

Quality Improvement System Recommendations Team

Description & Selection Process

The Quality Support System (QSS) Recommendations Team consists of around 20 childcare providers who will create recommendations to inform the development of a new quality improvement and support system for childcare in Mississippi. Members of this team serve as the primary authors of the final recommendations that will be shared with the Mississippi Department of Human Services. The intention is to create a basic layout for a Quality Support System that is rooted in the lived experiences of providers, family needs and preferences, and research-based best practices. The process for creating these recommendations is intended to prioritize equity, elevate provider perspectives, and demonstrate transparency at all levels.

About the Recommendations Report:

The final project deliverable is a report that will be submitted to the Mississippi Department of Human Services to inform the department's planning and design efforts around a quality support system for childcare. This report will include overarching recommendations for what a quality system should include, what kind of structure or organizing framework the system should follow, and what must be true of a quality support system for it to benefit Mississippi families and providers.

Recruitment and Selection Process for the Recommendations Team

The QSS Convening Team was responsible for selecting Recommendations Team members via a statewide application process. The Convening is the team responsible for organizing this initiative, recruiting participants, and facilitating all meetings. The team consists of representatives from the childcare community, families, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center, Mississippi Early Learning Alliance, Mississippi First, the BUILD Initiative, Excel by 5, Loving Hands Educational Services, and the Child Care State Capacity Building Center.

The Convening Team followed a data-informed selection process to ensure that Recommendations Team membership met the following criteria:

- Were reflective of Mississippi's diverse childcare community in terms of geographic, racial, and ethnic representation, subsidy acceptance, program size, and business type (home-based, center-based, or other).
- Were able to attend three multi-day meetings during June and July.
- Expressed enthusiasm or innovative ideas and/or were knowledgeable of the childcare system and quality improvement concepts.

Recruitment and Promotion

This initiative and the application process were publicized via press release, social media, and direct emails to potential applicants via listservs, including the Mississippi State Department of Health Licensure listserv. The Convening Team also leveraged outside partnerships to publicize the application process to specific regions and demographic groups as needed to ensure the applicant pool was as reflective of the Mississippi childcare population as possible.

Detailed Selection Process & Outcomes

The tables on the next several pages detail the process the Convening Team used to select Recommendations Team members. They also summarize how the demographics of the selected applicants align with statewide data on the childcare community as a whole.

GOAL 1: Ensure members have the capacity to fulfill requirements of the role

Selection Criteria	Selection Process
Members must be able to attend all three multi-day meetings.	<p>An availability score was calculated for each survey respondent. Each survey respondent was asked to tell us the total number of days that they were available to meet across three sets of dates: June 21-June 24, June 27-July 1, and July 18-July 22.</p> <p>The total availability score could range from 0 (no days available) to 9 (all days available). This availability score was included in the applicant's total score out of a possible 40 points. The selection process excluded any participant who had an availability score of 0, as this meant they were unable to attend any meetings either virtually or in-person in Jackson.</p>
Members must demonstrate baseline understanding of quality improvement systems, show enthusiasm for the project, and offer a unique or innovative perspective.	<p>The application included open-response questions to gauge these criteria. Reviewers were asked to rate applicant responses across five categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to bring unique insights 2. Enthusiasm 3. Understanding of how a Quality Support System could impact childcare providers 4. Understanding of how a Quality Support System could impact children and families 5. Ability to innovate <p>Applicants could score up to 5 points in each category, with a score of 1 indicating that “the provider does not demonstrate the desired competency,” a score of 3 indicating that “the provider partially demonstrates the desired competency,” or a score of 5, which indicated that “the provider fully demonstrates the desired competency.”</p>

GOAL 2: Ensure members reflect Mississippi's childcare community as a whole

Selection Criteria	Selection Process	
Ensure that each region of the state has adequate and equitable representation.	The Convening Team separated the state into 6 regions, then used licensure data to estimate the total number of childcare providers in each of those regions. The team then identified a target number for each region to ensure that each geographic area was represented proportionally on the team.	
Target numbers based on statewide data	Applicant Pool	Selected Members
<p>Number of providers needed from each region to align with statewide licensure data on the number of licensed providers in each region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central East: 2 • Central West: 7 • Northeast: 3 • Northwest: 3 • Southeast: 4 • Southwest: 1 	<p>Number of applications received per region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central East: 6 • Central West: 28 • Northeast: 4 • Northwest: 7 • Southeast: 8 • Southwest: 5 	<p>Nearly all targets were met – only two applicants from the Northeast qualified for consideration, based on their availability to attend meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central East: 2 • Central West: 7 • Northeast: 2 • Northwest: 3 • Southeast: 4 • Southwest: 1

Selection Criteria	Selection Process	
<p>Ensure equitable representation of providers who accept Child Care Payment Plan (CCPP) subsidies.</p>	<p>Applicants who accept CCPP subsidies received three equity points. Applications were scored out of 40 possible points. Quality Support Systems stand to make the greatest impact on centers who accept childcare subsidy payments. Thus, these applicants received weighted scores to increase the likelihood that providers most likely to be impacted by a QSS would be represented on the Recommendations Team.</p>	
Target numbers based on statewide data	Applicant Pool	Selected Members
<p>According to the 2021 Market Rate Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 81% of centers accept CCPP subsidies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 78% of applicants indicated that they accept CCPP subsidies. 10% indicated they did not. 12% were unsure. 	<p>89% of the Recommendations Team providers accept subsidies. This slight overrepresentation is intentional, as any QSS will likely impact providers who accept subsidies more than those who do not.</p>
Selection Criteria	Selection Process	
<p>Ensure equitable racial and ethnic representation.</p>	<p>Applicants who identified as Black/African-American received three equity points. The reason for this is also tied to subsidy payments. Families who make 85% of the State Median Income or below are eligible for childcare subsidies. African-American families disproportionately make up the population of families eligible for subsidies. The convening team sought to increase the likelihood that the racial make-up of selected participants would reflect the population of families eligible for CCPP subsidies.</p>	
Target numbers based on statewide data	Applicant Pool	Selected Members
<p>According to 2016-20 American Community Survey data (from the United States Census Bureau):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 57% of Mississippi childcare workers identify as White 40% identify as Black or American-American 1.6% identify as “Non-Hispanic Other” Less than 1% of childcare workers identify as Hispanic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 72% of applicants identified as Black or African-American 22% identified as White 1.7% (one applicant) identified as more than one race. 1.7% (one applicant) identified White-Hispanic or Latinx 1.7% (one applicant) preferred not to answer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 68% of applicants selected identify as Black or African-American. 32% of applicants selected identify as White. The one applicant who identified as White-Hispanic or Latinx needed to be removed from consideration because they were unable to attend any of the working meetings, either virtually or in-person.
Selection Criteria	Selection Process	
<p>Ensure equitable representation of childcare programs size & business types</p>	<p>Each applicant was asked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Their role/job title within their program Their program type (center-based, home-based, Head Start, Pre-K collaborative, or other) How many children their program serves The age distribution of children served Whether they serve children with special needs. 	

Program type: Center-based; Home-based; Head Start or Early Head Start; Pre-K Collaborative; Other

Applicant Pool	Selected Members
<p>Applicants were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 72% center-based • 7% home-based • 7% Head Start or Early Head Start • 7% Pre-K collaborative • 7% other 	<p>Members are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 63% center-based • 16% home-based • 11% Head Start or Early Head Start • 5% Pre-K collaborative • 5% other (Lab school for community college)

Program size & age distribution

Selected Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members represent programs of various sizes, in proportional alignment statewide data on program size. • Members serve multiple age groups (within the birth - 5 age range and beyond).

Member Role

Applicant Pool	Selected Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 93% childcare directors and/or center owners • 3.5% teachers/childcare providers • 3.5% health & safety personnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All team members are program directors and/or center owners.

Services for Children with Special Needs

Applicant Pool	Selected Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 69% of all applicants indicated that they serve children with special needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 79% of providers selected serve children with special needs.

Limitations

- This project’s timeline requires that a final recommendations report is submitted to the Mississippi Department of Human Services at the end of August 2022. Some Recommendations Team applicants needed to be removed from consideration due to their inability to attend working meetings during this timeline, regardless of their other qualifications. While the Convening Team has created pathways for many stakeholders (childcare providers, families, other early childhood professionals, etc.) to provide their input, the short timeline prevents us from creating as many feedback loops with stakeholders as would be ideal. Future work focused on quality improvement and support for childcare should prioritize broader engagement and dialogue with additional childcare providers and parents.
- Recruiting Spanish-speaking and Native-American providers was challenging. This is due to a lack of existing relationships or infrastructure within the early childhood sector to engage with these populations. More time and work is needed to build trust and partnerships with these populations before adequate representation is truly possible. In the interim, the Convening Team has been working on recruiting providers and early childhood professionals from these populations directly, and has been successful in recruiting at least one Recommendations Team member who is a part of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.

The Convening team is also working with the Mississippi State University Migrant Education Services Center and the Immigrant Alliance for Justice and Equity to recruit one or more providers who primarily provide care for Spanish-speaking families. If the Convening Team is unable to recruit a provider who primarily serves Spanish-speaking families for the Recommendations Team, we will recruit them to give feedback and recommendations via a survey.

- Only one before- and after-school center applied. We plan to recruit before- and after-school care providers to provide feedback and recommendations via survey.
- The Convening Team sought to include at least three providers from the northeastern region of the state, but only two applicants with availability to attend meetings applied. We plan to recruit additional providers in the northeastern region of the state to provide their feedback and recommendations via survey.

- While the Convening Team has made every effort to make participation in the Recommendations Team accessible to all childcare providers (i.e. option to attend meetings virtually, scheduling around provider availability, stipends for participating, covering travel and lodging costs, etc.), this project does require a significant time commitment. We understand that childcare teachers and staff may not have the same level of flexibility in their schedules as center directors. Given that most Recommendations Team members are directors and/or owners of their centers, we plan to collect input and feedback from childcare teachers via survey.