confusion when the parents move from one program to the next.

2002 Response:

We are currently examining application policies. The provider contract will be reviewed this year and input will be solicited from parents and providers.

2001 Response:

We are examining application policies currently.

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

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

Applications can be made through all above methods.

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

2003 Response:

We actually have a meeting set up this week with the Child Support Enforcement Agency. This is the area that seems to be the most frustrating for parents and we are trying to develop a plan to share information so that parents do not have to respond to two different agencies. Depending on the cost of implementing access to the data base, we will develop a plan to utilize the documents they have on file.

2002 Response:

We are currently examining application policies.

2001 Response:

We are examining application policies currently.

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

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

Applications are provided at multiple sites including DHS offices, all resource and referral locations and on-line.

(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.

2003 Response:

Eligibility staff conducted interviews during evening and weekend hours this year. Toll-free phone lines are available for parents to call and those numbers are published on all informational brochures.

2002 Response:

Some of our workers have arranged times outside the normal operating hours if necessary, but this is not required by policy.

2001 Response:

Until we begin to receive additional funding from our Legislative efforts this will not be necessary.

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

2003 Response:

We have not incorporated this action step at this time.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

We are examining application policies currently.

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

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

Face-to-face interviews are held for the initial determination but not required for redetermination.

2001 Response:

We are examining application policies currently.

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

2003 Response:

This is completed by the caseworker if necessary.

2002 Response:

This is completed by the caseworker if necessary.

2001 Response:

This is currently completed by the caseworker if necessary.

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

2003 Response:

After review, we continued with our policy of 6-month redetermination.

2002 Response:

We are currently examining application and redetermination policies. The provider contract will be reviewed this year and input from parents and providers will be solicited.

2001 Response:

We are examining application and redetermination policies currently.

(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.

2003 Response:

Families that lose employment can continue eligibility for three weeks if they document that a job search is underway.

2002 Response:

Families that lose employment can continue eligibility for three weeks if they document that a job search is underway.

2001 Response:

We are examining these policies currently.

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.

2003 Response:

There are no requirements for families to reapply when eligibility categories change.

2002 Response:

Category changes are made without closure if TEA parents are moving into Transitional care. The same procedure is utilized when parents move into Low-income Working care. Both systems are open at this time due to increased revenues.

2001 Response:

Category changes are made without closure if TEA parents are moving into transitional care.

(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.

2003 Response:

Our public Pre-K income eligibility standards match those of the CCDF Block Grant. This increases the number of children eligible under the income category for the public Pre-K program.

2002 Response:

We have adjusted our public pre-K income eligibility standards to match those of the CCDF Block grant. This increased the number of children eligible under the income category for the public pre-K program.

2001 Response:

We are still working on this.

(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.

2003 Response:

Because of our strong partnerships with Head Start and Department of Education and Special Education, we effectively utilize multiple funding streams to create options for early care and education services for children.

2002 Response:

We have strong linkages with Head Start and Department of Education and effectively utilize multiple funding streams to create options for early care and education services for children.

2001 Response:

We are still working on this.

(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.

2003 Response:

Entergy, the state's largest utility company, endorsed high quality early childhood education as an investment in the future, especially for low-income children who face additional hurdles in overcoming the educational and employment disadvantages that poverty brings. They published a report, *The Economics of Education*, which documents a study of Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. The report conservatively estimates a \$9 return for every \$1 invested in early childhood education.

The Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce and Affiliated Industries Association drafted a very strong recommendation that supports the finding of the State's Blue Ribbon Commission on Education. They specifically recommended that the state provide quality preschool education for three and four-year olds in families with incomes less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.

A partnership with the Arkansas Department of Economic Development for distribution of \$1 million in Community Development Block Grant funds for renovation/construction of child care facilities places the Division in a position of assisting county and local governments during planning stages of determining whether child care is necessary in the community. This involves local business leaders and establishes a strong public-private partnership.

Local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CHILDREN of North Central Arkansas and REACH of NE Arkansas) both have active outreach and cooperation from the business community. Both receive financial backing and have business and Chamber of Commerce representatives serving on their Boards. These CCR&R's receive support both financially and from CEO levels to continue the work of the R&R locally.

Child Care Resource and Referral agencies also collaborate with local United Way organizations to support Success by Six projects. Two agencies have been recipients of the Success by Six projects; one is a current site.

Funding from private foundations has extended the Division's ability to promote home visiting programs through the *Parents As Teachers* Program. Foundation funding supported the program for the past two years. Additionally, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation has provided a planning grant to be used for a comprehensive systems plan for development of a scientifically based research project to study the effects of early care and education interventions in the state.

2002 Response:

We have strong linkages with Head Start and Department of Education and effectively utilize multiple funding streams to create options for early care and education services for children.

2001 Response:

We are still working on this.

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.

2003 Response:

We will conduct a Customer Satisfaction Survey this year. The last one was completed in 2001 and parents and providers gave favorable responses.

2002 Response:

Plans are being made to allow staff participation in our *Nuestra Familia* training. This project focuses on cultural differences and is now being implemented across the state.

2001 Response:

Efforts have been made to provide professional and well-trained staff. According to the recent Customer Satisfaction Survey parents and providers were pleased.

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

2003 Response:

We have increased our eligibility staff from 16 to 22. We are looking at ways to utilize existing positions within Division of County Operations and the "One Stops" to facilitate quicker eligibility determination.

2002 Response:

We have received approval for seven additional eligibility caseworkers and one supervisor in order to lower the caseloads.

2001 Response:

Our caseloads have been at the same level since September of 1999 due to limited funding. This is not an issue for us.

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

2003 Response:

We will conduct a Customer Satisfaction Survey in 2003.

2002 Response:

We have plans to conduct another Customer Satisfaction Survey in 2003.

2001 Response:

See response 3.3 for Customer Satisfaction Survey results.

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

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

The state currently supports four local child care resource and referral networks and offers state-wide services through the central office. A council of representatives from the resource and referral agencies meets quarterly to develop plans to expand and upgrade services.

2001 Response:

Grants have always been provided to support the child care resource and referral organizations.

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.

2003 Response:

We will continue to cap reimbursement rates at the 75th percentile based on the market rate survey conducted every two years. This year the market rate surveys were completed through contract with the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. Seventy-five percent of the providers responded as compared to thirty- seven percent the last time the survey was completed.

2002 Response:

Rates are capped at the 75th percentile based on a market rate survey conducted every two years.

2001 Response:

We raised reimbursement rates beginning July 1, 2001 to reflect the current market rate survey of rates at the 75th percentile (\$2.6 million increase).

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

2003 Response:

Meetings were held with providers to review reimbursement policies. Major changes will be made effective July 1, 2003 due to the input. Providers will be paid for Holidays and the rate structure was simplified to Full-Time, Half-Time and Part-Time rates.

2002 Response:

We will address reimbursement policies this year during review of the provider contract. Input will be solicited from providers and community leaders.

2001 Response:

State planning process allowed input from providers and community leaders regarding reimbursement policies. Also we made personal contacts with providers during the "market rate survey" period in order to get the price sheets that they were giving to parents.

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

2003 Response:

We do not allow additional charges unless approved by our agency.

2002 Response:

We do not allow additional charges unless approved by our agency.

2001 Response:

We do not allow additional charges.

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.

2003 Response:

Please see response to action step 1.2.

2002 Response:

One of the recommendations of The Arkansas Corporate Champions for Children Task Force was to establish the Governor's Family-Friendly Employer Award, which will recognize employers who have established policies and practices that address the growing concerns of employees trying to balance work and family life.

In addition, the campaign will distribute business-oriented child care resource guides and information on programs and policies considered best practices to use as models for replication. The recommendations for implementation have been completed and we are in the process of establishing the Advisory Committee to oversee the process of selection. The award ceremony is scheduled for March 2003.

There are also business leaders that have served on both groups studying the public education system in this state. They have looked at the issue of quality care for young children and made a recommendation to include that in the plan.

2001 Response:

See response to action step 1.1 for public private initiative information.

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

2003 Response:

We have no representation on the Southern Business Council initiated by the Southern Institute, but do have the Governor's Family Friendly Awards that is listed in 1.2.

2002 Response:

We have asked two representatives to serve on the Southern Business Council initiated by the Southern Institute.

2001 Response:

See response 1.1 for business participation through public private initiative.

(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.

2003 Response:

Business child care kits were distributed at the Governor's Family Friendly Award Breakfast in March 2003. They are also available upon request to all employers. Arkansas has a current law that provides tax exemptions to employers constructing a child care center on site.

2002 Response:

Business child care kits are available to all employers. The Arkansas Department of Economic Development conducted a survey of all businesses with less than 200 employees to ascertain the level of involvement in child care issues.

2001 Response:

We have developed a “child care kit” that is available to employers that explains all of above plus additional information.

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

2003 Response:

During the Governor’s Family Friendly Awards Ceremony the emcee described each winning business plan for balancing work and family life issues. Each business was also written up in Arkansas Business Magazine which is distributed state-wide. Several of the employers present were talking as they left about ideas they had heard that they felt would be easy to implement for the next year. In addition, business oriented child care resource guides and information on programs and policies considered best practices were distributed as models for replication. This initiative received television coverage and there is a very competitive atmosphere already established for next year. Please refer to action step 1.2 as well.

2002 Response:

One of the recommendations of the Arkansas Corporate Champions for Children Task Force was to establish the Governor’s Family–Friendly Employer Award, which will recognize employers who have established policies and practices that address the growing concerns of employees trying to balance work and family life. In addition, the campaign will distribute business-oriented child care resource guides and information on programs and policies considered best practices to use as models for replication. The recommendations for implementation have been completed and we are in the process of establishing the Advisory Committee to oversee the process of selection. The award ceremony is scheduled for March 2003.

2001 Response:

This is part of the Early Care Foundation Act as well as the Governor’s Faith based initiative in conjunction with the Division.

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

2003 Response:

The Child Care Apprenticeship project supported by the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education and funded by the Department of Labor provide financial incentives for employer involvement in child care and training for early care and education staff. We have seven registered apprenticeship sites now in Arkansas.

2002 Response:

The Child Care Apprenticeship projects supported by the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education and funded by the Department of Labor provide a financial incentive for employer involvement in child care and training for early care staff.

2001 Response:

The Early Care Foundation provides for \$1million to be utilized for matching funds. See action step 1.1.

(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.

2003 Response:

The Early Care Foundation was not implemented due to budget constraints.

2002 Response:

Due to budget cuts the state matching dollars for the Early Care Foundation are not available at this time.

2001 Response:

Please see response to action step 1.1.

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

2003 Response:

We have several employers who have contracted with private providers to manage the child care operation for them on site. This reduces the administrative burden on the employer.

2002 Response:

Due to budget cuts, the implementation of the Public-Private Initiative was delayed.

2001 Response:

Please see response to action step 1.1.

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.

2003 Response:

Not applicable to states.

2002 Response:

N/A

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

Arkansas has a refundable child care tax credit available to parents.

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

2003 Response:

Due to budget cuts, no legislation was introduced in the 2003 session. There were no changes made regarding child care tax credit limits.

2002 Response:

The Interim Study on Child Care Financing has established a tax work group to address Federal and State Tax issues in preparation for the 2003 Legislative session. Plans to introduce new legislation are being finalized.

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.

2003 Response:

Due to budget constraints, the Legislation was not introduced in the 2003 Session.

2002 Response:

The Interim Study on Child Care Financing has established a tax work group to address Federal and State Tax issues in preparation for the 2003 Legislative session. Plans to introduce new legislation are being finalized.

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.

2003 Response:

The Division has worked with the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) to ensure that parents can file easily.

2002 Response:

The Division has worked with Department of Finance Administration (DFA) to ensure that parents can file easily.

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

The 3% excise tax on beer was extended to June 2005.

2002 Response:

Currently we have a 3% excise tax on beer to support Early Care and Education in our state.

2001 Response:

We have tax strategies in place currently and will be examining others during the next year for possible Legislative action in 2003.

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.

2003 Response:

The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education works closely with the Transitional Employment Assistance Board that was established by state law to oversee the management of the State's Temporary Employment Assistance (TEA) for Needy Families program. The Division updates the Board periodically with statistics and expenditure projections concerning child care services to families who are participating in or transitioning from welfare assistance. This Board has authority over the transfer of TANF funds. During the past two years they have approved the transfer of \$12 million dollars for subsidized child care services. This Board is legislatively mandated to ensure prioritized, subsidized child care services to those TEA and Transitional families. If a shortfall in revenue was to occur that would affect these services, the Division would work with the Board to consider options such as locating additional revenue, reducing monies budgeted for low-income working families, changing eligibility guidelines or co-payment levels.

In addition to working closely with the TEA Board, the Division coordinates subsidized services with its sister Division-the Division of County Operations. This Division is charged with the actual management of the TANF program for the State. Division Directors and program administrators meet monthly to ensure coordination of services.

Arkansas Better Chance Programs are administered by several differing entities that include: Local School Districts (LEA's), Regional Educational Service Cooperatives, Head Start Grantees; Community Based non-profit Organizations (CBO); Hospitals; and the Economic Opportunity Corporation (EOC). Coordination and collaboration is seen in all operations. The expected outcome is assurance that programs operate at a level of high quality and fiscal soundness to ensure high quality of early education for young children.

Numerous Head Start Grantees participate and offer both child care voucher and ABC services to eligible children. The blending of these services provide a wide range of services to all children. ABC programs may serve children from birth to 5 years of age. The Division serves as grantee for the Arkansas Head Start Collaboration Grant. Cooperation and coordination of services occurs at the state and local levels.

In coordination with the Arkansas Department of Education/Early Childhood Special Education (part C/IDEA) office, children with special needs are served in Head Start, ABC and voucher programs. Additional services may be provided by local school districts or through the Regional Educational Services Cooperatives. In coordination with Child Health Management Services (CHMS), intensive medical early intervention care is provided to children with special health care needs, ages six (6) months to four(4) years of age. This program results in individually designed programs of speech, occupational and physical therapy and it provides parent education and support networks. All CHMS programs are licensed as child care settings, and the majority meet the State Quality Approval/Accreditation standards.

Reimbursement for special needs is not subject to the county cap rate. The rates are individually set based on the needs of the child.

The Division Director serves on the Interagency Coordinating Council on Early Intervention.

Coordination occurs between multiple programs in the Public Education sector and the Division. These include:

1. The Division administers the public pre-K program on behalf of the Department of Education (DOE). Funding for the Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) program is included in the budget of the DOE. Through an agreement, the Division provides programmatic oversight of the ABC program, reporting to the State Board of Education.
2. Programs operating under the ABC program are managed by local school districts (LEA's), Regional Cooperatives and by Institutions of Higher Learning. These programs provide matching funds for the ABC program, which include Title I funds, Early Childhood Special Education funds (IDEA), Even Start and District poverty funding. Programs are collaborative in nature and ensure that high quality services are available to a broad number of children.
3. Coordination between the ABC program and Even Start programs includes site visits made jointly by staff from the Division and the Department of Education, joint reviews of grant and budget proposals and both programs require completion of State Accreditation/Quality Approval process for continuation of funding.
4. Development of the Kindergarten skills checklist and assessment was a joint project of the DOE, the Division of Child Care and the School Readiness Indicators task force. A Kindergarten Assessment tool will be piloted in the fall of 2003 in 36 local schools. The Assessment is based on the Arkansas Early Childhood Education Frameworks (Early Learning Guidelines), the Head Start Child Outcome Performance Indicators, HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) outcomes and the Arkansas Kindergarten Benchmarks. Upon completion of the pilot, the Kindergarten Assessment will be required of all entering Kindergarten children in the fall of 2004. The Kindergarten teacher may accept assessments for children who have attended an ABC program, Head Start program or a State Accredited/Quality Approved program completed by the early childhood professional.
5. Pre-K ELLA (Early Literacy Learning in Arkansas) contractors include Education Service Cooperatives, Local School Districts, and Universities.

2002 Response:

We continue to work collaboratively in Arkansas to address early care and education issues. During the past year we have focused on the following projects:

- Early Learning Literacy Training in Arkansas (pre-K ELLA) is implemented in 75 counties.
- ABC Core Quality Component Model adopted by the State Board of Education in February, 2002 and implemented July 1, 2002.
- School Readiness Initiative to develop school readiness indicators and the assessment process for incoming kindergarten children.
- The Nuestra Familia Project provides training for pre-school teachers working with children and families who have English as a second language.
- Program Accountability across all agencies working with early care and education programs in order to maximize the use of limited resources.

2001 Response:

We have several collaborative projects in Arkansas. I have listed just a few below:

- The Arkansas Early Literacy Learning Training Program for pre-school teachers.
- Arkansas Corporate Champions for Children, the public-private initiative.
- The English as a Second Language Early Learning Academy for Pre-school teachers.
- The state accreditation program.
- A comprehensive funding source database including all Arkansas Department of Education funding, the Head Start funding, and DHS early care and education funding.
- The Readiness Initiative, which will include setting readiness benchmarks for entry to Kindergarten and developing an assessment tool to evaluate incoming students thirty days prior to entering kindergarten.
- Transition initiative.

(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.

2003 Response:

No new information.

2002 Response:

No new information.

2001 Response:

We participate in the data collection efforts of the Southern Institute on Children and Families.

**APPENDIX C
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**Survey Results on the Status of State Implementation Efforts
October 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003**



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
Current Report Period: October 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003**

Your State:	Washington, DC
Your Name:	Barbara Ferguson Kamara
Title:	Executive Director
Name of Agency:	Department of Human Services, Office of Early Childhood Development
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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.

2003 Response:

OECD has met with the federal General Services Administration staff involved in child care to discuss cost sharing options with the District of Columbia for federal employees who are District residents and receive subsidies from the District. Follow-up meeting will continue with federal agencies.

The Children and Youth Investment Action Team continues to meet and to sponsor forums to highlight the need for sustainable funding. Sustainable funding is the number one priority for the District of Columbia through the technical assistance from the National League of Cities. A Finance Task Force is scheduled to be appointed by the Mayor to focus on sustainable funding for early childhood and out-of-school-time services.

2002 Response:

The District of Columbia is continuing the Children and Youth Investment Action Team and from that has created a Task Force of high level representatives from business, philanthropy, early childhood education and other stakeholders to develop an action plan for financing Out of School Time and Early Childhood Education. In response to budget challenges in FY2002 a strategies paper was drafted and briefings were held with City Council and the Deputy Mayor. Specifically:

- OECD developed a paper to focus on options for addressing the need for additional funding from federal and District sources to sustain the children already enrolled and to obtain revenue from new sources to increase services to 70% of eligible families following a drop in services from FY2001.
- OECD developed a Fact Sheet showing a flat budget, federal and local for at almost seven years, outlined options for additional federal and local funding and shared this with federal and District government officials, providers, advocates and the community. This information was the subject of three articles in The Washington Post, one article in the Washington Times and several local newspapers, television and radio stories and meetings with the business community.
- The Council of the District of Columbia held hearings on the budget situation in the Office of Early Childhood Development. The hearings heightened the awareness of people across the District of the need for additional federal and local funds. The business community made a commitment to assist the District in developing a plan for financing early care and education programs.

The OECD staff has made presentations on the need for additional funding to meetings involving staff at Regional and National offices of the Administration for Children, Youth and Families as well as at the Child Care State Administrators Meeting. In addition, presentations have been made to the National League of Cities officials and Conference.

2001 Response:

Presentation made to Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Early Childhood Development and at an April Forum focused on providing services for infants and toddlers on waiting lists. Developed two child care matters briefing documents one focusing on infants and toddlers, and one focusing on compensation, benefits and retention. A profile of child care providers and services document has also been developed. These documents have been broadly distributed and have been made accessible at City Council hearings and at meetings and site visits with District and Federal representatives.

There is a monthly meeting of the Children and Youth Investment Action Team, which includes representation from all District government agencies involved with children as well as policy organizations, and community based providers. This group has met for more than a year and every agenda includes items focused on funding and service needs. The Deputy Mayor for Children Youth and Families or her representative participates in these meetings. This group has an annual meeting that includes the Superintendent of Schools and all related District government department directors.

The District of Columbia televised Child Care and Development Fund hearings that were aired several times a day over a four-month period.

(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.

2003 Response:

The business community representatives testified that they would assist the District in developing a finance strategy for child care and out of school time services.

The DC Downtown Child Care Partnership sponsored a forum on the status of child care and needs for employees.

2002 Response:

No change except that the Metro Bankers Association has been superceded by the CareBuilders Initiative.

2001 Response:

In 1991, under the leadership of a prominent businessperson, a group of businesspersons were organized and an educational process began at that time. Since that time, there have been sessions with the Chamber of Commerce and the Metro Bankers Association. Since 2001, small-facilitated sessions have been held with human resources staff of District of Columbia based businesses. These will continue over the next year. Also in 2001, The District of Columbia Bar Pro Bono Project adopted child care as an area of focus and they will provide periodic workshops on child care issues to lawyers who will provide pro bono services to non-profit providers

(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.

2003 Response:

The Mayor's Advisory Committee on Early Childhood Development has been in the forefront of this issue as has DC Agenda, the Children and Youth Investment Action Team and DC Action for children.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

The Mayor's Advisory Committee on Early Childhood Development has been in the forefront of this issue as has DC Agenda and the Children and Youth Investment Action Team.

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

2003 Response:

Additional TANF dollars were received at the end of Fiscal Year 2002 to support children receiving child care services. Similarly, additional TANF dollars were made available in Fiscal Year 2003. These dollars were available because the District of Columbia received the TANF high performance bonus for five consecutive years. No new state dollars have been made available although requests have been made for additional funds. In FY 2002, the District served 60% of the eligible children and currently serves 51% in FY 2003.

2002 Response:

In fiscal year 2001, the District had carryover TANF funds and was able to provide services to 70% of eligible families. No new federal or local dollars were received in fiscal year 2002 and services reduced to approximately 60% of eligible families.

2001 Response:

In FY 2001, the District of Columbia provided services to 70% of eligible families using all sources of funds.

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

2003 Response:

A Finance Task Force is scheduled to be appointed by the Mayor to focus on sustainable funding for early childhood and out-of-school-time services.

DC held five community hearings on children's services in collaboration with eight partners.

2002 Response:

A high level Task Force will be launched in fall 2002 to address financing for early childhood education and out of school time in the District.

2001 Response:

- Held two large forums with small group facilitated session at the District of Columbia Convention Center involving parents and child care providers including teachers and teacher assistants.
- Early Childhood Collaborative of the District of Columbia (formed 1991) and the District of Columbia Downtown Child Care Corporation (formed 1999) raised funds to support centers with subsidized children.
- Three groups with Hope Six grants have included child care center and homes in their packages.

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.

2003 Response:

DC continues to use the same co-payment system. The parent co-payment does not exceed 10% of gross family income.

2002 Response:

DC uses the same co-payment system. Income eligibility is being adjusted for the new federal poverty levels; co-payment amounts will not be changed.

2001 Response:

DC established a new co-payment system that does not exceed 10% of gross family income and implemented this system in 2001.

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

2003 Response:

DC provides child care assistance to students who qualify under the income guidelines. However, in June of 2002, D. C. established a waiting list as demand for services exceeded available subsidy resources. The waiting list includes eligible families who are working and other non-TANF recipients who are otherwise eligible. The current wait list has 1,130 children, as of May 2003.

2002 Response:

No response.

2001 Response:

DC has provided financial assistance to students since the 1980's.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

DC counts earned income, veteran's benefits, and child support. All other income is exempt.

2001 Response:

The only income that DC counts is earned income.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

DC has no asset testing policy to receive child care financial assistance.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Families are eligible up to 250 percent of the federal poverty level and remain eligible until they reach 300 percent of FPL. This was implemented in 2001.

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.

2003 Response:

The District uses a multi-faceted strategy to make information on child care subsidies available. Child care materials are distributed throughout the community via health fairs, job fairs and Income Maintenance Administration (TANF) and Department of Employment Services service centers. Due to budgetary constraints the messages around availability have been adjusted to attract those populations that are currently eligible for enrollment.

The District held five community hearings on child care and other children's services as an opportunity to make the community aware of the child care subsidy program and its current status. Information was made available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese and Amharic. The Office of Early Childhood Development has public services announcements on several radio stations and hosts a weekly radio program.

2002 Response:

The massive outreach campaign launched in 2000 successfully increased the number of children receiving subsidized child care by 60% between 1999 and 2001. Limited television advertising continued in FY 2002. Written materials are also available at public buildings and various public forums. The Department of Human Services now has an Asian-Pacific Islander liaison to improve communication with this community.

2001 Response:

In 2000, DC began an extensive out reach campaign which uses TV, Radio, specially created videos, website, community events, flyers, other agencies and mailings. We have created materials in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean and Chinese. We have a technical assistance contract to work with groups for whom English is not the first language. The Mayor's Office of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs hosts an annual event and OECD provides a workshop with simultaneous translation in three languages.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

See 2001 response. Our translated materials include: English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese.

2001 Response:

Information is tested for reading levels and is in two to five different languages. Video tapes are closed captioned.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

The District of Columbia has professionally designed materials in multiple languages. They appeal to persons of all incomes.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

See 2001 response. Also, information is included on the city-wide resource and referral call center called Answers Please! This service will be available online in 2002.

2001 Response:

The District of Columbia has video tapes; print materials and the child care resource and referral service. OECD intake staff reviews options for service with each parent as does the more than 60 vendors who conduct intake at sites across the District.

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

2003 Response:

See response from 2002. Additionally, OECD recently conducted a series of forums that are required by the Child Care Development Fund Plan to educate the community at large and seek input from them about their child care issues as well.

2002 Response:

OECD staff provides information at monthly orientations for the customers of the Department of Employment Services' Project Empowerment program, which is a welfare to work initiative. OECD intake staff is also co-located with TANF vendors who work with customers to provide job training and job placement services. Information is also provided to the community through partnerships between OECD and the faith community.

2001 Response:

The District of Columbia has coordinated conferences and interagency outreach efforts on an ongoing basis. Each time the Mayor holds a meeting in any section of the District, OECD provides materials on child care. Information is also coordinated with the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Early Childhood Development, which meets every other month, and the Children and Youth Investment Action Team, which meets monthly.

(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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Cross training is provided with the public assistance office, the Maternal and Family Health Administration and in special forums organized by OECD to bring government agencies up to date on what we are doing. This also happens at the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Early Childhood Development, monthly meetings with the Parent Education Collaborative, with various provider groups, individual sessions at various organizations including faith based institutions; weekly site visits to TANF vendor sites and quarterly training for groups providing employment training.

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.

2003 Response:

There are 57 child care programs (serving over 5,000 children) where parents may apply and complete re-enrollment at the child care site rather than the OECD office. We also assist parents by giving them a written list of all required documents.

2002 Response:

A one page application and documentation to verify residency, identification, income, relationship, health form for children, etc. are required. Plans are being made for information to be available online by the end of 2002.

2001 Response:

The District of Columbia has a simple automated application that we have been using since 1997.

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

2003 Response:

Eligibility interviews will continue to be face to face. We believe original eligibility documents must be seen for verification.

2002 Response:

By the end of 2002 all forms and information will be available online through a nonprofit partner. Eligibility interviews will continue to be face to face.

2001 Response:

The District of Columbia currently does not accept filing except in person unless the person is a foster parent. Because we are a small jurisdiction, service can be provided more timely through face-to-face interaction.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

See 2001 response. Also, when appointment letters for eligibility determination interviews are sent, information on what documentation is required, is included. Documentation varies based on eligibility category, for example: a foster parent, working parent or TANF recipient.

2001 Response:

The District of Columbia reviews document requirements on the phone and broadly distributes the two easy steps document, which describes requirements.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

See 2001 response. Also, Intake/eligibility workers are co-located with TANF vendors who provide job training and job placement services.

2001 Response:

We have mobile eligibility across the District and more than 60 vendors who conduct eligibility at their sites.

(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.

2003 Response:

OECD is still providing non-traditional services for customers who need care evenings, overnight, weekends and holidays. These services started in 1999. Since that time three centers began providing child care services during non-traditional hours and 28 family child care homes as well.

If the children fall into the following categories, services are available to them:

- TANF parents in an approved activity including employment
- Children in foster care whose foster parent is employed
- Children in Child Protective Services (CPS) including court cases
- Children who are disabled
- Teen parents attending school
- TANF payees (child only cases)

2002 Response:

Evening hours were eliminated temporarily in 2002 due to budget challenges.

2001 Response:

The District of Columbia has evening hours and a toll free number and will make appointments for weekends.

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

2003 Response:

Same as 2002.

2002 Response:

A prescreening telephone interview to determine eligibility is conducted prior to an eligibility appointment being scheduled. The prescreening is based on information provided over the phone by the customer. Documentation is required to determine final eligibility.

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

The District of Columbia still requires a face-to-face for initial interview and redetermination except for foster parents and children under protective services. Since we are a small jurisdiction, it is feasible to have people apply face to face.

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

2003 response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

In 1998, the District of Columbia began a special consultation with the parents who requested a third change of child placement in a 12-month period. However, parents are required to put in writing a request for a change of provider and are also encouraged to go back and talk with the provider before changing the child.

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

2003 Response:

See 2001 and 2002 responses. Children dually eligible for Head Start or pre-kindergarten and child care subsidy remain eligible for one year.

2002 Response:

See 2001 response. For TANF customers and all others, eligibility is reviewed every six months.

2001 Response:

This practice became effective October 1, 2001.

(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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

In 1982, the District of Columbia began providing subsidy for three months for families who lost employment and were already in the subsidy program. The District of Columbia implemented this program in 2001 for persons involved in structured job search.

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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

The District of Columbia implemented this program in 1990.

(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.

2003 Response:

For the past five years, the Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) and the Head Start State Collaboration have been meeting in collaboration with the DC Public Schools to develop common procedures for meeting transition and coordination goals among early care and education, Head Start and Pre-K programs in the District of Columbia.

The District of Columbia does not use Title I funds for its Pre-K programs which have been in existence for almost thirty years. Therefore, Title I coordination is not part of this equation.

The Office of Early Childhood Development has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Health to develop a single health form for children in public and charter schools, as well as in all early care and education settings including Head Start. The final draft that was developed over at least three years ago is in the interagency review process. This application will match the revised early childhood health and safety regulations, which are currently under review by interagency legal staff.

Major strategies for linkage have been in the form of joint training involving all of the aforementioned parties as well as inclusion of all early care and education settings in Head Start yearlong transition to kindergarten activities throughout the city.

Interagency activities of all of the aforementioned agencies have been formalized through a variety of governmental and foundation grants for transitions including:

- ❖ District of Columbia Kellogg Foundation Grant administered by the National Black Child Development Institute,
- ❖ Regional Pre-Kindergarten Planning Project administered by the Council of Chief State School Officers,
- ❖ District of Columbia City Councilmember Kevin Chavous “Universal School Access” legislation, and
- ❖ District of Columbia Early Learning Opportunities Act funded by the US DHHS Administration for Children and Families and administered by the Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Early Childhood Development.

2002 Response:

DC continues its blended funded program where parents needing full day, full year child care who qualify for Head Start enter through Head Start and receive child care subsidy automatically.

2001 Response:

The District of Columbia has implemented a blended Head Start and child care program (1999) and a blended child care and pre-k/title program (1996).

(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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

The District pools its funding streams so services to TANF, low-income, or other populations appear seamless.

2001 Response:

The District of Columbia has implemented this concept since 1990.

(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.

2003 Response:

The DC Public Schools After Care for ALL program will use the same eligibility criteria as all other programs effective August 1, 2003.

2002 Response:

Early Childhood Education and Out of School Time is offered through community-based organizations, DC Department of Parks and Recreation, Public Charter Schools, and DC Public Schools. OECD funds all of these programs with CCDF, TANF direct, TANF transfer, local dollars and SSBG. With the exception of the DC Public Schools Program, all other programs have the same eligibility requirements and sliding fee scale.

2001 Response:

The District of Columbia has implemented this concept since 1990.

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.

2003 Response:

OECD has enrolled its staff on Asian and Pacific Islander cultural sensitivity training. Each division has staff who are bi-lingual in Spanish.

OECD actively engages in partnership with the Asian and Latino communities through targeted outreach activities and Initiatives.

2002 Response:

See 2001 response. Also, in addition to training staff in the field, all DC staff attend customer service training. Training includes role-playing, critiquing participants on attitude and tone of voice, as well as quality and accuracy of information given when referrals to staff or other agencies are appropriate.

2001 Response:

We provide quarterly eligibility training institutes and have staff and contractors who speak multiple languages.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

See 2001 response. Also, parents who bring required documentation to the eligibility interview and have selected a child care provider with an open slot, generally receive child care within the next 2 business days.

2001 Response:

The District of Columbia broadly distributes information about documentation required to apply for subsidy. During the telephone pre-screening, items required for eligibility are reviewed and follow-up letter with requirements is sent. Appointments save time and people are seen shortly after they arrive for the appointment. The major challenge faced by most parents is obtaining a completed health form.

OECD has no control over this.

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

2003 Response:

OECD continues to make a customer feedback survey available for customers to complete during their appointments.

2002 Response:

In FY 2002, the University of the District of Columbia launched a customer satisfaction survey by surveying 1,000 current recipients of child care subsidy. Results will be available at the end of 2002. OECD also developed a customer feedback survey that is available for customers to complete following their appointments.

2001 Response:

University of the District of Columbia conducts assessments, analyzes data and makes recommendations.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

We fully fund the child care resource and referral service and have since 1991.

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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

Currently, DC's reimbursement rates are at the market rate (75th percentile) for 1998. Due to budget constraints rates have not been increased.

2001 Response:

DC conducts a market rate survey every two years and establishes a Market Rate Task Force that makes recommendations for rate increases.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

See 2001 response. Also, the highest tier is for the programs that have achieved national accreditation. Criteria include parental involvement, staff development, and compliance with licensing.

2001 Response:

We have established a three tiered reimbursement system with rates based on quality indicators.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

The District of Columbia prohibits providers from charging above the established co-payments. This has been a policy since 1980.

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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

Same with the exception of the Metro Bankers Association. The Carebuilders Initiative (CBI) supercedes the partnership with the Metro Bankers. This initiative is a community partnership between the Enterprise Foundation, The Office of Early Childhood Development, DC Bar Pro Bono Corporation, The Washington Area Community Investment Fund, the Washington Architectural Foundation and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation.

CBI is purposed to improve the quality and supply of child care services available for low-income families in the District of Columbia by bringing together resources necessary to coordinate and provide financial assistance to the child care community. It will create a “tool kit” for child care facility operators to use for future development.

2001 Response:

DC has partnerships with the Chambers of Commerce, the Metro Bankers Association and community development groups. We have groups that have been established by prominent business people in DC since 1991. In 2001, we sponsored facilitated discussions with human resources staff in District of Columbia businesses. One of the major employers in DC has established a Corporate Voices group to educate business people.

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

2003 Response:

Marriott International has provided support to the establishment of Corporate Voices for Working Families which provides member corporations with unique access to the policy making process at a high level, expertise on issues related to working families and opportunities to network with corporate leaders in the field.

2002 Response:

See 2001 response. Also, The DC Downtown Child Care Corporation has a board comprised of representatives from business throughout the District. Donna Kline of Marriott International has created the Corporate Voices organization to educate Congress and other businesses on the needs in the Child Care Industry. Kerr Company, a housing developer, has put child care programs in its housing since 1988. As a corporate child care advocate, they continue to serve as mentors to other housing developers.

2001 Response:

The Early Childhood Collaborative and DC Agenda have solicited business champions. These champions have been strong advocates for child care since 1991.

(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.

2003 Response:

Same as 2002.

2002 Response:

DC has the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) a federal tax benefit that is designed to help low-income workers increase their financial stability and a DC EITC that is 25% of the federal credit. We also have the Child and Dependent Care Credit, a tax benefit for workers who need child care to be able to work, and the Expanded Child Tax Credit that allows taxpayers raising dependent children to get a credit worth up to \$500 per dependent child under age 17. All of these assistance plans can be assessed through the human resources staff in businesses for their employees' use.

2001 Response:

Information provided to human resources staff in businesses for their use with employees. OECD has worked with business on a one on one or small group basis since 1987 when the *Child Care Wish List for Businesses* was originally established.

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

2003 Response:

OECD has initiated a series of community forums on child care, public hearings and conducted a special session on Public Policies Partnership.

2002 Response:

Same as 2001 response.

2001 Response:

This is done through the Early Childhood Collaborative, DC Downtown Child Care Corporation, the DC Chamber of Commerce, the Metro Bankers Association, and the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Early Childhood Development.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

The District implemented a new tax related law in 2001.

2001 Response:

In 1988, the District of Columbia established a series of tax incentives for employers who made child care investments in the Development Zones area of the District. This included incentives for hiring persons from these areas and for providing rent at below market rates.

(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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

DC does not have such incentives. However, housing and commercial developers have provided child care space for use by businesses in the areas developed since 1988.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

See 2001 response. Also, the majority of public/private child care projects in DC are related to quality initiatives that provide technical assistance, training or other support directly to providers.

2001 Response:

All administration is handled by DHS Office of Early Childhood Development or through the DC Child Care Corporation or the Early Childhood Collaborative.

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.

2003 Response:

Not applicable to states or the District of Columbia.

2002 Response:

N/A

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

DC has a nonrefundable child care tax credit. DC also has a refundable Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) that is 25% of the federal EITC.

2001 Response:

DC implemented a refundable child care tax credit.

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

2003 Response:

Not applicable.

2002 Response:

N/A.

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.

2003 Response:

Not applicable.

2002 Response:

N/A

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.

2003 Response:

Same as 2002.

2002 Response:

Joint effort by DC Tax and Revenue, DHS Office of Early Childhood Development, the child care resource and referral service and advocate groups such as DC ACT (D. C. Action for Children) to promote the Earned Income Tax Credit.

2001 Response:

Joint effort by DC Tax and Revenue, DHS Office of Early Childhood Development, the child care resource and referral service and advocate groups such as DC ACT (D. C. Action for Children).

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

The District's EITC was raised from 10% to 25% of the federal EITC. Other tax strategies have not been explored as of yet.

2001 Response:

DC has not implemented initiatives in this area.

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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

The Mayor is appointing a Task Force to research and make recommendations on universal early childhood education for children birth to age five and out of school time.

2001 Response:

Leadership provided by DHS Office of Early Childhood Development collaborates with the welfare agency, the Employment agency and Parks and Recreation since 1987.

(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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

Southern States and the District should determine what the data would be used for, what data elements are necessary, and review existing data (801 reports and administrative data) to determine how to best utilize what exists. The Southern Institute should engage the National Child Care Information Center to work through these issues.

2001 Response:

DC is very interested but has not initiated efforts in this area with other states except Maryland and Virginia. DC, Maryland and Northern Virginia have been collaborating with the Council of Governments of Greater Washington to collect and publish common data since 1981.

**APPENDIX D
GEORGIA**

**Survey Results on the Status of State Implementation Efforts
October 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003**



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

**Survey on the Status of Implementation Efforts
Current Report Period: October 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003**

Your State:	Georgia
Your Name:	Bonnie Murray
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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.

2003 Response:

Policy makers were informed that the need for child care continues to grow. Based on the current inquiry/waiting lists, the need for subsidized child care far exceeds current funding.

2002 Response:

Child care advocates, staff from the state's network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies and providers converged at the state house on children's day during the legislative session to promote the children's agenda. Meetings were held with state legislators to inform them of child care issues in Georgia, including the need for expanding assistance to families eligible for subsidized child care.

The Georgia Success By 6[®] initiative has implemented a public awareness campaign addressing quality child care and has secured funding to implement quality child care activities in local communities. As a result of the public awareness campaign and available funding, state legislators requested their communities to be pilot sites for the quality child care activities.

2001 Response:

Increasing the number of families eligible for subsidies was a Georgia Early Learning Initiative recommendation which was given to the Governor in the fall of 2000. While it was not one of the recommendations chosen for implementation in 2001, it remains on the table.

(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.

2003 Response:

The newly named initiative Smart Start (formerly GELI, Georgia Early Learning Incentive) is revamping the way the business community is educated on the need for leadership in achieving state, federal and community resources to meet Georgia's child care needs.

2002 Response:

A GELI organizer facilitates the initial meeting to determine how the company can help the child care center, establish a volunteer plan and is available to assist the company liaison throughout the year. By adopting these centers, businesses make a visible contribution and lasting impression on their employees, the children, the community and the state. The Georgia Child Care Council has produced a free resource guide for businesses called, "Quality Child Care - The Business Connection." The contents include: Child Care Statistic;

The Case for Business Involvement; Child Care Options for Businesses; Georgia's Child Care Corporate Tax Credit (H.B. 610); Case Studies; How to Get Started; Consultants & Resource Information; Web Sites; and Information on Quality Child Care and Brain Research.

2001 Response:

The State Chamber of Commerce endorsed the Georgia Early Learning Initiative at its annual State Board Meeting.

(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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

Income eligibility for subsidized child care remains the same due to state budget constraints and limited federal funds.

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.

2003 Response:

Subsidized child care funds were not increased this year.

2002 Response:

While state funds have been appropriated to increase quality child care, funds have not been appropriated to provide subsidized care to additional families.

2001 Response:

Please refer to action step 1.1.

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

2003 Response:

Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies in Georgia continue to educate local leaders about the need for child care assistance for low income families through meetings, legislative luncheons, etc.

Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) continues to partner with other child care agencies such as Head Start and Pre-K to maximize child care funds by providing extended day and extended year for eligible families.

Tiered reimbursement is available in 14 counties. Tiered reimbursement payments are issued centers, group homes and family child care providers who meet increased quality standards and serve children in the CAPS program. The tiered reimbursement rate paid to providers is more than the standard rate paid for child care.

2002 Response:

The 14 Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies in Georgia educate their local leaders about the need for child care assistance for low incomes families through one on one meetings, legislative luncheons and breakfasts, and during a special child care day during the legislative session.

Partnerships between the subsidized child care program, Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS), Georgia's Pre-K program and Head Start maximize child care funds by providing extended day/extended year care for eligible families whose children attend Pre-K and Head Start programs which operate the traditional "school year" (9 months, 6 hours per day).

The Georgia Early Learning Initiative is piloting Tiered Reimbursement in 11 counties in Georgia. Tiered reimbursement payments are issued by the CAPS program to centers, group homes, and family child care providers who meet increased quality standards AND who serve children subsidized through CAPS. The reimbursement is a percentage above the standard reimbursement rate for care furnished to the eligible child.

Governor Barnes successfully introduced and passed legislation that encourages businesses to provide on-site child care centers. The Governor's initiatives consist of two components: Increasing the current tax credit from 50 percent to 75 percent for employers that provide on-site child care or sponsor child care for their employees; and providing a new tax credit to businesses that construct on-site child care facilities for the children of their employees. The credit allows for 10 percent of the construction cost per year for 10 years.

2001 Response:

Georgians for Children, a statewide child advocacy organization, develops a children's agenda each year to be used by all child advocates during the Legislative session. The agenda for 2002, developed over the summer of 2001, contains three issues related to the availability of child care.

The 14 Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies in Georgia educate their local leaders about the need for child care assistance for low incomes families through one on one meetings, legislative luncheons and breakfasts, and during a special child care day during the legislative session.

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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Families currently receiving child care subsidies do not have co-payments that exceed 10% of family income.

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

2003 Response:

Teen parents enrolled in high school or technical school may receive subsidized child care without being placed on a waiting list if the student is determined eligible.

2002 Response:

Subsidized child care is provided to students enrolled in high school or technical school. Teen parents attending high school or working to earn a General Equivalency Degree (GED) receive child care subsidies, if eligible, without being placed on a waiting list.

2001 Response:

High school and Tech school students are eligible at this time.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

Georgia determines eligibility based on “regular, predictable” income and does not include income from public assistance programs (TANF, SSI, adoption supplement, etc). By using “regular, predictable” income to determine eligibility, income from tax refunds, lump sum child support payments, annual bonuses, gifts, etc. are exempt. Income from any family unit member under the age of 18 is also exempt.

2001 Response:

Georgia does not count TANF, SSI, Food stamps, adoption supplements, tax refunds, relative subsidies, earnings of any child under 18, in determining income eligibility.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

Georgia does not include assets when determining eligibility. Families may own a car, home, etc., and receive subsidized child care.

2001 Response:

Georgia does not test for assets.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

Income eligibility levels are not indexed for inflation.

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.

2003 Response:

The local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies and local county Departments of Family and Children Services are the primary sources for information about child care subsidies. The information is both written and verbal. The Georgia Pre-K program continues to refer all potentially eligible families to the CAPS program. Potentially eligible families may receive before and after school care as well as summer care.

2002 Response:

A primary source of information about subsidies comes from written and verbal information provided by the local CCR&R agencies and the county Departments of Family and Children Services. However, child care providers and health department staff frequently refer potentially eligible families to the subsidized child care program.

Georgia's Pre-Kindergarten program refers all potentially eligible families to CAPS. CAPS provides the before/after school and summer child care for children attending Pre-K who live in eligible families.

The Georgia Division of Family and Children Services web site includes a fact sheet on the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program. The CAPS program has a web site which allows individuals to search for contact information for their county department. Of course, other public assistance programs (TANF, Food Stamps and Medicaid) also refer families to CAPS.

2001 Response:

The main source of information about subsidies comes from written and verbal information provided by the local CCR&R agencies and the county Departments of Family and Children Services.

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

2003 Response:

Local county Departments of Family and Children Services, Child Care Resource and Referral agencies and child care providers through person to person contact, provide basic information about the CAPS program. The CAPS webmaster continues to receive and respond to approximately 75 e-mails per month.

2002 Response:

Individuals receive basic information about CAPS through person-to-person contact (R&Rs, providers, case workers, etc.). The CAPS web site encourages visitors to contact the web master if the visitor has questions. The web master receives and personally responds to an average of 75 e-mails per month.

These e-mails answer questions, provide specific information requested by the visitor and furnish additional resources. The average response time is less than 24 hours.

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

Our Business Process Reengineering project team recommended families should be able to access child care services via a variety of avenues. Georgia's goal is to offer several ports of entry so that visiting the local Department of Family and Children Services is not the only way to access the subsidized child care program.

2002 Response:

CAPS is involved in a Business Process Reengineering project which has recommended changes to allow multiple ways to access the CAPS program so that families may access subsidized child care without having to apply at the local Department of Family and Children Services office. Though not in place yet, we are moving forward on this action step.

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

Case workers and Child care Resource and Referral agencies continue to assist parents/guardians with making informed child care choices by providing general child care information. Each of the 14 Child Care Resource and Referral agencies has a toll free telephone number.

2002 Response:

Multiple avenues are used to help parents make informed provider choices. The statewide network of CCR&Rs provide general child care information and offer help finding child care programs that meet each family's criteria. Each of the 14 CCR&Rs has a toll free phone number.

The public awareness campaign “Choose to Care,” distributed brochures through the state’s major supermarket chain. The brochures describe quality child care settings and how to find them.

The United Way’s Success By 6® partnership works with families and policymakers to ensure that children are healthy and developmentally ready to continue their learning process. The goals and strategies include: increasing public awareness of children and family issues by implementing a broad-based marketing and education plan and increasing access to services for young children and their families by coordinating existing service systems to create linkages between services.

Georgia’s various child care organization and advocacy groups, as well as CAPS, have information on their web sites about selecting quality child care programs.

2001 Response:

A statewide network of CCR&Rs provides this service.

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

2003 Response:

Georgia continues it’s collaboration with Head Start grantees and Pre K (the Office of School Readiness to provide extended day/extended year child care to eligible families.

2002 Response:

In an effort to serve more eligible families, Georgia has transferred funds from the TANF grant to the CAPS program. The transferred funds are used for subsidies.

Collaboratives facilitate communication among organizations with common goals. Collaborating with Head Start grantees and the Office of School Readiness (Georgia’s Pre-K providers) allows CAPS to provide extended day/extended year child care to eligible families. The CAPS program has gained visibility by contributing to and participating in the Georgia Early Learning Initiative. CAPS is represented with Healthy Child Care Georgia, and the section director serves as ex-officio member of the Georgia Child Care Council.

2001 Response:

N/A

(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.

2003 Response:

Cross training was offered to case managers in the Employment Services/TANF programs, licensing surveyors in the Office of Regulatory Services, and child care providers.

2002 Response:

In 2002, cross-training was provided to coordinators in Georgia's Pre-K program, licensing surveyors in the Office of Regulatory Services and case managers in the Employment Services/TANF programs.

A series of meetings have been convened around the state with child care providers to discuss the GELI tiered reimbursement, TEACH™, Incentive\$, training and technical assistance. During these meetings, providers were encouraged to enroll children who receive subsidized child care if not already doing so. (Tiered reimbursement is available only to providers in the designated counties who care for children who receive subsidies.)

A separate series of meetings have been convened around the state with child care providers to listen to comments and answer questions regarding the automated child care payment system implemented in 26 of Georgia's largest counties.

CCR&R staff (who are well-versed in the subsidized child care program) regularly provide training and information to child care providers about CAPS.

2001 Response:

N/A

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.

2003 Response:

As the state works to implement the recommendations made by the Business Process Reengineering team, application simplification remains a priority. Elimination of the face-to-face interview also remains a priority so that parents will not need to take time away from work to meet with the child care case manager. Also in the future, families will have multiple ways to access the subsidized child care program.

2002 Response:

The CAPS Business Process Reengineering (BPR) project team has recommended streamlining the application and redetermination processes to make them more customer friendly. (For example: Eliminating the required face-to-face interview so that clients do not have to take time off from work to meet with a case manager). Multiple access points for families interested in CAPS have been recommended. Though not in place yet, we are moving forward on this action step.

2001 Response:

Applications are being amended at this time to use simpler language.

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

2003 Response:

The Business Process Reengineering team has recommended that the application review and redetermination processes be conducted via mail, phone and the internet.

2002 Response:

The BPR project team has recommended that the application, review and redetermination processes be conducted via mail, phone and internet. Pending administrative approval, the BPR change management plan will describe how and when this action step will be deployed.

2001 Response:

As a direct result of the Southern Institute's report, specifically the chart that shows alternative application processes in other states, the State agency managing subsidies is beginning to explore the possibility of alternative methods for receiving applications for subsidies in Georgia.

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

2003 Response:

The Business Process Reengineering (BPR) project team and the CAPS section has as a goal leveraging automation to interface with existing systems that have client information so that clients are not asked for the same information repeatedly.

2002 Response:

The BPR project team has recommended leveraging automation to interface with existing systems that have client information so that clients do not have to submit redundant information. Pending administrative approval, the BPR change management plan will describe how and when this action step will be deployed.

2001 Response:

Under study at this time.

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

2003 Response:

The call, click or come by recommendation by Business Process Reengineering team for the application process will facilitate applications being available at multiple sites.

2002 Response:

The BPR project team has recommended a “call, click or come-by” approach to make applications for child care subsidies more accessible. This would allow potential clients to “call” to request an application via mail, “click” to access an internet site and complete an application, or “come-by” to pick up an application. Pending administrative approval, the BPR change management plan will describe how and when this action step will be deployed.

2001 Response:

Applications are only provided at 159 county DFACs offices at this time.

(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.

2003 Response:

Some DFCS county offices continue to open early in the morning and stay late in the evening to accommodate their clients. This not a state requirement but an effort to meet the needs of the client.

2002 Response:

Some county offices are open early in the morning, late in the evening and/or on Saturdays. This is not a state requirement. A centralized toll-free phone line has been recommended by the BPR project team.

2001 Response:

Some county offices are opened during non-traditional hours but it is not a state requirement. There are no toll free phone lines.

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

2003 Response:

In collaboration with Head Start grantees, children who attend Head Start are presumed to be eligible for extended day/extended year child care subsidies through DFCS. Head Start families are not required to apply for subsidies at the local DFCS office.

2002 Response:

In collaboration with Head Start grantees, children who attend Head Start are presumed to be eligible for extended day/extended year child care subsidies if parents are working, in school or in training. These families do not have to apply for subsidies at the local DFCS office; the Head Start program screens to ensure eligibility.

2001 Response:

Under study at this time.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

The CAPS Business Process Reengineering (BPR) project team has recommended eliminating the required face-to-face interview so that clients do not have to take time off from work to meet with a case manager.

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

Case managers are required to consult with clients and provide them enough information to make wise child care choices.

2002 Response:

Case managers are required to consult with clients to assess the client's child care needs and to offer information about child care choices when the clients request excessive provider changes.

2001 Response:

Georgia already requires that local child care eligibility staff offer consultation to parents regarding appropriate choices when excessive provider changes are requested.

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

2003 Response:

CAPS clients are currently certified eligible for one year.

2002 Response:

Georgia has a 12-month redetermination process. CAPS clients are certified eligible for one year.

2001 Response:

This is current Georgia policy.

(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.

2003 Response:

Clients who are receiving child care and lose their job, will receive ten days notification before child care is terminated. If employment is found within the ten day notification period and the client remains income eligible, child care is not interrupted.

2002 Response:

Clients who lose their jobs and receive subsidized child care currently receive at least 10 days notice before the child care case closes; many use this notice period to search for employment. If employment is found within the notice period and client remains income eligible, then the case may stay open.

2001 Response:

N/A

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.

2003 Response:

Families receive seamless child care services as long as they remain eligible for any child care program category. Similarly, there are no time limits on how long an eligible family may receive child care services.

2002 Response:

This is current Georgia policy. Families receive seamless services as long as they are eligible for any eligibility category. Similarly, there are no time limits on receipt of subsidized child care. Families may continue to receive services as long as they are eligible.

2001 Response:

This is current Georgia policy.

(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.

2003 Response:

At this time applications for CAPS, Head Start and Pre-K programs are not combined. However there are good linkages among the subsidy programs to provide wrap around services for low-income families in Georgia.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

While applications are not combined, there are good linkages between Pre-K, Head Start, and the subsidy program to provide wrap around services for low income families in Georgia.

(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.

2003 Response:

Georgia provides seamless subsidized child care to eligible clients without time limits. When necessary, clients are moved from one eligibility category to another without an interruption in their child care service.

2002 Response:

Georgia provides subsidized child care to eligible without time limits and seamlessly “moves” clients from one category to another as eligible. This “move” is transparent to the client.

2001 Response:

See action step 5.2.

(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.

2003 Response:

The CAPS program, Head Start and Georgia's Pre-K program continue to work together to ensure that Georgia's children receive stable and consistent early child care services. When requested, families may receive both expanded day and extended year services.

2002 Response:

Georgia's Pre-K program, the CAPS program and Head Start have been working closely together over the past three years to insure maximization of resources.

2001 Response:

The voluntary, statewide Pre-K program, the Subsidy program and Head Start have been working closely together over the past three years to insure maximization of resources.

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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

Training has been provided to all county DFCS staff in modifying policies, practices and procedures to ensure equal opportunity. Each county office developed and implemented procedures for dealing with customers who speak other languages. New employees attend customer service training.

2001 Response:

This varies based on the county DFACS office.

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

2003 Response:

The CAPS Business Process Reengineering (BPR) project team made recommendations for standardizing and streamlining the program, leveraging automation and out-sourcing some functions so that case managers will have more time to focus on the clients. The plan is to follow the recommendation.

2002 Response:

The CAPS Business Process Reengineering (BPR) project team has made extensive recommendations for standardizing and streamlining the program, leveraging automation, and out-sourcing some functions so that case managers have more time to focus on the clients. Pending administrative approval, the BPR change management plan will describe how and when this action step will be deployed.

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

The CAPS Business Process Reengineering team included consumer satisfaction assessments in the new business model.

2002 Response:

The study of families on the waiting list for child care subsidies provided information on the types of alternative (non-subsidized) child care used by the families.

The CAPS Business Process Reengineering team included consumer satisfaction assessments in the new business model. Though still below the 75th percentile, reimbursement rates were increased for child care providers in July 2002. After a successful six month pilot in 5 counties, tiered reimbursement has expanded to an additional 6 counties.

2001 Response:

This fall, the subsidy program began focus groups with parents on the child care subsidy waiting list to determine how not having a child care subsidy has affected their family.

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

2003 Response:

The Child Care Resource and Referral agencies received funds for quality improvement in family day care and group homes. Training was also made available for informal child care providers.

2002 Response:

The network of CCR&Rs receive sufficient funds for operations and personnel. The CCR&R inclusion staff is well-established in each R&R. Funds were allocated last year for the inclusion lending/equipment library. The CCR&Rs also receive funds to administer contracts. These contracts fund materials and equipment for family and group home child care providers to improve quality.

2001 Response:

Investments in the CCR&R system have tripled in the past year with the addition of funds for an inclusion project and funds to improve and expand family child care.

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.

2003 Response:

Reimbursement rates remain below the 75th percentile. After a successful six-month pilot in 5 counties, tiered reimbursement is being expanded to a total 14 counties July 1, 2003.

2002 Response:

Though still below the 75th percentile, reimbursement rates were increased for child care providers in July 2002. After a successful six month pilot in 5 counties, tiered reimbursement has expanded to an additional 6 counties.

2001 Response:

Most recent market rate survey was completed in January 2001 but rates fall well below the 75% percentile. However, as part of the Georgia Early Learning Initiative, 5 pilot counties were selected to receive tiered reimbursements based on increased quality, up to 150% of the current rate.

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

2003 Response:

Supports continue to be offered through Smart Start (formerly Georgia Early Learning Initiative), ACT initiatives (training, technical assistance, Incentive\$, TEACH and tiered reimbursement).

2002 Response:

The provider supports offered through the GELI and ACT initiatives (training, technical assistance, Incentive\$, TEACH®, and tiered reimbursement) have been well received by providers. There has been an increase in the number of child care providers who are recruiting families receiving subsidies because of the tiered reimbursement program.

2001 Response:

See action step 7.1.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

Georgia is concerned that prohibiting providers from charging above the established co-payments will reduce parental choice. Providers may choose not to serve families who receive subsidies if the providers are unable to charge their customary fees.

2001 Response:

N/A

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.

2003 Response:

The presentation developed by the Georgia Child Care Council continues to be used by child care resource and referral agencies to encourage businesses to support child care assistance. That presentation is currently being revised. Smart Start, has decided to revise the presentation developed for businesses which explains the importance of quality a quality child care environment.

The child care resource and referral agencies offer assistance to businesses on ways to meet the child care needs of their employers.

2002 Response:

The Georgia Child Care Council has developed a presentation for businesses which have been used by CCR&Rs to encourage business support for child care assistance in many forms. GELI has developed a presentation for businesses that explains the importance of a quality early childhood environment for all children.

The CCR&Rs offer businesses assistance in meeting the child care needs of their employees through parent educational opportunities and consultation on developing child care programs. They offer information on developing community resources to increase the availability of child care services, offer data on child care supply and demand and work to increase public awareness of child care needs in their communities.

2001 Response:

The Georgia Child Care Council has developed a presentation for businesses which can be used by CCR&Rs or any community organization to make the case for business support for child care assistance in many forms. Also, GELI has developed a presentation, also easily adapted for use with businesses, which explains the importance of a quality early childhood environment for all children.

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

2003 Response:

Not applicable.

2002 Response:

N/A

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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

See action steps 8.1 and 8.5.

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

2003 Response:

Not applicable.

2002 Response:

N/A

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Georgia has a substantial state corporate tax credit for employers who provide on site care or help pay child care costs for their employees.

(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.

2003 Response:

Not applicable.

2002 Response:

N/A

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

Not applicable.

2002 Response:

N/A

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.

2003 Response:

Not applicable.

2002 Response:

N/A

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

Not applicable.

2002 Response:

N/A

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.

2003 Response:

Not applicable.

2002 Response:

N/A

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.

2003 Response:

Not applicable.

2002 Response:

N/A

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.

2003 Response:

Not applicable.

2002 Response:

N/A

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

See action step 8.5.

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.

2003 Response:

The need for subsidized child care services still exceeds the abilities of the early child care programs to serve the eligible families. CAPS partners with other agencies and organizations that serve similar families to increase capacity. These linkages maximize our child care dollars.

2002 Response:

Child care services exceed the abilities of each of the child care and early education programs to serve all eligible families. Therefore, CAPS partners with other agencies and organizations that serve similar client populations to build capacity. These linkages promote comprehensive services to families and stretch child care dollars. Funds for these programs are blended to maximize services.

2001 Response:

Any parent eligible for Head Start is eligible for wrap around services financed by the subsidy program. Pre-K has no eligibility policies other than age of the child.

(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.

2003 Response:

Not applicable.

2002 Response:

N/A

2001 Response:

N/A

**APPENDIX E
KENTUCKY**

**Survey Results on the Status of State Implementation Efforts
October 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003**



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
Current Report Period: October 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003**

Your State:	Kentucky
Your Name:	Paula Woodworth
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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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Quarterly reports are sent to state agency and legislative members, as well as collaborative partners. Policymakers are included on the Early Childhood Authority and local Early Childhood Councils who assess community/state needs, decide on funding priorities, and work on a comprehensive plan to meet the needs of Kentucky's children. Testimony is also given before Legislative committees.

(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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

The Early Childhood Authority, the local Early Childhood Councils include the business community as members. An Early Childhood Business Council is also being formed as a result of KY's HB 706, which is to involve the corporate community, county judge/executives, and mayors in supporting issues of importance to working families with young children and to collect and disseminate information about the various ways business and local government can become involved in supporting early childhood.

(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.

2003 Response:

See 2001 and 2002 responses. Additionally, budget constraints in 2003 have forced Kentucky to plan implementation of cost containment measures which include a suspension of intake of new applications for income eligible and non-TANF education/training clients. If this is not sufficient to prevent a deficit, Kentucky will be considering lowering the eligibility threshold rather than raising it to 85% of state median income.

2002 Response:

See 2001 response. Additionally, the Early Childhood Authority, the local Early Childhood Councils include the business community as members. An Early Childhood Business Council has been formed as a result of KY's HB 706, and involves the corporate community, county judge/executives, and mayors in supporting issues of importance to working families with young children. The Councils also collect and disseminate information about the various ways business and local government can become involved in supporting early childhood. Eligibility for participation in the Child Care Assistance Program may be increased, to the extent that funds are available, from 165% to 170% of the federal poverty level during the effective period of the FFY 2002 and 2003 CCDF Plan. However, to date budgetary constraints have not permitted this increase.

2001 Response:

HB 706 also mandates that the Cabinet for Families and Children shall evaluate at least annually the adequacy of the childcare subsidy to enable low income families in need of childcare services to obtain child care and shall file an annual report on its evaluation with the Early Childhood Authority and the Legislative Research Commission.

The Governor's Early Childhood Initiative, HB 706, was enacted during the 2000 Session of the General Assembly. This important initiative combines funding from the CCDF and Kentucky's Phase I Tobacco Settlement dollars. As a result, an increased focus on child care issues means that early care and education will be enhanced through the following: eligibility for participation in the Child Care Assistance Program may be increased, to the extent that funds are available, from 165% to 170% of the federal poverty level during the effective period of the FFY 2002 and 2003 CCDF Plan.

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

2003 Response:

The child care assistance program has a projected budget deficit of \$16M for SFY'04 and was able to obtain \$5M in additional general funds in our SFY'04 budget. However, there is still a projected budget deficit that has required implementation of cost containment measures. Effective 5/1/03, Kentucky is suspending intake for new applications for low-income and non-TANF education/training clients. This will result in a waiting list for eligible families.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

KY is currently able to serve all eligible families who seek child care assistance that meet income guidelines. At this time we have no waiting lists.

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

2003 Response:

Please see 2001 response. Additionally, during the 2003 General Assembly, many child care advocates, providers and families came to Frankfort in support of obtaining additional funds for the child care assistance program. It was this community support that resulted in a \$5M increase in state general funds.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

KY is working through the Early Childhood Authority, the Early Childhood Councils, and the Early Childhood Business Councils to achieve this goal. In addition some Child Care Resource and Referral agencies and Service Agents have accessed additional local resources to supplement child care assistance.

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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

KY's co-payment schedule meets this guideline (sliding scale from 0-10%).

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

2003 Response:

KY is able to assist teen parents who are pursuing a high school diploma or GED. From 7/1/02 to 5/1/03, KY also assisted adults pursuing a GED, vocational training, or post-secondary education that leads to self-sufficiency. Policy established time frames for participation for adult students. Due to budget constraints, effective 5/1/03, new applications for adult students were suspended. Current recipients will be allowed to remain eligible as long as they meet criteria and do not allow their eligibility to lapse.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

KY is able to assist teen parents who are pursuing a high school diploma or GED. We are also able to assist adults pursuing a GED, vocational training, or post-secondary education that will lead to self-sufficiency.

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

2003 Response:

KY exempts one time payments such as tax refunds, lottery winnings, educational loans or grants, and payments made specifically for the child such as child eligible SSI or Disability.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

KY exempts one time payments such as tax refunds, lottery winnings, educational loans or grants, and payments made specifically for the child such as Kinship Care payments, child eligible SSI or Disability, etc.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

KY does not utilize asset testing for child care assistance eligibility.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

KY does not do this. Current budget shortfalls for the state will probably not allow us to consider this at any time in the near future.

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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

KY is accomplishing this goal through Early Childhood Councils, CCR&Rs and Service Agents. Multiple sources include distribution of pamphlets in local offices, newspaper articles, video tapes that are played in the Community Based Services offices, some radio spots and interviews.

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

2003 Response:

See 2001 and 2002 responses. In 2003, budget constraints have impacted the timeframes and priorities for implementation.

2002 Response:

See 2001 response. Additionally, the Cabinet for Families and Children convened a workgroup to make recommendations for compliance with federal guidelines related to limited English proficiency. Those recommendations have been made and are currently under review.

2001 Response:

This is an on-going effort. Workgroups are currently working on translation of forms, revising them to be more user-friendly.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

KY attempts to promote child care assistance as a benefit/support to the parent rather than a subsidy/entitlement. Confidentiality is mandated and regulations require that policies for the general public must also apply to families receiving the child care assistance to alleviate some of the potential for stigma that might be associated with a family receiving child care assistance.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

This information is distributed through the CCR&Rs, Service Agents, Family Resource centers, Health Departments, and Healthy Start in Child Care staff.

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

2003 Response:

See 2001 response. In addition, a Partnership Workgroup has been convened to collaborate and coordinate with key early care and education partners.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

The Child Care Councils are working collaboratively to achieve this goal. CCR&Rs in some areas are also working with provider organizations and community partners. The Division of Child Care staff participates in collaborative efforts with Head Start, Health Departments, Division of Licensed Child Care, the Councils, and other child advocacy partners.

(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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Service Agents, CCR&Rs, and the Councils are working toward this goal under the oversight and guidance of the Division of Child Care and the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development.

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.

2003 Response:

See 2001 and 2002 responses. Budget constraints have impacted development of the central data repository.

2002 Response:

See 2001 response. There is also an initiative to develop a central data repository for families receiving benefits from several Departmental agencies so that data can be shared and the application process for families simplified and streamlined.

2001 Response:

This is an on-going process. Division of Child Care consults with the Service Agents to work on ways to get parent feedback and incorporate recommendations.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

Sew 2001 response. Redeterminations may be done by mail, phone or fax.

2001 Response:

While most contact is face-to-face, there is no mandate that it is required. KY is piloting a program that allows redeterminations by mail or fax in the county with the largest CCAP population. KY does not have the technology to allow for internet filing at this point.

We do have concerns that allowing filing without face-to-face contact does not allow counselors to develop an important relationship with the families and to perhaps identify other needs. KY's Comprehensive Family Services focus encourages staff to treat families in a holistic way, rather than just do eligibility determinations.

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

2003 Response:

See 2001 and 2002 responses. Budget constraints have impacted development of the central data repository.

2002 Response:

See 2001 response. The initiative to develop a central data repository, upon completion, would permit all agencies involved with a family to share data required for verification of eligibility. Families would then only have to document once for any services for which they might apply.

2001 Response:

Families that are referred by Community Based Services workers do not have to re-verify information that is provided on the referral form. If completed correctly, families do not usually have to provide any additional documentation. Once critical information is documented and on file, it is not required to verify again.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

See 2001 response. Applications are system generated at this time and completed during the interview process. Without costly major system changes, we are not able to make this process available in as many locations as we would like.

2001 Response:

Several counties, primarily in the larger urban areas, offer multiple sites and outreach offices at this time. Counselors in other counties attempt to accommodate families when time and staffing permit. Some go to schools or places of employment when possible.

(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.

2003 Response:

See 2001 response. Budget constraints will further impact efforts.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Some offices are attempting to flex staff time in order to offer more hours. However, numbers of staff available, time constraints, and budget constraints have not permitted us to staff offices or phones during evenings and weekends. All of the Service Agents have toll-free lines, at least in their central offices, and can have counselors return calls to families. Service agents do have counselors that cover all 120 counties but there are not full time counselors in every county. There are, however, local phone numbers for families to call or to leave a message for the counselor. Accessibility issues are an on-going effort.

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

2003 Response:

Although regulations allow for 30 days to notify parents of their eligibility, most parents are advised of their eligibility on the date of application. Eligibility is normally immediate unless there is a different date specified if the family has an authorization from Community Based Services. With the suspension of new applications for low-income and non-TANF education/training clients, presumptive eligibility will be a moot point.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Although regulations allow for 30 days to notify parents of their eligibility, most parents are advised of their eligibility on the date of application. Eligibility is normally immediate unless there is a different date specified if the family has a referral from Community Based Services. Occasionally, counselors will need verification of income, immunization, or some other record to make a final determination. Most families in these situations are presumed eligible and allowed time to submit the necessary documentation.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

While most contact is face-to-face, there is no mandate that it is required. KY is piloting a program that allows redeterminations by mail or fax in the county with the largest CCAP population.

We do have concerns that allowing filing without face-to-face contact does not allow counselors to develop an important relationship with the families and to perhaps identify other needs. KY's Comprehensive Family Services focus encourages staff to treat families in a holistic way, rather than just do eligibility determinations.

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

2003 Response:

See 2001 response. At the time of application consumer education regarding quality child care is made available to the family as well as a referral to the local child care resource and referral agency.

2002 Response:

No change

2001 Response:

Current regulation limits families to 3 provider changes per year although a counselor may approve additional changes if appropriate. Counselors are also to advise families of this limit when application is made and to counsel them regarding the importance of stability for their children in an attempt to reduce frequent changes.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

This is KY's policy.

(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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Current policy allows a 30-day break in employment if the child care slot would be lost. Consideration of expansion of the time limit can be made for job searches that extend beyond the current 30-day limit.

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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

If funding forces changes in eligibility categories, families are transferred to that category automatically. An exception to this would be the elimination of a funding source and there were no other categories in which the family could qualify. If family circumstances change causing the family to no longer be eligible in a particular category, re-application is required but can be facilitated and may not require a face-to-face contact.

(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.

2003 Response:

KY continues to explore this possibility. This will be one area of discussion for the Partnership Workgroup.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

We are beginning to explore this area.

(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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Kentucky is currently meeting this goal. In programs with multiple funding sources in which eligibility has expired or terminated in one program, the families that are still eligible have their eligibility switched through a batch process that does not require anything of the family. They are unaware of the change.

(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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

This is the goal of the Governor's Early Childhood Initiative.

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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

KY has identified the need and is considering ways to minimize the gaps and barriers, including training possibilities.

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

2003 Response:

See 2001 response. The suspension of new applications for low-income and non-TANF education/training will impact caseloads.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

In most areas, eligibility determination is completed on the day of application and generally there is no more than a 1week wait for an appointment. In areas where caseloads are a concern and impact customer service, KY is working with the agencies to find ways to reduce the caseloads and improve customer service.

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

2003 Response:

Improvement in this area is an on-going process.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

One Service Agent does a quarterly survey. A phone survey has been conducted as a part of the yearly monitoring of the Service Agent contract. Improvement in this area is an on-going process.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

KY supports local CCR&Rs through their state association, KACCRRA. There are continuing efforts to improve services, to improve and increase training possibilities, and to bring all CCR&Rs to technological efficiency.

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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

KY does this.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

KY has implemented a voluntary rating system which provides technical assistance, financial incentives, and recognition to improve the quality of care provided to KY's families. Parental involvement is a component of the requirements of this system. There are differentials for providers providing care during non-traditional hours, for providers that are accredited, and for children requiring special care. Differentials are allowed to be cumulative.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Parents are required to pay any difference between the state maximum rate and the provider's rate to the public, less the parental co-pay, unless waived by the provider. KY does not mandate that providers cannot charge CCAP families for any difference between their rate to the public and the state maximum rate.

We recognize that since our maximum rates are based on the 75th percentile of the market rates, that there will be care available for more than we reimburse. We do not feel that we can force the provider to accept a financial loss or to pass the loss along to private pay parents in order to meet this goal.

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.

2003 Response:

The Early Childhood Business Council is addressing this. Additionally one area of the state is working with the National Economic Development and Law Center to report the economic impact of child care industry in that area.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

This has not been a state-wide effort although some area agencies make this effort. This is seen as an effort that will be addressed through the Early Childhood Business Councils.

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

2003 Response:

The Early Childhood Business Council is addressing this.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

See response to action step 8.1.

(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.

2003 Response:

The Early Childhood Business Council is addressing this.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Please refer to action step 8.1.

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

2003 Response:

The Early Childhood Business Council is addressing this.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Please refer to action step 8.1.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

KY does not currently do this and budget shortfalls are not encouraging for development in the near future.

(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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

KY does not currently do this and budget shortfalls are not encouraging for development in the near future.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

The Early Childhood Business Councils will explore this.

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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

Currently KY uses 20% of the federal amount and no change is anticipated.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

KY does not do this and no change is anticipated.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

This is legislative action that may be considered in the next session, perhaps updated to 35% (e.g. \$288-\$420).

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

This may be another area that the Early Childhood Business Council can address.

(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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

On KY's forms these are clearly identified.

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

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

This may be another area that the Early Childhood Business Council can address.

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 childcare and early childhood education programs at state and local levels.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

This is another area addressed in the Governor's Early Childhood Initiative.

(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.

2003 Response:

No change.

2002 Response:

No change.

2001 Response:

KY currently does this through the Child Care Information Center, part of ACF and is open to other collaborative efforts.

**APPENDIX F
LOUISIANA**

**Survey Results on the Status of State Implementation Efforts
October 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003**



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
Current Report Period: October 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003**

Your State:	Louisiana
Your Name:	Julie Ledet
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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.

2003 Response:

The state is currently experiencing Fiscal problems which are anticipated to continue in the 2004 appropriations budget, currently being debated by the Louisiana State Legislature. Executive management continues to meet with State Legislators and the Governor to educate them on the need for quality child care funding.

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.

2003 Response:

Louisiana has contracted with several entities to provide public awareness of the need for additional resources devoted to child care services. The agency recently co-sponsored a breakfast with the Louisiana Association of Business & Industry, The Council for A Better Louisiana, Children's Trust Fund, Agenda for Children, Head Start Collaboration, Louisiana Head Start Association and members of the business community to focus on the value of early child development, care and education to the business community.

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.

2003 Response:

Due to the fact that the Child Care Assistance Program budget hinges on state general fund dollars to enable us to access federal dollars, this service is the most vulnerable when state budget cuts are applied. Executive management continues to meet with State Legislators and the Governor to educate them on the need for quality child care funding.

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.

2003 Response:

At this time, the budget shortfall for the state does not allow for an increase in state funding for child care subsidies.

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.

2003 Response:

We are continuing to collaborate with the school systems to develop programs to serve school age children before and after school. We have recently funded initiatives to pilot programs that offer before and after school care for children and include activities for parents. The Head Start Collaboration Project supports statewide partnerships among Head Start programs, child care programs and public school pre-K programs. Federally funded, the Collaboration Project operates on the principle that serving the whole family is the key for improving developmental, social and economic conditions for low-income children. The Collaboration Project develops initiatives in eight priority areas: education, child care, health care, welfare, family literacy, national services activities, homelessness, and children with disabilities. A recently completed evaluation recognized the Collaboration Project for providing critical leadership in early childhood education issues and for increasing the visibility of Head Start programs across the state.

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.

2003 Response:

Due to overwhelming response to the need for child care and the limited amount of funds available, major changes were necessary in our payment structure. The state percentage of payments for child care was reduced for many families, which resulted in co-payments that exceed 10% of gross family income for those families. Participants in our FIND Work program continue to be eligible at 100%.

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.

2003 Response:

Louisiana continues to provide child care assistance to students who qualify under the income guidelines. However, the number of activity hours required to qualify for assistance increased from an average of 20 to 25 hours per week.

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.

2003 Response:

Louisiana exempts the following income sources: loans, gifts, contributions, reimbursements, foster care income payments, earned income tax credits, FITAP and Kinship Care subsidy payments, in-kind income, earnings of household members not required to be in an activity (disabled), and the value of resources.

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.

2003 Response:

Louisiana does not consider resources in determining eligibility 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.

2003 Response:

We periodically evaluate income eligibility levels, state median income, poverty level income, inflation, and funding availability and adjust the sliding fee scale, which is used to determine the percentage that the agency will pay, based on that information.

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.

2003 Response:

Information and applications for Child Care Assistance are available on the Department of Social Services' website or from parish/district offices statewide. Information is also provided through our resource and referral agencies, the Louisiana Child Care Newsletter, public awareness initiatives, and other sources. We have recently funded initiatives to develop newsletters and educational materials regarding available services and critical child care issues.

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.

2003 Response:

Policy and forms are regularly revised to ensure accuracy of information disseminated to the public, and assistance in completion of the application or requests for information are provided to persons of all languages.

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.

2003 Response:

Applicants for Child Care Assistance are not required to go into an office for an interview. They may call and request information and an application form or obtain an application form from our website. Notification of eligibility decision is received through the mail. This process removes the stigma of going into an office to apply for a government program. Our resource and referral agencies assist parents of all income levels with information regarding child care.

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 may be received as demeaning.

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

2003 Response:

Louisiana funds contracts with child care resource and referral agencies which educate parents on how to recognize quality child care and refer them to child care facilities located near their home, workplace or school that meets their specific needs.

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.

2003 Response:

Our contracted child care resource and referral agencies work with providers, training contractors, and the community to perform a variety of services for families and child care providers throughout the state. They help build the child care supply by encouraging providers to enter the child care market or to expand their operations. They work to increase the quality and availability of child care services in order to support informed parent choices for all families. Our Community Resource Specialists promote interagency coordination among agencies and organizations with common goals. The Community Resource Specialists link child care providers and customers with other child care focused initiatives/programs. The Head Start Collaboration Project supports statewide partnerships among Head Start programs, child care programs and public school Pre-K programs. The Collaboration Project develops initiatives in the areas of education, child care, health care, welfare, family literacy, national services activities, homelessness, and children with disabilities.

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 cover the Orleans and Thibodaux Regions, Partnership in Child Care, Baton Rouge and Acadian regions, 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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

We continue to work toward simplification of the application process.

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:

No response.

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

2003 Response:

Currently applications may be filed by mail, fax, or hand delivered. Louisiana is working on a new system that will allow filing of the application over the 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 local office receives the application with "authentic." This 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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

In addition to parish/district offices statewide, applications are available on the Department of Social Services' website and by phone call to any parish/district office.

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.

2003 Response:

Louisiana has implemented a pilot program of extended hours of operation in several offices. Response has been overwhelmingly positive from staff and customers. A final determination regarding statewide implementation is due in the near future. Louisiana parish/district offices do not have toll-free numbers at this time.

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.

2003 Response:

We have the flexibility to allow presumptive eligibility for Child Care Assistance for some applicants who are immediately placed in an approved activity. Immediate eligibility is not provided to all customers. However, benefits may be paid retroactively based on the customer's beginning date of eligibility if the child was in the care of an eligible provider.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

Our contracted resource and referral agencies are available to assist and educate parents on how to recognize quality child care that meets their needs. The customer has freedom of choice in selecting an eligible provider or changing providers.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

Louisiana has funded a contract to provide child care assistance for parents and guardians who need help paying for child care while they are seeking employment or enrolling in school/training program, and to provide case management to help families eliminate barriers to employment and self-sufficiency.

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.

2003 Response:

Programming and policy changes are currently being implemented so that child care recipients who lose their categorical eligibility for child care under the FINDWork program will be automatically be considered for Low-Income child care without reapplying.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

2002 Response:

We have transferred TANF funds to child care to 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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

Staff is continuing to receive intensive case management training with a focus on family outcomes.

2002 Response:

All OSF staff has 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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

Local parish/district offices periodically provide customers with evaluation forms to determine their satisfaction with our services.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

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 participant's 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.

2003 Response:

The agency furnishes up-to-date information needed for our resource and referral agencies to provide information/services to the public.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

Since 1993 have contracted and provided whatever resources we had available to the three Resource and Referral agencies mentioned in action step 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.

2003 Response:

A Market Rate Survey is currently being conducted to assist in ensuring equal access to child care services comparable to those provided to non-subsidized families. We anticipate a rate increase as a result of this new Market Rate Survey.

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.

2003 Response:

Providers are paid after services are rendered. In January, 2001, Louisiana implemented the Child Care Assistance Program System (CAPS) which simplified the eligibility determination process and automated child care payments which reduced the length of time it took for providers to receive payment. Payments are currently issued as invoices are entered with check runs after close of business each workday. Policy is currently being revised to generate payment based on authorized services eliminating the requirement for providers to return invoices each month unless a child is absent for more than 5 days in the month. To encourage provider participation, providers are reimbursed for children's absences of up to 5 days a month, and days of closure count as absent days for the child.

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.

2003 Response:

Customers are given complete freedom of choice in selection of an eligible provider. They may choose a provider who charges more than the state maximum rate if they wish to pay the difference. Providers are not prohibited from charging more than the state maximum as long as he/she does not charge CCAP children any more than the maximum rate charged to any other child in care for the same service.

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.

2003 Response:

Agency staff recently met with Children’s Trust Fund, Agenda for Children, Head Start Collaboration and members of the business community regarding the value of early child development, care and education to the business community. Our contracted resource and referral agencies work to educate the public to increase the quality and availability of child care services in order to support informed parent choices for all families. This is an on-going effort.

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, educated these entities of the role and importance of a workforce that also has accessible, quality child care.

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

We are continuing to make the business community aware of the need for quality child care and encourage them to enlist other members of the business community to become involved as well.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

Agenda for Children/Child Care Resources, our resource and referral agency, recently held a meeting with the Hotel/Motel Association of Greater New Orleans to discuss the child care needs of their employees and the critical issues that employers face. Child care providers participated in the meeting and developed ways to offer employees some assistance. Everyone agreed it is in the best interest of the children - and business – to have them in an affordable, consistent, quality care setting.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

2002 Response:

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

2001 Response:

N/A

**APPENDIX F
LOUISIANA**

**Survey Results on the Status of State Implementation Efforts
October 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003**



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
Current Report Period: October 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003**

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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.

2003 Response:

The state is currently experiencing Fiscal problems which are anticipated to continue in the 2004 appropriations budget, currently being debated by the Louisiana State Legislature. Executive management continues to meet with State Legislators and the Governor to educate them on the need for quality child care funding.

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.

2003 Response:

Louisiana has contracted with several entities to provide public awareness of the need for additional resources devoted to child care services. The agency recently co-sponsored a breakfast with the Louisiana Association of Business & Industry, The Council for A Better Louisiana, Children's Trust Fund, Agenda for Children, Head Start Collaboration, Louisiana Head Start Association and members of the business community to focus on the value of early child development, care and education to the business community.

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.

2003 Response:

Due to the fact that the Child Care Assistance Program budget hinges on state general fund dollars to enable us to access federal dollars, this service is the most vulnerable when state budget cuts are applied. Executive management continues to meet with State Legislators and the Governor to educate them on the need for quality child care funding.

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.

2003 Response:

At this time, the budget shortfall for the state does not allow for an increase in state funding for child care subsidies.

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.

2003 Response:

We are continuing to collaborate with the school systems to develop programs to serve school age children before and after school. We have recently funded initiatives to pilot programs that offer before and after school care for children and include activities for parents. The Head Start Collaboration Project supports statewide partnerships among Head Start programs, child care programs and public school pre-K programs. Federally funded, the Collaboration Project operates on the principle that serving the whole family is the key for improving developmental, social and economic conditions for low-income children. The Collaboration Project develops initiatives in eight priority areas: education, child care, health care, welfare, family literacy, national services activities, homelessness, and children with disabilities. A recently completed evaluation recognized the Collaboration Project for providing critical leadership in early childhood education issues and for increasing the visibility of Head Start programs across the state.

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.

2003 Response:

Due to overwhelming response to the need for child care and the limited amount of funds available, major changes were necessary in our payment structure. The state percentage of payments for child care was reduced for many families, which resulted in co-payments that exceed 10% of gross family income for those families. Participants in our FIND Work program continue to be eligible at 100%.

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.

2003 Response:

Louisiana continues to provide child care assistance to students who qualify under the income guidelines. However, the number of activity hours required to qualify for assistance increased from an average of 20 to 25 hours per week.

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.

2003 Response:

Louisiana exempts the following income sources: loans, gifts, contributions, reimbursements, foster care income payments, earned income tax credits, FITAP and Kinship Care subsidy payments, in-kind income, earnings of household members not required to be in an activity (disabled), and the value of resources.

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.

2003 Response:

Louisiana does not consider resources in determining eligibility 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.

2003 Response:

We periodically evaluate income eligibility levels, state median income, poverty level income, inflation, and funding availability and adjust the sliding fee scale, which is used to determine the percentage that the agency will pay, based on that information.

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.

2003 Response:

Information and applications for Child Care Assistance are available on the Department of Social Services' website or from parish/district offices statewide. Information is also provided through our resource and referral agencies, the Louisiana Child Care Newsletter, public awareness initiatives, and other sources. We have recently funded initiatives to develop newsletters and educational materials regarding available services and critical child care issues.

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.

2003 Response:

Policy and forms are regularly revised to ensure accuracy of information disseminated to the public, and assistance in completion of the application or requests for information are provided to persons of all languages.

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.

2003 Response:

Applicants for Child Care Assistance are not required to go into an office for an interview. They may call and request information and an application form or obtain an application form from our website. Notification of eligibility decision is received through the mail. This process removes the stigma of going into an office to apply for a government program. Our resource and referral agencies assist parents of all income levels with information regarding child care.

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 may be received as demeaning.

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

2003 Response:

Louisiana funds contracts with child care resource and referral agencies which educate parents on how to recognize quality child care and refer them to child care facilities located near their home, workplace or school that meets their specific needs.

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.

2003 Response:

Our contracted child care resource and referral agencies work with providers, training contractors, and the community to perform a variety of services for families and child care providers throughout the state. They help build the child care supply by encouraging providers to enter the child care market or to expand their operations. They work to increase the quality and availability of child care services in order to support informed parent choices for all families. Our Community Resource Specialists promote interagency coordination among agencies and organizations with common goals. The Community Resource Specialists link child care providers and customers with other child care focused initiatives/programs. The Head Start Collaboration Project supports statewide partnerships among Head Start programs, child care programs and public school Pre-K programs. The Collaboration Project develops initiatives in the areas of education, child care, health care, welfare, family literacy, national services activities, homelessness, and children with disabilities.

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 cover the Orleans and Thibodaux Regions, Partnership in Child Care, Baton Rouge and Acadian regions, 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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

We continue to work toward simplification of the application process.

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:

No response.

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

2003 Response:

Currently applications may be filed by mail, fax, or hand delivered. Louisiana is working on a new system that will allow filing of the application over the 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 local office receives the application with "authentic." This 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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

In addition to parish/district offices statewide, applications are available on the Department of Social Services' website and by phone call to any parish/district office.

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.

2003 Response:

Louisiana has implemented a pilot program of extended hours of operation in several offices. Response has been overwhelmingly positive from staff and customers. A final determination regarding statewide implementation is due in the near future. Louisiana parish/district offices do not have toll-free numbers at this time.

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.

2003 Response:

We have the flexibility to allow presumptive eligibility for Child Care Assistance for some applicants who are immediately placed in an approved activity. Immediate eligibility is not provided to all customers. However, benefits may be paid retroactively based on the customer's beginning date of eligibility if the child was in the care of an eligible provider.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

Our contracted resource and referral agencies are available to assist and educate parents on how to recognize quality child care that meets their needs. The customer has freedom of choice in selecting an eligible provider or changing providers.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

Louisiana has funded a contract to provide child care assistance for parents and guardians who need help paying for child care while they are seeking employment or enrolling in school/training program, and to provide case management to help families eliminate barriers to employment and self-sufficiency.

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.

2003 Response:

Programming and policy changes are currently being implemented so that child care recipients who lose their categorical eligibility for child care under the FINDWork program will be automatically be considered for Low-Income child care without reapplying.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

2002 Response:

We have transferred TANF funds to child care to 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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

Staff is continuing to receive intensive case management training with a focus on family outcomes.

2002 Response:

All OSF staff has 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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

Local parish/district offices periodically provide customers with evaluation forms to determine their satisfaction with our services.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

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 participant's 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.

2003 Response:

The agency furnishes up-to-date information needed for our resource and referral agencies to provide information/services to the public.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

Since 1993 have contracted and provided whatever resources we had available to the three Resource and Referral agencies mentioned in action step 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.

2003 Response:

A Market Rate Survey is currently being conducted to assist in ensuring equal access to child care services comparable to those provided to non-subsidized families. We anticipate a rate increase as a result of this new Market Rate Survey.

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.

2003 Response:

Providers are paid after services are rendered. In January, 2001, Louisiana implemented the Child Care Assistance Program System (CAPS) which simplified the eligibility determination process and automated child care payments which reduced the length of time it took for providers to receive payment. Payments are currently issued as invoices are entered with check runs after close of business each workday. Policy is currently being revised to generate payment based on authorized services eliminating the requirement for providers to return invoices each month unless a child is absent for more than 5 days in the month. To encourage provider participation, providers are reimbursed for children's absences of up to 5 days a month, and days of closure count as absent days for the child.

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.

2003 Response:

Customers are given complete freedom of choice in selection of an eligible provider. They may choose a provider who charges more than the state maximum rate if they wish to pay the difference. Providers are not prohibited from charging more than the state maximum as long as he/she does not charge CCAP children any more than the maximum rate charged to any other child in care for the same service.

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.

2003 Response:

Agency staff recently met with Children’s Trust Fund, Agenda for Children, Head Start Collaboration and members of the business community regarding the value of early child development, care and education to the business community. Our contracted resource and referral agencies work to educate the public to increase the quality and availability of child care services in order to support informed parent choices for all families. This is an on-going effort.

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, educated these entities of the role and importance of a workforce that also has accessible, quality child care.

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

We are continuing to make the business community aware of the need for quality child care and encourage them to enlist other members of the business community to become involved as well.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

Agenda for Children/Child Care Resources, our resource and referral agency, recently held a meeting with the Hotel/Motel Association of Greater New Orleans to discuss the child care needs of their employees and the critical issues that employers face. Child care providers participated in the meeting and developed ways to offer employees some assistance. Everyone agreed it is in the best interest of the children - and business – to have them in an affordable, consistent, quality care setting.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

2002 Response:

This information has not changed.

2001 Response:

N/A

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

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

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.

2003 Response:

This information has not changed.

2002 Response:

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

2001 Response:

N/A