



A Practical Guide to Including Child Care as a Work Support in Job Training Programs

INTRODUCTION

Many in Mississippi's workforce system agree that the lack of affordable child care is a barrier for many parents who need job training in order to enter the workforce. Finding ways to offer child care as a work support goes a long way toward addressing one of Mississippi's most challenging problems: increasing workforce participation.

Moore Community House's Women in Construction Program in partnership with the Mississippi Low Income Child Care Initiative has implemented a pilot program that yields many practical lessons for other job training programs seeking to incorporate child care assistance. This brief guide offers these lessons for other programs to replicate and adopt.

STEP ONE: RECRUIT MOMS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

Poverty in Mississippi is concentrated among families with young children headed by single mothers. These moms often work, but their jobs rarely pay much above minimum wage. Further, their jobs rarely allow paid family leave or other benefits working parents need. Thus, this population benefits most from job training leading to middle skill jobs and jobs that are non-traditional occupations for women where they can earn higher wages.

Be intentional about targeting recruitment to this population. Among the effective methods we've found:

- Use images in your recruitment materials that show women in nontraditional jobs.
- Recruit in places where women will find your materials: child care centers, WIC, TANF and SNAP offices, battered women's shelters, pediatrician and ob/gyn clinics, etc.
- Build into your program flexibility and support to help single moms balance the demands of pursuing job training while also meeting the needs of their families: i.e., child care.

STEP TWO: GATHER INFORMATION ON LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTERS IN YOUR AREA

While you are targeting your recruitment to single moms, gather a list of all the licensed child care centers in your service/recruitment area.

In Mississippi, this listing is available from the Mississippi Department of Health Child Care Licensure Division. Here is their contact info http://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/30,0,183,61.html¹ This office can provide you with a listing of licensed centers by county, by zip code, and/or by city or help with a search for a licensed facility: http://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/30,332,183,438.html

Also, Mississippi has created a network of Early Childhood Academies on the campuses of community colleges throughout the state where you can obtain a listing of licensed child care facilities in your area, and other resources. This network can be reached at this link:

<http://mccb.edu/childhood/chdefault.aspx>

To find your state's licensing agency, click here: <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/licensing>

STEP THREE: SHARE CONSUMER INFORMATION WITH YOUR PARTICIPATING PARENTS TO HELP THEM CHOOSE CHILD CARE SERVICES

Use the listing of child care providers you identify in your area to create a database of these centers, or see if your local Early Childhood Academy already has such a database, or link to the child care resource and referral network in your state by visiting this Child Care Aware site: <http://childcareaware.org/ccrr-search-form/>

Include in your database the following fields your participants will be interested to use for comparison purposes (you may have to gather some of this data from multiple sources, or directly from the individual centers):

- Locations of licensed child care center options
- Fees charged
- Ages of children served
- Daily hours of operation
- Days of the week the center is open
- Months of the year the center is open
- Does the center provide or require the parent to provide diapers and formula?
- Does the center provide after-school and summer care for young school-aged children?
- If the center provides the above, do they arrange for pick-up services from the school?
- Does the center participate in the state Child Care Payment Program?
- Does the center participate in the Child Care and Adult Food Program?
- If not, does the center charge a meal fee?
- What is the center policy about child absences?
- What is the center policy about late pick-up?
- Does the center charge a registration fee (or other fees)?

Once you have this information, place it in a user friendly tool (such as a graph or an interactive map or internet-based program) that your case managers or your potential participants can easily utilize. This will be the resource your participant parents will use to choose their child care services.

In addition, share with your participating parents good, easy-to-use check lists to take with them when they visit child care centers. These check lists are widely available as tools to help parents make good

¹ A copy of this guide with links is available online at www.moorecommunityhouse.org/childcareguide

child care choices for their children. These check lists are available from many sources. Here are a couple examples:

http://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/resources/76.pdf

<http://www.childcareresourcesinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Quality-Checklist-2016-Final.pdf>

STEP FOUR: IDENTIFY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO HELP MOMS PAY CHILD CARE FEES

Child care fees are extremely expensive. Our participants report that the high cost of child care is THE reason they haven't been able to take advantage of job training previously.

Programs that offer assistance with child care costs in Mississippi are: 1) the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) program operated by DHS; 2) Head Start/Early Head Start; and 3) pre-k programs. Here is a little info about each of these:

CCDF: CCDF is a federal block grant to states to provide child care assistance for low-income working families. There are some federal regulations, but states are allowed wide discretion to set state-specific rules in this program. Each state has a CCDF "lead agency." To learn how this program operates in your state, contact your state's Lead Agency. You can find that agency here: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/ccdf-grantee-state-and-territory-contacts>

The Mississippi Lead Agency is the Department of Human Services (DHS). Here is a link to the MS state CCDF policy manual that includes state-set operational rules: https://secac.ms.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/CCPP-Policy-Manual_Effective-Date_7.14.17.pdf

DHS uses federal CCDF money for vouchers to help eligible parents pay the cost of child care. These vouchers can be used in approved licensed child care centers. Parents must apply electronically for these vouchers to DHS. Here is a link for parents to find out if they qualify and to apply: <http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/early-childhood-care-development/for-parents/child-care-certificate-program/application-for-parents/>

DHS calls this program the Child Care Payment Program (CCPP). The CCPP pays a portion of the child care fee based upon a sliding scale developed by DHS. Parents are responsible for a co-payment based upon a sliding fee scale set by DHS.

Providers that meet CCPP participation requirements are eligible to be reimbursed for approved services to eligible CCPP parents. Here is a link to learn about the participation requirements for child care providers: <https://secac.ms.gov/providers/child-care-payment-program/>

CCPP child care centers typically operate Monday – Friday 6am-6pm, all year long. These centers serve children from six weeks of age up to 12 years of age. CCPP is a great program for those working parents who can get a voucher. Unfortunately there is a waiting list of about 10,000 children statewide, so it is difficult to obtain one of these vouchers.

Head Start/Early Head Start: Each local HS/ESH program is funded by the US Dept. of Health and Human Services to operate these federal programs in local service areas that cover a single

or multiple counties. Early Head Start serves children from birth to age 3. Head Start serves children ages three and four. Each local program recruits children in their service area once a program year. To qualify for services, parents must have incomes below the poverty level or have a child with special needs. Parents do not have to work or attend school in order to qualify. These services are free to parents. (In fact, it is unallowable for HS/EHS to charge fees to parents.) These programs typically operate Monday through Friday during the school year. HS/EHS defines full-day as 6 hours/day. Many are closed during the summer. This schedule makes it difficult for parents to rely upon HS/EHS for child care during work. These programs are funded to serve a limited, federally specified enrollment number. To apply, parents must complete an application at one of the HS/EHS grantees in the state. A list can be found here: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/data/psr/results?findGrantName=&findGrantState=MS&findGrantNumber=&search=true&findGrantStateAllBasic=MS&findGrantCityAllBasic=All&findGrantNameBasic=&findGrantNumberAdv=>

Pre-K: Mississippi has no state-wide pre-k program. The MS Dept. of Education has awarded grants to a few local school districts to operate a limited number of pre-k classrooms in a few local public school districts. Some local public school districts have a limited number of pre-k classrooms in addition to MDE-funded classrooms. Some private schools operate locally funded pre-k programs. The number of these programs available to parents is quite limited. These programs can be identified by contacting local public school districts and private schools located in your area.

When these programs are operated by public schools they are free. Private schools charge tuition. Enrollment in both public and private pre-k is limited. These programs are only for four year old children.

Please note that these programs rarely operate all day – even for the whole 6 hour school day – and they are closed in the summer. So, these programs are difficult for parents to rely upon for child care during work.

Since the above programs altogether only serve about 35% of our low-income children, here are some other places to look for money to help pay the cost of child care:

- SNAP E&T – This federal program is operated by the MS Department of Human Services
- TANF – This federal program is operated by the MS Department of Human Services
- WIOA participant work support funds – these funds are managed by the MS Department of Employment Security

STEP FIVE: EMPLOY A CHILD CARE CASE MANAGER TO HANDLE THE CHILD CARE SUPPORT SERVICES COMPONENT

Find a staff person who can gather all the above-listed data and learn about all the above-listed child care funding streams so that your program can link your participants to those sources. Find out: 1) which of the above programs operate in your area; 2) which programs have waiting lists; 3) what each program may require of your participants to be eligible and to apply; 4) how to connect your participant with the program that will yield the most child care funding and the best child care schedule for her.

Develop a formal process for helping your parent participants navigate these processes. They are not easy. Most require a lot of paperwork and documentation. Be prepared to help.

MLICCI can provide training for your staff on all these programs if you'd like for us to do that for you. You can request help by contacting us at info@mlicci.org

STEP SIX: DEVELOP A FORMAL AGREEMENT WITH YOUR PARTICIPANTS AND PARTICIPATING CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Develop a formal partnership or memorandum of agreement (MOA) for use between your job training program and the child care centers on your new list. The MCH WinC and MLICCI child care/job training program partnership developed a formal MOA that we are happy to share as a template for your program to use. Contact us for more information, or for a copy, or for training to develop your own.

Have your child care case manager visit all the licensed child care centers on your list. Use these visits to develop partnerships with these child care centers. Have this person inform the child care centers that your program will be making referrals of job training participants, and solicit partnership agreements. Have the owner/director of the child care center sign your partnership/MOA.

Set up regular visits with your new child care partners. Be available to be a resource and a partner to support their support of your participants.

STEP SEVEN: REMEMBER! YOUR JOB TRAINING PARTICIPANT IS ALSO A MOM

Once you have recruited and enrolled your parent participants, pay attention to the fact that the mom/participant has family obligations. Be conscious of the participant as also being a parent. Serve the whole person. Do not treat the parent as if she is a single, 18-year-old male student with no other obligations and concerns.

It is true that industry is not often a family-friendly environment, and it does the participant no good to fail to prepare her for employer expectations. However, to help her succeed in your training so she can get into the jobs she needs, offer case management services to aid the parent to problem-solve when necessary to increase your retention and graduation rates: for example, make policies that accommodate break-downs in child care or child illness. And during training give her the skills and tools she needs to succeed as a mom in the industry she is training to enter. And where possible, press industry to be more accommodating to work/family balance for all their working parents.

For more information and/or training as you implement this workplan, as well as resources from our program, please feel free to contact us at info@mschildcare.org.