

# What is the State Early Childhood Advisory Council?

On March 1st, 2021, Governor Reeves announced new appointees to the State Early Childhood Advisory Council (SECAC).

But what does it mean, and how might it affect you?

Here, we've shared some facts that can help you answer these questions.

SECAC is a group of individuals appointed by the governor to serve as his advisors on issues pertaining to early childhood education and care for children from birth to school entry. SECAC was established to fulfill requirements in the federal Head Start Act, which was passed in 2007. The Head Start Act describes who should serve on SECAC and how it should function.

## What does it do?

SECAC exists to **advise** the governor's office on important matters related to young children. It serves as a liaison between the governor's office and administrative agencies (MDE, MDHS, and MSDH) and providers. SECAC does not make policy or approve regulations; it informs early education and care in Mississippi by making recommendations.

### According to the Head Start Act, SECAC is tasked with the following duties:

Conducting a periodic statewide needs assessment concerning the quality and availability of early childhood education.

Identifying opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among federally-funded and state-funded child development, child care, and early childhood education programs and services.

Developing recommendations:

- For increasing the overall participation of children in existing child care and early childhood education programs.
- Regarding unified data collection systems.
- Regarding statewide professional development and career advancement plans for early childhood educators.
- For improvements in state early learning standards and undertaking efforts to develop high-quality comprehensive early learning standards.

Assessing the capacity and effectiveness of 2- and 4-year public and private institutions of higher education in the State.

Holding public hearings and providing opportunities for public comment on the activities described in clause.

Submitting a statewide strategic report addressing the activities described above to the state director of Head Start Collaboration and the governor.

## Why is this important?

**1 SECAC advises the governor and is tasked with making important recommendations that will inform your work.**

The governor and his office listens to the recommendations of SECAC, and they are informed by any reports that SECAC makes. Though SECAC does not make policy, it can shape the decisions of policymakers and have a significant impact on the regulations that impact you day-to-day.

**2 SECAC can bring your voice to decision makers.**

SECAC provides a way for you to bring your voice to important decisions impacting the child care community. SECAC is comprised of many different stakeholders, some of whom share your experiences as providers and some you may have encountered in your work. You can voice your concerns and proposed solutions to SECAC members for consideration as they make recommendations to the governor and policymakers.

**3 SECAC seeks public input.**

SECAC holds public meetings on a regular basis, and they provide opportunities for public comment. We will share where you can find out more about meetings and their recommendations soon.

The **MELA** team who provides **Mississippi Early Learning Resources** is dedicated to creating a one-stop information hub for child care providers throughout the state.

We strive to share information that is important to you as leaders, educators, and supporters of young children.



# Who serves on SECAC?

The Head Start Act describes who should serve on SECAC, and each member is appointed by the governor. There are three distinct types of appointees to SECAC:

1

First, there are the appointees that are directly called for in the Head Start Act. These members are mostly leaders and representatives from other state agencies who engage with early education and care services.

2

Second, there are appointees that the governor deems relevant. These appointees bring additional insight to SECAC from representatives agencies not directly called for by the Head Start Act as well as non-profit leaders.

3

Lastly, the Head Start Act requires the governor to appoint a representative of local providers of early childhood education and development services. The governor has appointed four child care representatives to meet this requirement.\*

Below we have listed each member according to the criteria in the Head Start Act. In the future, we plan to bring you more information about the child care provider representatives on SECAC.

## 1. Directly called for in Head Start Act are representatives from:

These members serve on SECAC because the Head Start Act directly calls for their participation.

The agency responsible for child care:	The state educational agency (MDE):	Local educational agencies (School District):	Institutions of higher education:	Head Start agencies located in the state:	The State Director of Head Start Collaboration:	Indian Head Start programs located in the state:	The state agency responsible for programs under 619 or part C:	The state agency responsible for health:	The state agency responsible for mental health care:
<b>Dr. Chad Allgood</b> Co-Child Care Administrator, Mississippi Department of Human Services	<b>Dr. Carey Wright</b> State Superintendent, Mississippi Department of Education	<b>Dr. Michael Cormack</b> Chief of Staff, Jackson Public Schools	<b>Dr. Julie Parker</b> Associate Professor, Mississippi State University <b>Dr. Stephanie Davidson</b> Associate Professor, Jackson State University	<b>Nita Thompson</b> Chair of SECAC  Executive Director, Mississippi Head Start Association	<b>Holly Spivey</b> Head Start Collaboration Director Education Policy Advisor Office of Governor Tate Reeves	<b>Tina Routh</b> Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians	<b>Candice Taylor</b> 619 Coordinator, Mississippi Department of Education	<b>Melissa Parker</b> Director, Office of Licensure	<b>Wendy Bailey</b> Executive Director, Mississippi Department of Mental Health

## 2. Other Entities Determined to be Relevant by the governor

These members bring additional insights to SECAC from the perspective of nonprofit leaders and other state agency personnel who work directly with early education and care providers.

<b>Dr. Linda Southward</b> Executive Director Children's Foundation of Mississippi	<b>Carolyn Willis</b> Vice President for Education Programs, Delta Health Alliance	<b>Vicki Lowery</b> Co-Child Care Administrator, Mississippi Department of Human Services	<b>Kelly Butler</b> Chief Executive Officer, Barksdale Reading Institute	<b>Dr. Angela Rutherford</b> Director, Campaign for Grade Level Reading Professor, Department of Teacher Education Director, Center for Excellence in Literacy Instruction	<b>Andrea Sanders</b> Executive Director of SECAC  Commissioner, Child Protective Services	<b>Dr. Susan Buttross</b> Division Head Child Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, University of Mississippi Medical Center	<b>Dr. Jill Dent</b> Early Childhood Director, Mississippi Department of Education
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## 3. Child Care Provider Representatives\*

These members, chosen to represent early education and care providers across the state, were chosen based on a number of criteria: (1) each of the congressional districts in the state, (2) their expertise, and the (3) diversity of experiences they have acquired working as child care providers.

<b>Tamara Smith</b> Director Little Samaritan Montessori Center 3rd Congressional District	<b>Lori Rolison</b> Director Little People's Christian Academy 4th Congressional District	<b>Jennifer Calvert</b> Director Calvert's Learning Center Lead Partner for Amory Early Learning Collaborative 1st Congressional District	<b>Dean Bobo</b> Director Magnolia Kindergarten 2nd Congressional District
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\* These representatives are from different parts of the state and they run a variety of center types. The diversity of experiences they bring to SECAC was a part of the reason why they were selected to serve. The Governor's Office was tasked with choosing a representative group from over 800 providers and selecting a group with experience in a wide range of areas related to child care was prioritized (i.e. operating in an early learning collaborative, serving students with special needs, operating a religious center, etc.). In addition, geographic diversity was prioritized, and there is at least one child care provider represented from each of the supreme court districts in the state. These SECAC appointees can be very meaningful to you as child care providers in the state. They have the same day-to-day experiences that you have, and they can bring insight about your challenges to SECAC.