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**RECRUITING CHILD CARE PROVIDERS TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON
STATEWIDE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM**

Early education advocates and professionals recognize provider-led quality recommendations as a critical part of building a state-of-the-art child care system.

May 6, 2022 - The W.K. Kellogg Foundation and partners will convene licensed and home-based providers to create recommendations for a new quality improvement system for child care in the state. These recommendations will be shared with the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS). Child care providers are encouraged to apply to participate using this [online form](#). A formal request for applications will also be sent through existing child care emailing lists, like that of the Mississippi Department of Health's Licensure Listserv and the [Mississippi Early Learning Alliance's Shared Services](#) membership listserv. (Child care providers are encouraged to register for free membership on the website, [MSEarlyLearningResources.org](#)). Applications will be due on Friday, May 20, 2022.

Today, there is no continuous quality improvement system for child care in Mississippi. However, demand is growing inside the Mississippi early childhood community for a quality child care system that recognizes the professionalism of the job in measurable ways. After listening to long-standing conversations within the early childhood community, it is evident that many child care providers support quality improvement efforts. However, some providers have not always felt supported or consulted in previous quality rating models, and their experiences with implementation have varied.

In addition, the state's journey, while unique, does not differ from national findings that quality improvement efforts have often missed the mark. This has prompted the child care community nationwide to re-examine quality models to make them more equitable, supportive, and focused on standards that increase child outcomes and school readiness.

"Providers *must* be at the center of the child care quality discussion," said Angela Bass, Executive Director of the Mississippi Early Learning Alliance, continuing, "They are experts on the complexities of quality improvement implementation. On a day-to-day basis, a provider has to take on the roles of educator, business owner, and caregiver, all while balancing family

engagement and children’s health and wellbeing. We’ve heard over and over that providers want a seat at the table, and I am excited for the opportunity that this effort provides.”

As the state explores more equitable and supportive quality improvement efforts, it is important that child care providers help shape the design of the quality system. There are at least two efforts underway to capture provider input. First, the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) is conducting listening sessions across the state to capture high-level input from providers on their concept of child care quality.

The second effort is the one announced here: convening child care providers to make specific quality improvement recommendations to MDHS. This effort is complementary to the work being done at MDHS. Approximately 20 seats are available for providers across the state, and applications can be found at this link: bit.ly/QISRecommendationsTeam. Applications will be due on Friday, May 20, 2022. Providers will be selected in a manner that ensures the steering team is diverse in representation, including subsidy acceptance, program size, business type, race, and geography. This work is aligned with a larger movement to convene childcare providers and cross-sector partners around the following goal: *By 2030, Mississippi will have a state-of-the-art child care system, fueled by robust data, cross-sector collaboration, and resources.*

A separate team will be formed to gather input from interested partners who work within the child care sector but do not provide direct child care services. However, final recommendations from this effort will prioritize the voices of child care providers.

An additional team known as the Mississippi child care quality convening team is providing technical assistance and meeting facilitation support for this effort. This team consists of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, a Mississippi child care provider, the Mississippi Early Learning Alliance (MELA), Mississippi First, the Social Science Research Center at MS State University, the BUILD Initiative, and the Child Care State Capacity Building Center.

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W.K. Kellogg Foundation

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF), founded in 1930 as an independent, private foundation by breakfast cereal innovator and entrepreneur Will Keith Kellogg, is among the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States. Guided by the belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive, WKKF works with communities to create conditions for vulnerable children so they can realize their full potential in school, work, and life.

Mississippi Early Learning Alliance (MELA)

MELA was founded in 2019 to drive collective efforts in Mississippi to rethink our current early care and education system and design a system that works better for everyone: childcare providers, families, employers, other early childhood professionals, and our children. MELA is working to build and leverage a powerful network of early childhood professionals, policymakers, and other stakeholders to achieve a common goal: *By 2030, Mississippi will have a state-of-the-art child care system, fueled by robust data, cross-sector collaboration, and resources.* In addition to our long-term collective impact efforts, MELA works to meet immediate stakeholder needs through curated communications and information-sharing, ad-hoc support for provider-led initiatives, our shared services website and program for childcare providers (MSEarlyLearningResources.org), and our *Leading from Strength* Empowerment Network, an initiative to promote the professional advancement of women of color working in early childhood care and education.

Mississippi First

Mississippi First was founded in 2008 by Executive Director Rachel Canter and founding Deputy Director Sanford Johnson. Driven to change the fact that Mississippi has historically been last, our founders set a bold vision: a Mississippi first in education nationally. A 501(c)(3) education policy nonprofit, Mississippi First's mission is to champion transformative policy solutions ensuring educational excellence for every Mississippi child.

Social Science Research Center at MS State University

Founded in 1950, the mission of the Social Science Research Center (SSRC) is to conduct research on social, economic, political, human resource and social-environmental problems facing the state, nation, and world and to provide a vehicle for unique social research and public service programs that do not fit more traditional academic structures. The Center recognizes the importance of combining expertise and capacities of multiple institutions, disciplines, and professions in addressing complex problems. You can find more information about the SSRC at ssrc.msstate.edu.

The BUILD Initiative

BUILD envisions a time when all children reach their full potential and race, place, and income are no longer predictors of outcomes. The BUILD Initiative partners with state and community leaders across the country to promote equitable, high-quality child- and family-serving systems that result in young children thriving and learning.

Child Care State Capacity Building Center

The Child Care State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) works with State and Territory leaders and their partners to create innovative early childhood systems and programs that improve results for children and families.