

An evaluation of the impact  
of  
**The Mississippi  
Director's Child Care  
Credentialing Project**

with recommendations for improvement

Submitted to

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## Executive Summary

The evaluation of the Mississippi Director's Child Care Credentialing Project was designed for two purposes: 1) to assess the impact of the training leading to the credential in terms of on-the-job performance of directors who have received the credential, and 2) to make recommendations to improve the process, structure and content of the credential.

The Mississippi Forum on Children and Families developed the curriculum and piloted the training model for the credential in 1995, and has operated the project since then with annual grant funding from the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Office for Children and Youth (OCY). The training content is organized into multiple modules totaling 120 clock hours of training. Content covers a wide range of topics relevant to operating a successful quality child care program. A test is given at the end of each of the 8 instruction modules; the 9<sup>th</sup> is an 'integration' module that is the final exam. The credential is awarded on successful completion of all modules. Training is offered in multiple locations around the state.

### Rationale

The Director's Credential aims to affect the quality of child care. The quality of child care matters because children's experiences in child care have direct effects on children's success as students in school and later in life as adults. Research supports the theory that higher quality child care is associated with directors who have more years of experience in the director job and who have higher levels of educational attainment, that is, college degrees. Several studies show that the director role is essential to program quality – some have called directors the “gatekeeper to quality.” This link between child outcomes and adult competence is the foundation on which the Mississippi Director's Credential is built. The rationale for the credential is: If directors master the content of director training and thus achieve the credential, they will be able to positively affect the operation of their center, the skills of their staff and thus the children in their care.

### Results

One director summed up well the view of the majority of credentialed directors.

*“The credential course improved my performance and the quality of care in my center. I am more aware of and knowledgeable about appropriate practice, I can explain it to parents, and insist on it with teachers. Our center is now [nationally] accredited.”*

Findings from this evaluation support the theory that the Mississippi director credential is having a positive impact on program practices that are associated with quality early care and education. Credentialed directors reported positive changes having to do with staff and classrooms. These include increased staff training, staffing patterns more beneficial to children, child-appropriate room arrangements and equipment. They also reported improved business management practices regarding financial management and operational policy.

Mississippi's credential compares well with other credentials offered in states in the South and with a national credential. The design of Mississippi's credential training, especially in terms of content, has been responsive to the expressed needs of the field, to the demand from credentialed directors. The

format of training is responsive to the work demands of directors, offering both evening weeknight and all-day weekend schedules. The year-long format is conducive to putting learning into practice.

The Director Credential appears to be equally valued by, and effective in terms of program impact, for individuals who have completed only high school, those with some college and those with college degrees. Regardless of race, directors value the training and hold the credential in high regard. Credential training appears to be equally useful to brand new directors just entering the field and to directors who have many years of experience.

The credential is reaching a fair percentage of directors in the state. In five years, more than 750 have completed all eight of the training modules and close to 600 have received the credential. Given that there are at least 1,600 directors (based on the total number of licensed programs in the state), approximately 38% have been credentialed to date.

### **Recommendations**

Nine recommendations based on the findings from the study are offered as suggestions for consideration to improve the credential and the credential training.

1. Review the Directors Credential training curriculum and the structure and process of the training.
2. Establish an on-going advisory body to guide the Director Credential.
3. Offer the Director Credential course for credit.
4. Develop at least two levels of the director course.
5. Encourage trainees to become involved in professional organizations and encourage graduates from the same region to develop local peer director networks.
6. Review and consider revising the “point system” and other structural aspects of the credential training.
7. Revise end-of-module tests to better prepare participants for the final exam.
8. Build impact evaluation methods into the design of credential training.
9. Set performance goals.

### **Moving forward in Mississippi**

A set of factors must be in place to make significant and durable improvements in child care. These factors are well-prepared and fairly compensated staff working in a community of well-educated colleagues. Quality child care is led by well-prepared administrators and staffed with capable adults who can form stable and caring relationships with children – the relationships through which children learn and develop. Education, job-specific training for all roles, and fair compensation all matter – all three are necessary elements of a quality improvement agenda.

The cornerstone upon which to build Mississippi’s career development system is the Director Credential. Mississippi was one of the early states to develop training for directors and is now the first state to have completed an evaluation of its director credential to guide it forward. Mississippi is poised to create a quality improvement agenda that can make a lasting positive impact on child care – and on school readiness.

## **Purpose and methodology**

The evaluation of the Mississippi Director's Child Care Credentialing Project was designed for two purposes: 1) to assess the impact of the training leading to the credential in terms of on-the-job performance of directors who have received the credential, and 2) to make recommendations to improve the process, structure and content of the credential. This report first describes the development of the credential training, then discusses the impact of the credential and finally offers recommendations for the future.

The Mississippi Forum on Children and Families developed the curriculum and piloted the training model for the credential in 1995, and has operated the project since then with annual grant funding from the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Office for Children and Youth (OCY). The 1999-2000 grant included funds for an evaluation. In the spring of 2000, the Forum contracted with Anne Mitchell of Early Childhood Policy Research to conduct an evaluation of the project. The contractor reviewed written materials, and conducted interviews with key informants knowledgeable about the history and current operation of the Director Credential training project, including a sample of credentialed directors. Written materials included all curricula developed through the project, monthly reports submitted to OCY from June 1995 through June 2000, brochures and application materials for all years, and evaluations conducted previously by the Forum as part of the training project. A literature search was conducted to identify research and best practice on early childhood administrator training and credentialing.

Interviews were conducted with the three current trainers and a sample of three trainers drawn from those with the most years of experience from past years. Interviews were also conducted with ten individuals selected from the 1995-96 advisory committee members and current and former staff of the Office for Children and Youth and the Department of Health. The purpose of these interviews was to understand the perceptions of the director credential from the perspective of stakeholders outside the Forum and the perspective of those who hold the credential. Copies of all interview protocols are included in the Appendix beginning on page 26.

To assess impact of the credential on practice in child care centers, the contractor randomly selected a representative sample of 30 credentialed directors drawn from the total pool of directors credentialed from 1996 through 1999. Figure 1 on page 25 in the Appendix shows that the selected sample fairly represents the demographics of credentialed directors overall, the years in which credentials were received, the racial diversity of the population, and the geography of the state of Mississippi. Of the sample of 30 credentialed directors, 28 were able to be interviewed. After repeated attempts were made to contact the remaining two individuals, replacements were selected who matched the characteristics of the individuals being replaced. One of these was successfully contacted and interviewed, resulting in a total of 29 interviews completed with credentialed directors.

In terms of methodology, an independent researcher conducting onsite observations of the adult and child environments in each center before and after its director participated in the training is the method that would be most likely to provide solid evidence of impact on quality. That method would also be the most expensive approach to evaluation and one that could not be used in this situation because there is no possibility for a pre-test of a director who has already been credentialed. The method chosen for this evaluation might be called an “innovative pre-test/post-test design.” Each director was asked to reflect on her own center, thinking about it at two points in time, before she took the training and after she received the credential. These questions were open-ended, with prompts used only if no comments were elicited by the question itself. Essentially, when the director is thinking about her center before she took the training, she has in mind the pre-test conditions. When she reports the changes in the center afterwards, she is describing the post-test conditions.

This method of training evaluation has been used in other studies, notably a study of statewide family child care training in Michigan. The author of that study, describing the methodology, notes, “Self-reports based on retroactive pre-tests have the advantage of comparable scaling: that is, the person has the same view of her performance in mind at the same point in time.”<sup>1</sup>

## Background and rationale

The Director’s Credential aims to affect the quality of child care. The quality of child care matters because children’s experiences in child care have direct effects on children’s success as students in school and later in life as adults. Several studies, including the most recent report from the Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study, demonstrate that quality child care leads to school readiness and school success. The summary of their results is worthy of serious consideration by anyone concerned about the quality of child care.<sup>2</sup>

In recent years there has been increasing interest in the effects of preschool experiences—especially child care—on children’s later performance in school. A substantial majority of preschoolers now participate in some form of child care before coming to school.<sup>3</sup> The Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers Study, begun in 1993, was designed in part to examine the influence of typical center-based child care on children’s development during their preschool years and then subsequently as they moved into the formal elementary education system. We have now followed these children through the end of second grade, four years after our initial contact with them when they were nearing the end of their next-to-last year in child care. The overall findings can be summarized in a few broad statements about the influence of center-based child care in America on children.

- **High quality child care is an important element in achieving the national goal of having all children ready for school.**

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<sup>1</sup> Reed, Celeste Sturdevant (1996). *Michigan Child Care Futures Training Project 1994-95 Evaluation Report*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, Institute for Children, Youth, and Families. (page 5)

<sup>2</sup> Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team (June 1999). *The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Go To School. (Executive Summary)*. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Pages 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> West, J., Wright, D., & Hausken, E. G. (1995). *Child care and early education program participation of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Our findings showed that the quality of children's experiences in typical child care centers affects their development while they are in child care and their readiness for school. Children who attended higher quality child care centers performed better on measures of both cognitive skills (e.g., math and language abilities) and social skills (e.g., interactions with peers, problem behaviors) in child care and through the transition into school. Further, this influence of child care quality was important for children from a wide range of family backgrounds.

- **High quality child care continues to positively predict children's performance well into their school careers.**

Our longitudinal analysis of children's performance indicated that the quality of child care experienced by children before they entered school continued to affect their development at least through kindergarten and in many cases through the end of second grade. Child care quality was related to basic cognitive skills (language and math) and children's behavioral skills in the classroom (thinking/attention skills, sociability, problem behaviors, and peer relations), both of which are important factors in children's ability to take advantage of the opportunities available in school.

- **Children who have traditionally been at risk of not doing well in school are affected more by the quality of child care experiences than other children.**

For some outcomes (math skills and problem behaviors), children whose mothers had lower levels of education—children who often are at risk of not doing well in school—were more sensitive to the negative effects of poor quality child care and received more benefits from high quality child care. Moreover, for these children who attended typical child care centers, these influences of child care quality were sustained through second grade.

- **The quality of child care classroom practices was related to children's cognitive development, while the closeness of the child care teacher-child relationship influenced children's social development through the early school years.**

Children who attended child care with higher quality classroom practices had better cognitive development (language and math skills) through early elementary school. Children who had closer relationships with their child care teachers had better classroom behavior and social skills (greater thinking/attention skills and sociability, fewer problem behaviors, and better peer relations) through early elementary school. It is no surprise that the nature of children's experiences in child care are important, but the results of this study confirm the lasting impact of these early experiences. High quality child care experiences, in terms of both classroom practices and teacher-child relationships, enhance children's abilities to take advantage of the educational opportunities in school.

Additional research conducted over the past three decades shows that several aspects of the adult environment have positive effects on children's outcomes: level of education and specificity of training for teaching staff<sup>4</sup>, levels of education and experience of administrators<sup>5</sup>, levels of

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<sup>4</sup> Many studies over several decades provide evidence for this relationship, including:

Ruopp, Richard, et al. (1979). *Children at the center: Final report of the National Day Care Study*. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates.

Consortium for Longitudinal Studies (1983). *As the twig is bent..lasting effects of preschool programs*. Hillsdale, NJ: Earlbaum Associates.

compensation for all staff<sup>6</sup>, intentionality (for family child care)<sup>7</sup>, and presence of a community of well-educated colleagues (for center staff)<sup>8</sup>.

The quality of early childhood programs (whether child care, preschool, nursery school or Head Start) and the subsequent outcomes for children that higher quality programs produce, are associated with the preparation and continuing professional development of the adults who work directly with children. Research has shown that training specific to the tasks of working with young children as well as the amount of education the teacher has attained both matter. The education and job-specific training of the teaching staff is one factor in the quality equation. Research shows that staff compensation – wages and benefits – are associated with quality. Better wages and benefits are linked with higher quality programs. This is the second factor in the quality equation.

Research supports the theory that higher quality child care is associated with directors who have more years of experience in the director job and who have higher levels of educational attainment, that is, college degrees. Several studies show that the director role is essential to program quality – some have called directors the “gatekeeper to quality.”<sup>9</sup> As more training opportunities for directors become available, research may begin to show a link between job-specific training and program quality, similar to the link that is well-established for teaching staff.<sup>10</sup> The director’s education, experience and training are the third factor in the quality equation.

These three factors – working together – lead to reduced staff turnover (increased staff tenure) and higher quality environments for children. In a nutshell, quality child care environments led by well-prepared administrators and staffed with capable adults who can form stable and supportive relationships with children lead to good child outcomes.

This link between child outcomes and adult competence, bolstered by understanding the director as the ‘gatekeeper to quality,’ is the foundation on which the Mississippi Director’s Credential is built. The rationale for the credential is: If directors master the content of director training and thus achieve the credential, they will be able to positively affect the operation of their center, the skills of their staff and thus the children in their care.

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Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team. (1995). *Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers*. Denver, CO: University of Colorado.

<sup>5</sup> Bloom, Paula J. (1992). The Effects of Leadership Training on Child Care Program Quality. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 7, 579-594.

Mocan, H. Naci, et al., (1995). Models of quality in early childhood care and education. In S. W. Helburn (Ed.). *Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers: Technical report*. Denver, CO: Department of Economics, University of Colorado.

<sup>6</sup> Whitebook, Marcy, Carolee Howes and Deborah A. Phillips (1990). *Who cares? Child care teachers and the quality of child care in America: Final report of the National Child Care Staffing Study*. Oakland, CA: Child Care Employee Project.

Whitebook, Marcy, Deborah A. Phillips, and Carolee Howes (1993). *National Child Care Staffing Study revisited: Four years in the life of center-based child care*. Oakland, CA: National Center for the Early Childhood Workforce (formerly Child Care Employee Project).

<sup>7</sup> Kontos, Susan, Carolee Howes, Marybeth Shinn, and Ellen Galinsky (1995). *Quality in family child care and relative care*. New York: Teachers College Press.

<sup>8</sup> Whitebook, Marcy, Laura Sakai and Carolee Howes (1997). *NAEYC Accreditation as a strategy for improving child care quality*. Washington DC: National Center for the Early Childhood Workforce.

<sup>9</sup> Bloom, Paula Jorde and Marilyn Sheerer (1992). Changing organizations by changing individuals: A model of leadership training. *The Urban Review*, 24(4), 263-286.

<sup>10</sup> Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education (2000). *Research Findings Relevant to Director Credentialing*. Boston: Wheelock College.

## History and development of the Director Credential Training Project

The Director Credential emerged largely in response to directors' demand for training. One impetus came in 1994, when a training workshop on the state child care regulations was offered around the state. The primary target audience was directors, who welcomed the training on regulations and decried what they perceived as a pervasive lack of other training opportunities for administrators (as compared to training opportunities for teaching staff). This was borne out in a 1995 study of staff qualifications and training opportunities for child care providers in Mississippi, conducted by the Mississippi Forum on Children and Families (The Forum) under a contract with the state of Mississippi Department of Human Services, Office for Children and Youth (OCY). Less than 10% of staff at that time had a degree in child development or a CDA (Child Development Associate) credential. Directors reported having no administrative training. While turnover among teaching staff was high, the turnover among directors was very low. The average tenure of directors was over ten years. Training directors appeared to be a good investment of public resources.

### *The pilot year (1995-96)*

The need for training leading to a credential and the outline of the content of training was created by a group of 14 stakeholders representing state agencies such as the Department of Health Licensing Office and the Department of Human Services Office for Children and Youth, community college and university faculty in human development and education, and directors of child care programs. The curriculum was developed by Dawn Hall at the Forum with input from staff at the Wheelock College Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education.

The training content was organized into multiple modules totaling 120 clock hours of training. A test is given at the end of each of the 8 instruction modules; the 9<sup>th</sup> is an 'integration' module that is the final exam. Content covered a wide range of topics relevant to operating a successful quality child care program. (The curriculum outline in current use is included in the Appendix beginning on page 33.)

The Director's Child Care Credential training course was taught by Dawn Hall to a diverse group of 50 individuals from across the state in 1995-96. The group included both current and aspiring directors. The pilot training was conducted in a controlled format. To ensure maximum participation, encourage completion and collect the data needed to make decisions about continuation, participants were required to attend all sessions. A variety of incentives were offered: 1) all travel and per diem costs incurred by participants were paid, 2) each participant who completed the pilot course was given playground equipment valued at \$2,500 (larger centers received equipment worth \$5,000). The experiences of the 'pilot' group led to the expansion of the project in the next year and informed the design of the training.

### *Year two (1996-97)*

The pilot was run as one class of 50 individuals taught in one location by a single instructor. In 1996-97, there were multiple classes, locations and trainers. Three individuals were recruited to be 'co-trainers' with the trainer from the pilot year. Co-training allowed them to learn the curriculum and training method and to gradually take over as instructor. Class capacity was set at 50; actual classes ranged from fewer than 20 to more than 50 students. Classes were taught in three locations (Tupelo, Gulfport and Jackson) in a two-day format once a month. Content was revised to devote one module to budget and finance issues and one to curriculum.

Recruitment focused on employed directors because of the practical nature of the training and the need to have real experience to discuss and learn from. In contrast to the pilot year with its limited group of carefully selected participants, enrollment was open to all directors and no incentives beyond free tuition were offered, providing a reality test of the system. Some participants were prepared for the rigors and responsibilities of training; others were not. Complaints arose from participants who were concerned about late arrival of some of their peers, wide variation in homework quality, among other concerns. After the second module of training, adjustments were made to clarify the demands of the training and reward responsible participation.

A point system was devised based on attendance, homework and test results. Strict attendance policies were instituted with points deducted for tardiness at any session. Acceptable homework may earn up to 10 points per assignment; unacceptable homework is returned for re-doing and can earn only up to 5 points on resubmission. End-of-module tests can be re-taken once (with points automatically deducted for the first failure). Successful completion of all 8 module tests is required before the 9<sup>th</sup> module (final exam) can be taken. To receive the credential, a student must get at least 180 points out of a possible 258 points, or a minimum score of 70% overall.

In addition, the make-up policy was clarified. If a student misses an entire module of training, she may attend that module the next time it is given in any location, with no penalties. Depending on the training schedule, the student may be able to make-up the module in the same year or may have to wait until the subsequent year.

### ***Year three (1997-98)***

By 1997-98, the credential training's content and structure were well established. The focus was on recruitment using brochures, mailings and conference presentations. The curriculum was reviewed and minor editing changes were made for clarification. A trainer's manual was developed that provides a script and notes keyed to the timed agenda for each module. A 'train the trainers' session was held over a weekend. Five trainers offered seven sections of the credential training sequence in five geographic locations (Tupelo, Gulfport, Jackson [2 sections], Greenwood and Hattiesburg [2 sections]). One section was offered on a weeknight format – one night per week for four weeks instead of the weekend two-day format. Two new 15-hour courses were developed: a 'pre-orientation' course on basics of operating a child care center in compliance with state regulations was offered to novice directors, and an 'advanced' course on curriculum was offered to credentialed directors. Each course was taught once with about 15 participants in each class.

State child care subsidy reimbursement rates effective in 1998 in Mississippi were \$281 per month for a preschool-aged child in programs licensed by the Department of Health. However, subsidy reimbursement rates increase to \$312 per month for licensed programs that are nationally accredited and/or have a credentialed director on staff. This policy acted as an incentive for directors of programs to pursue the credential. In 1998-99, the Forum began discussions with the Department of Health with the aim of establishing the credential within the state child care regulations as one way to qualify as a center director.

### ***Year four (1998-99)***

Beginning in 1998-99, a modest materials fee began to be charged (\$25) to all participants. Those from programs that receive federal funds (e.g., Head Start) are required to pay half-tuition (\$500) as

well. Participants who are not employed in a licensed child care facility also pay \$500. This change was made in response to the prior year's experience. A large number of participants had enrolled in the course for year three. Of the 273 who completed the first module that year, more than a hundred dropped out at various points in the year before completing the training. The materials fee was established based on the belief that people tend not to value things that are free as highly as things that require a financial commitment. Additionally, a disproportionate number of Head Start staff enrolled in the training in year three. Given the first-come, first served enrollment policy, this limited access for child care directors and reduced the program-type diversity within classes. To address this concern and in reflection of the fact that Head Start (and other federally funded programs) have relatively ample staff training budgets, the tuition cost-sharing arrangement was instituted.

In 1998-99, the director credential training was delivered by 15 trainers who taught 11 sections of classes in 8 geographic locations in both weeknight and weekend formats (Gulfport, Greenville, Senatobia, Jackson [3 sections – one on the weekend format and two on different weeknights], Starkville, Tupelo, Booneville and Hattiesburg [2 sections – one of each format]). Although a training of trainers was held to prepare trainers (and the majority were credentialed directors themselves), some concerns about having multiple trainers were raised by participants in the course evaluations. This led to the decision to limit the number of trainers for the next year and assign one trainer to be the consistent instructor teaching all modules of the training in a given location. Recruitment of participants continued using the same methods as before and by the end of the year 386 people were on the waiting list to take the credential training in 1999-00.

### ***Year five (1999-00)***

In 1999-00, three trainers (all full-time employees of the Forum) taught nine sections of the credential training in seven geographic locations. The project coordinator taught one section and subbed as needed; each of the other trainers taught four sections apiece. Evening classes were offered in Hattiesburg, Batesville and Pascagoula. Weekend classes were offered in McComb, Starkville and Greenville. Two weekend sections and an evening section were offered in Jackson. The advanced course on working with parents was offered in two locations; 50 credentialed directors took the course.

Several new advanced courses were developed during the year. One is an 'orientation course' designed to be taught by credentialed directors to their own staff. The course was developed by a small working group that included six credentialed directors and staff from the Department of Health Licensing Office and OCY. The orientation course was given in three locations during the spring and summer (Starkville, Greenwood, and Senatobia). The other courses developed during the year were one on creating print-rich environments to support reading readiness, and three on creating classroom learning centers to support math readiness, writing readiness and reading readiness. More than one hundred directors took these courses. See page 35 in the Appendix for a list of course titles.

Subsidy rates increased in October 1999, maintaining the 10% differential for centers or group family child care homes that are accredited or have credentialed directors. Effective January 1, 2000, the state child care regulations required that a 'qualified' director be on site at all times in a center.

One way to qualify as director is to have the director’s credential<sup>11</sup> (and 2 years of caregiver experience in a licensed facility), creating an incentive for centers to send not only the director, but other staff as well, to the credential training. Recruitment efforts continued as usual and by August there were 465 individuals on the waiting list to take the course in 2000-01.

One measure of the success of a credential training project is the number of individuals who have participated and completed the requirements. Figure 2 below shows that nearly 600 individuals have become credentialed to date. By way of comparison, there are about 1,600 licensed child care centers in the state of Mississippi.

**Figure 2. Completion rates for Director’s Credential by year**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Enrolled (Module 1)</b>	<b>Completed Modules 2-8</b>	<b>Credential awarded</b>	<b>Percent of completers attaining credential</b>
1995-96	50	50	45	90%
1996-97	111	99	75	76%
1997-98	273	161	129	80%
1998-99	306	244	153	63%
1999-00	272	202	190	94%
Totals (all 5 years)	1,012	756	592	78%

### The perspectives of stakeholders

Ten individuals, 4 African-American and 6 Caucasian, were interviewed who represented higher education (both community college and university levels), state regulatory and funding agencies (both DOH and OCY) and members of the original advisory committee formed in 1995-96. These individuals’ knowledge about the credential came from involvement in the early stages of planning (on the committee), hearing about it generally, or from knowing a few directors who have taken the training, rather than direct experience (except for the one who was a credentialed director).

Licensors felt the credential training helped directors deal with operational issues and thought the content was “probably similar to what would be taught at Jackson State or Hinds in an early childhood course.” Higher education informants said, “The director credential is a good thing for Mississippi. The content is the right stuff for directors to know and it’s good that it’s now become more or less required [in licensing].” The licensors tended to agree, saying, “The primary benefit [of the credential] is that it’s a training mechanism that is state supported so it can be widely available to educate directors and set some standards on how a good child care program should be run.” They felt that having the credential be one way to qualify as a director in licensing rules is positive for child care in the state. However, they feel that having the credential tied to subsidy reimbursement

<sup>11</sup> A CDA credential or the Child Care Directors Credential is the minimum qualification for a director. Either must be paired with 2 years of caregiver experience in a licensed facility. Higher qualifications are an associate degree in child development or child care and 2 years experience, or a bachelor degree in early childhood education, child development, elementary education, child care, special education, or family and consumer sciences without additional experience. Individuals employed as director in a licensed facility in Mississippi prior to 1/1/2000 are grandfathered.

rates has been both good and bad – good in that a higher rate is an incentive for pursuing education, and bad in that some who are qualified already, by virtue of years of education and years of on-the-job experience, have to ‘go through it’ just to get the rate. Some concern was expressed that the new requirement for having a qualified director on site at all times has created a somewhat perverse incentive to have centers send any staff member, regardless of their role, to the credential training.

Some state agency staff said, “The credential seems good, but we’re not sure how it fits within a career ladder. It needs to have credit attached and lead toward degrees if we’re going to close the qualifications gap between child care and Head Start. How does it relate to CDA? Have we neglected caregiver training in favor of directors?” All of these stakeholders freely offered their opinions about the credential, while acknowledging that they were not able to offer concrete examples of its impact on practice except through anecdotes or unconfirmed reports.

## **The perspectives of Credentialed Directors**

Interviews with the credentialed directors are the primary source of data on the concrete impact of the credential. Beyond assessing impact on practice, a secondary purpose of these interviews was to gather information from credentialed directors about their experience of the training and any suggestions for improvements to it. Directors were asked their opinions about the process and structure as well as the content of the curriculum. Finally, there were several hypotheses or questions about the credential training that the interviews sought to explore. These are: 1) does satisfaction with and ability to make use of the training vary by participant’s education level? 2) does either satisfaction or ability to make use of training vary by the race of the participant? 3) is there any relationship between the credential and director tenure/turnover? 4) is being credentialed related to membership in professional organizations or pursuit of additional education?

As noted earlier, the sample of credentialed directors who were interviewed fairly represents the universe of credentialed directors in terms of race, gender, geography, program type and role. Purposely, the selected sample also represents a wide range of ages (from 28 to 67 years old), and the full range of levels of education from high school graduate to doctorate. Education levels were about equal between the African-American and Caucasian directors in the sample, with the African-American credentialed directors slightly better educated overall than the Caucasian credentialed directors.

### ***Process, structure and format***

The most common way directors found out about the course was via a mailing (about half said they had heard about the course that way).<sup>12</sup> “Word of mouth” was a close second; many said they either heard about it in conversation with other directors or at a meeting or conference. Word of mouth complements the brochures; neither alone would likely be sufficient as a recruitment tool, but both together are persuasive. All of the credentialed directors interviewed were completely satisfied with the application process. They described it as “fine,” reasonably easy and all felt they got a quick response.

The primary reasons directors gave for pursuing the credential were for professional growth and personal satisfaction and for program improvement. Directors described it as “an opportunity to

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<sup>12</sup> All licensed programs are mailed a brochure about the credential training every year.

learn, to continue my education, to improve my school [program], to do my job better.” Only three directors said they had been advised by a supervisor to take the course. Directors who took the course when they were new to the field of child care described it as “just what I needed to prepare for entering a new field.” Many said they refer others to take the course.

*“All directors should take the course regardless of experience and degree. I thought I needed more information and heard other directors with a lot of experience say good things about the course. We are obligated to our center to get more information.”*

Although most directors reported they enjoyed the classes, learned a lot, and generally liked the structure and format, they had mixed reactions on the point system and the strict format of the training sessions. Some thought it elevated the importance of the credential and their sense of achievement when they received it; others thought it was too strict even though it made them appreciate the credential.

*“The class format is very stressful – nothing was acceptable [as an excuse] to miss class. A woman in my class couldn’t be at her son’s graduation.”*

*“Too much strict adherence to the schedule doesn’t use the knowledge and creativity of the instructor very well.”*

*“If it [homework] was too easy, it wouldn’t be worth doing. The homework was like the things I’d do for the center anyway.”*

*“The format was excellent! The group became a real network of support. I thought there was a good balance between lectures and group discussion. The role-playing was good, and problem-solving in small groups was great. The tests were fine, they helped me know what I needed to do more [work] on.”*

Several trainers noted that the Forum’s desire for consistency among trainers in delivery of the content is difficult to achieve without very detailed notes and many examples that can be used by any trainer regardless of their own personal knowledge and experience. One or two suggested that video training with one instructor and discussion leaders in the various sites might be more effective at achieving consistency. Others felt instructors should bring their experiences into the classes, as a model of experiential learning and to enrich discussions.

### **Curriculum content**

All the directors had positive things to say about the curriculum and the instructors. The most common content area mentioned as being especially helpful was budgeting (even from those who were not responsible for preparing their budget). Some wanted even more financial content, particularly noting start-up budgeting and the pros and cons of profit versus nonprofit legal status. More than half mentioned the usefulness of the content on staffing issues including policies and staffing patterns; child development and curriculum were also mentioned often. A few wished there were more information about children with special needs. About a third noted that the content on dealing with stress and learning to delegate were very helpful. Instructors were generally well-regarded. One director said the best thing about the training was “connecting with the instructor and being able to call on her for advice and help.”

*“The budgeting was especially helpful – I can do my own budget now, where the church did it before.”*

*“The curriculum is very thorough on administrative and business issues like insurance. Really, it was all useful. I learned things even in areas I felt competent in before [I took the course].”*

*“[I] came out of the course [with] hands-on experience in setting up my center in the correct way – I could come back and talk to co-workers about doing things the right way.”*

*“Loved the brain development and all the back-up on child development – lots of good tips on working with kids.”*

*“It taught me how to delegate.”*

According to several trainers, the curriculum should be revised and updated at least every three years because information changes, such as regulations and health requirements, and new references and resources should be added. A few directors and trainers feel the curriculum needs to be reviewed for bias. They felt that a few parts of the current content imply that best practice is narrow or absolute – there’s only ‘one way to do it.’ To correct this, they cited the need for a wider range of examples of good practice drawn from centers with different populations of children and families and different educational philosophies.

### **Impact on practice**

All of the directors believed the credential training had an impact on their work. Several strong themes emerged from their descriptions of changes made as result of the credential training.

Almost all directors mentioned doing something differently with staff such as:

- forging a better relationship with the staff including having more respect for them and their work,
- instituting a more thorough hiring process and better staff orientation training,
- re-writing or developing a staff handbook including job descriptions,
- helping staff to deal more effectively with children and with discipline.

*“I have improved almost all of our forms and changed our [staff and parent] handbooks. We now use the discipline policy that was in the course.”*

*“I observe teachers more often. I realize the significance of all teachers improving their performance, whether they have a degree already or not, and I encourage all staff to get more training”*

*“Specifically we have improved sanitation practices (handwashing) and staff are closer with the kids now, not just watching them.”*

Staffing patterns were a recurrent theme. One director said, “I understood the concept of continuity of care and have made staff schedules that allow it. We now assign one caregiver to each four infants.” Another said, “The staff scheduling information was very helpful – we have a more efficient staffing schedule now and we use our classroom time better now that we have a long-range curriculum plan and activities for each day.”

Nearly half mentioned changes in their ability to use time more effectively, to delegate and to handle stress. One said, "In the past, I would never take a day off. I'd work 11 ½ hours each day! Now I do [take time off], and I insist that staff do also."

About a third of all directors interviewed mentioned changes to the classroom environment such as:

- developing learning centers in the classroom and improving other aspects of room arrangement,
- deciding what is developmentally appropriate and what to purchase for the center, and
- reducing class sizes and improving staff:child ratios.

For example, one director reported that before the training she had a class of 22 four-year-olds with two teaching staff. After becoming credentialed she reduced the class size to just 16 children, for a 1:8 ratio. She also reduced the infant ratio to 1:3 in a group of 6.

*"[With my credential] I had the rationales to make better arguments to my Board to support these improvements [in program quality]."*

Several noted they now deal better and more directly with parents. One said, "I rewrote our parent handbook so all the policies and procedures are in one place." Another said she'd "started a parent discussion group."

Another fairly strong theme was professionalism, expressed as a better outlook on their job and more confidence in their knowledge and ability. Almost a third of directors mentioned the networking with other directors as one of the best things about the course. A few reported joining professional organizations – both state and national – as a result of the credential training course

*"I know what to do now, I'm not guessing"*

*"I feel more professional. I solve problems with more credibility behind me."*

*"[Credential training] helped me become a more well-rounded director with my staff and for my center made me feel better prepared to do my job."*

*"Being in the pilot class [to become a credentialed director] was an awesome experience, all year. It boosted my energies again and saturated me with new ideas I used in my center."*

*"The opportunity to meet with other directors, share concerns and experiences and find solutions was the best. I realized I'm not the only one with that [particular] problem – someone else has solutions or other approaches to try."*

These feelings of increased confidence and professionalism seem to have effects on center size. Several directors noted they had expanded their programs. One said, "We moved to a better space that's roomier and expanded our program." Another "started a kindergarten program."

One director summed it up well.

*“The credential course improved my performance and the quality of care in my center. I am more aware of and knowledgeable about appropriate practice, I can explain it to parents, and insist on it with teachers. Our center is now [nationally] accredited.”*

### ***The hypotheses about race, education level, tenure and professionalism***

Responses to interview questions were analyzed by race and education level. There is no discernible difference due to either factor. Directors of all education levels and both races reported similar types of impact in their centers, equivalent feelings of increased confidence and professionalism, and expressed comparable concerns about the format of classes.

Part of the original rationale for a director credential was the low turnover of directors and the wisdom of investing in their training. Research has shown that the director is a key to improving the quality of child care – the “gatekeeper to quality.”<sup>13</sup> In this random sample of directors, tenure as director was extremely high. A few changed jobs within the field, moving from one center to another as director. Only two had left the field since they received the credential. One went into retail business and one now works in administration for a public school district.

As noted above, there is a strong connection between becoming credentialed and having enhanced feelings of professionalism. Joining professional organizations and continuing one’s own education are actions that provide concrete evidence for the feelings of professionalism. There is a modest connection between becoming credentialed and joining organizations. About 15% did join a local, state, regional or national professional organization for the first time after becoming credentialed. There is a weaker link between the credential and continuing education. Only one director reported returning to college. However, most directors expressed a fairly strong commitment to education and training for themselves and their staff (and reported attending trainings). About one-third reported that they took more than the minimum training hours required in regulation, some described it as “much more” or “as much as I can get.” They reported no difference in these behaviors when asked to compare before with after they become credentialed. Commitment to continuing education and training seems to be a characteristic of directors who choose to pursue the credential rather than a result of the credential.

### **Improvements**

Suggestions for improvements to the directors credential training came from all sectors – credentialed directors, trainers and stakeholders. Nearly all the credentialed directors said they were very pleased with the course and then about half offered suggestions for improvement. While many suggestions for improvements were offered, there were few strong patterns. Offering the advanced courses and developing other “refresher courses” so directors get regular updates on changing issues were suggested by several directors. Some would like to see the point system altered, for example, to include an attendance policy to cover absences in emergency situations. Several stakeholders suggested that participants who have both a degree in early childhood or child development and several years of administrative experience be given the option to test out of modules and not have to “sit through them.” Requiring continuing education to keep the credential or making it renewable were suggested by a few stakeholders.

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<sup>13</sup> Bloom, Paula Jorde and Marilyn Sheerer (1992). Changing organizations by changing individuals: A model of leadership training. *The Urban Review*, 24(4), 263-286.

There was a feeling, expressed directly and indirectly by a few interviewees, that while evaluations and surveys have been done and meetings are held to gather opinions, that much advice is ignored, leading some to feel that aspects of the credential are 'set in stone.'

### **Offering credit**

The clearest and most common theme for improvement was the desire to see the course offered for credit. This level of intensity conflicts with previous findings from surveys the Forum has conducted, in which a minority of respondents mentioned credit. The difference lies in how the questions are asked. Credit appears in the Forum's surveys as a response to an open-ended query. This evaluation's request for suggestions to improve the training was an open-ended question, to which any response could be given, and only a few responded "offer it for credit." Later in the interview, a query about credit was posed as a direct question, asking "if credit had been offered as an option when you took the training, would you have wanted credit." Undoubtedly fewer interviewees would have endorsed the concept of offering credit if a direct question had not been asked. Credit was included as a direct question because offering college credit is one of the key elements of effective professional development training for directors.<sup>14</sup>

Every person interviewed – in all categories – thought offering the course for college credit in the future was highly desirable. Nearly every credentialed director said they would have liked credit and would have been willing to pay a small fee for it. Only three directors (all with advanced degrees) said credit was not important to them when they took the course. And all three of them expressed interest if credit could have been counted toward an advanced degree.

*"I'd chomp at the opportunity to get college credit for it!"*

*"Getting college credit never hurts, even if you already have a degree. It'd be especially useful if it could count toward graduate work"*

*"I wished I could have received college credit for having participated in the course in the past. I'll be resentful if credit is offered next year and there's not some way I can apply for it!"*

*"This course is as much work as a college course and everyone should be able to get credit. Credit makes it feel professional. Also credit makes the credential transferable – not just toward a degree in a college, but to work in another state."*

While applauding the idea of credit, most of the credentialed directors also expressed concerns about turning the credential course into an overly theoretical, impractical exercise which they felt was typical of (bad) college courses. The views of one director are an accurate summary of many other directors' concerns.

*"Making the course more like a college class with more free-flowing discussion would be good. It would not be helpful to turn it into a typical theoretical college course. The credential classes offer more than most college courses – the credential classes deal with real issues, that are applicable to my work. I'm torn between*

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<sup>14</sup> Bloom, Paula Jorde and Donna Rafenello (1995). The professional development of early childhood center directors: Key elements of effective training models. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 16 (1), 3-8.

*wanting it to be given in a college [if that's the only way of being able] to get credit for it and not wanting it to become unrealistic. I don't know how to make college courses more practical."*

### Comparing Mississippi's credential to others in the south

One approach to assessing the Mississippi Directors Child Care Credential is to compare its structure, content and impact to those of other similar credentials in other states. Unfortunately, evaluations of state-wide professional development for directors leading to a credential have not been conducted prior to this one, so no direct comparisons of evaluated impact on practice are possible. However, several states and professional organizations have developed director credential initiatives. The Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education, through their Taking the Lead initiative, collected data on all of them and prepared summary charts that include information on structure. Across the country at present there are 15 state and 3 national director credential projects. The figure below shows the year each credential began.

**Figure 3. State and national director credentials by year (1985-2001)**

Year	State or national organization
1985	National Association of Professional Administrators
1986	
1987	
1988	Texas
1989	
1990	
1991	
1992	
1993	Alabama
1994	Arizona, National Assoc. for Child Development Education (Christian)
1995	Minnesota, <b>Mississippi</b> , South Carolina
1996	Wisconsin, National Child Care Association
1997	California
1998	New Jersey, New York, North Carolina
1999	District of Columbia, Florida
2000	Illinois
2001	Oklahoma

Rather than comparing Mississippi to all of these other credentials, which would disregard the powerful influence of regional variations in child care, only those credentials offered in states in the southern region of the country were selected. These are in the states of Alabama, Oklahoma, and Texas and the credential offered by the National Child Care Association (NCCA). Their elements of content, process and structure offer useful comparisons against which to assess Mississippi's effort. See page 36 in the Appendix for the comparison chart.

Overall, Mississippi compares favorably with other credentials in the south. Mississippi's credential costs less than the others, thanks to generous state funding. At 120 clock hours, Mississippi's credential is similar to Texas (144) and Alabama (120) in the number of hours required. All of the others offer only one training format, while Mississippi offers two different ones in several locations.

Both Alabama and Mississippi require trainees to be working in administrative positions; the others include aspiring directors, either in the same training along with experienced directors (Texas and the NCCA), or through having different levels of training (Oklahoma).

One distinction among the credentials is that most consider child development a prerequisite for director training, while Mississippi and Texas include child development in the training content. All but Mississippi have either designed their credentials to offer college credit (Alabama, Oklahoma and NCCA), or plan to address the issue. Mississippi is the only credential without links to professional organizations. Only Oklahoma has designed its credential to offer credit for prior learning and experience, primarily for professional contributions through associations. Only Alabama's credential is not recognized in licensing regulations as a way to qualify as director. In both Oklahoma and Mississippi, the director credential is both recognized in regulation and rewarded in the tiered child care subsidy system.

## **Conclusions**

First and foremost, findings from this evaluation support the theory that the Mississippi director credential is having a positive impact on program practices that are associated with quality early care and education. Credentialed directors reported positive changes having to do with staff and classrooms. These included better hiring practices, more staff training (on topics with the potential to improve child care from handwashing to curriculum planning), better staffing patterns (both more efficient ones and ones that are better for children such as lower ratios), more child-appropriate room arrangements and equipment. Positive changes also were reported in business management practices such as policy handbooks for parents and staff, understanding budgets and being able to prepare them, and using time more effectively. Finally, after becoming credentialed, directors felt more professional, more connected to the profession of child care (e.g., joining organizations) and more connected to their colleagues (e.g., networking with other directors).

Mississippi's credential compares well with other credentials offered in states in the South and with a national credential. The contact hours are similar among these, and most are recognized in state child care regulation and subsidy systems. Mississippi's credential is the least expensive to trainees, offers more format and location options and is one of two to include child development in the content rather than treating it as a prerequisite.

While some aspects of the credential training structure came in for a bit of criticism, notably the point system and the final exam, the majority opinion is strong satisfaction and support. The design of the credential training, especially in terms of content, has been responsive to the expressed needs of the field, to the demand from credentialed directors. When directors asked for more content on budgeting and curriculum, both were added. When directors wanted more information on topics related to program improvement beyond those covered in the credential training, additional courses were designed and offered, for example, on staff orientation training, parenting, reading and math readiness.

The format of training is responsive to the work demands of directors. Both evening weeknight and all-day weekend schedules are offered. The format is conducive to putting learning into practice. Enough time elapses between training modules that directors can put into practice what they have learned. A training format that is often used, such as offering an entire course in one full week, does

not allow for this possibility. Beyond location and schedule, the credential training and the credential itself are accessible in financial terms. Individuals pay a modest fee with the bulk of the cost supported with federal funds.

The Director Credential appears to be equally valued by, and effective in terms of program impact, for individuals who have completed only high school, those with some college and those with college degrees. Regardless of race, directors value the training and hold the credential in high regard. Credential training appears to be equally useful to brand new directors just entering the field and to directors who have many years of experience. This is likely because it is job-specific training, that is, the information is practical, relevant and comprehensive (meaning it addresses the range of skills needed to manage a program). Directors are hungry for the training and value the information as much as the fellowship with peers that develops through the training.

The credential is reaching a fair percentage of directors in the state. In five years, more than 750 have completed all eight of the training modules and close to 600 have received the credential. Given that there are at least 1,600 directors (based on the total number of licensed programs in the state), approximately 38% have been credentialed to date. If the current rate of credentialing (about 150 directors per year) continues, all directors in Mississippi will have the opportunity to become credentialed within the next eight years. Of course, given that turnover does occur among directors, there will always be new directors who will need the credential training.

Credentialed directors and key stakeholders across the state of Mississippi are genuinely appreciative of the director credential. It is viewed as beneficial for the state and is believed to be making a difference in the quality of child care. They support it strongly, have a keen interest in seeing it continue, and in that spirit, offered sincere advice about how to improve it for the future.

The rationale for the director credential as a cost-effective way to affect child care still holds true. Directors are the gatekeepers to quality and the more they know the better they can lead their staff and their programs. However, common sense backed up by research tells us that a set of factors must be in place to make significant and durable improvements in child care. These factors are well-prepared and fairly compensated staff working in a community of well-educated colleagues. Quality child care is led by well-prepared administrators and staffed with capable adults who can form stable and caring relationships with children – the relationships through which children learn and develop. Education, job-specific training for all roles, and fair compensation all matter – all three are necessary elements of a quality improvement agenda.

Job-specific training for directors is one piece of the equation. There is both room for, and evidence of the need for, several credentials on the professional development career pathway, in part because there are many roles in the field. The CDA is well-designed to prepare teaching staff to work directly with children. It is competency based and can be linked to higher education. The Director Credential is the job-specific training for administrators of programs for young children. A director who also has a CDA is that much better prepared to run a program for children, but a CDA cannot substitute for a director credential because CDA competencies do not include the administrative content necessary for management.

Educational attainment – for both teaching staff and directors – also matters. Professional training such as the Mississippi director credential is most effective when it leads toward higher education and degrees at the associate, bachelor, masters levels and beyond.

There are successful and effective models for addressing these three key quality issues – education, job-specific training and compensation – that are working in states across the nation. These models include TEACH<sup>15</sup> and WAGES<sup>16</sup>, which were both initiated in North Carolina and are spreading rapidly across the nation. Taking a more systemic approach, nearly every state has a diverse group of stakeholders from all sectors of the early care and education field working to build a career development system for early care and education.

An effective career development system:<sup>17</sup>

1. is one unified career development system for all sectors, and includes all roles from entry level teacher aide to center director to college faculty member,
2. is based on a core body of knowledge and competence for all early childhood and school-age care and education practitioners,
3. has requirements and incentives for practitioners to obtain training,
4. is a sequenced system of practitioner preparation and continuing career development that is closely linked with the higher education system,
5. is designed to develop a competent and diverse population of practitioners and leaders in the field,
6. assesses training needs and offers training based on those needs,
7. is culturally relevant and ethnically diverse,
8. incorporates both recognition (maintaining records of training and credentials that practitioners have received) and rewards (compensation initiatives to ensure that increased knowledge and competence are rewarded by linking them to compensation),
9. makes information about training—and the training itself—easily accessible and user friendly,
10. has a professional development career advising system,
11. practices quality control, and
12. ensures the career development system and all its element are well-financed.

The cornerstone upon which to build Mississippi's career development system is the Director Credential. Mississippi was one of the early states to develop training for directors and is now the first state to have completed an evaluation of its director credential to guide it forward. Mississippi is poised to create a quality improvement agenda that can make a lasting positive impact on child care – and on school readiness.

## Recommendations

These recommendations are based on the findings from the study. They represent the combined thinking and advice of all those who were interviewed, tempered by the judgement of the evaluator, and viewed through the lens of effective professional development training. All of these

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<sup>15</sup> The TEACH Early Childhood Project is a scholarship program to induce child care staff to pursue higher education, realize increased compensation and reduce turnover, based on an agreement among the employer, employee and the scholarship grantor.

<sup>16</sup> WAGES is a compensation initiative that awards monetary stipends to child care staff who have child development related degrees.

<sup>17</sup> Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education (2000). *The Elements and Components of a Career Development System*. Boston: Wheelock College.

recommendation are offered as suggestions for consideration to improve the credential and the credential training.

### **1. Review the Directors Credential training curriculum and the structure and process of the training.**

The Mississippi Director Credential was designed in 1995, early in the professional development movement to create such credentials. Six years later, more is known about effective content, structure and delivery of training for directors, making this a good time to revise and improve the credential. Although the curriculum is reviewed annually, a formal regular review should cover curriculum as well as structure and process.

The purpose of this review is three-fold: 1) to ensure that all education offered for directors meets standards of effective professional development for early childhood directors, 2) to allow for revisions and review for bias, and 3) to set the stage for establishing credit for the credential training. Accepted standards for effective training should guide the review, such as the 12 elements listed below.<sup>18</sup>

#### **Content**

1. Address both the management and leadership functions of the director's role.
2. Be based on participant's perceived needs.
3. Be problem-centered and site-specific.
4. Focus on the director as change agent.
5. Stress a systems perspective.

#### **Structure**

6. Meet the needs of working professionals.
7. Promote professional advancement e.g., by offering college credit.
8. Promote participation that reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the field of early care and education.
9. Include follow-up activities to promote knowledge integration and skill progression.
10. Promote cross-fertilization among sectors of the field.

#### **Delivery**

11. Promote active learning.
12. Promote collegiality and networking.

To keep a job-specific, practical training curriculum such the one for the director credential up to date, it should be revised on a regular schedule, perhaps every three years. The review can take account of new knowledge, the latest child development and curriculum research, regulatory changes, health guidelines revisions and so forth. A review team of experts in relevant areas can be assembled to guide the revisions, some might be experts from Mississippi and others might be experts from other parts of the country who can participate in person, electronically, by mail and other means. To prepare for offering college credit, the review should consider the course outline, syllabus and schedule of any college courses in early childhood administration taught in Mississippi.

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<sup>18</sup> Bloom, Paula Jorde and Donna Rafenello (1995). The professional development of early childhood center directors: Key elements of effective training models. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 16 (1), 3-8.

**2. Establish an on-going advisory body to guide the Director Credential.**

Development of the original curriculum and design of the credential training benefited from advisory committee input. Several of the advanced courses that have been developed subsequently have been helped by ad hoc advisory committees – a group called together solely to work on a single course. Nearly all director credential initiatives in other states and those that are national have ongoing advisory committees. In most of the state credential initiatives, the advisory body is linked to the statewide career development group.

If there exists already in Mississippi an appropriate advisory group that has cross-sector representation of the field, includes some credentialed directors, has responsibilities for professional development in early care and education and can take on the duties of advising the Credential, that may be an option. If not, one that meets these requirements should be created. Such a group does not have to meet often. Perhaps twice a year is sufficient to get updates, provide advise on issues that arise, review curriculum content, etc. The first task of an advisory group is to read this report and consider its recommendations.

**3. Offer the Director Credential course for credit.**

The desire for credit is strong among directors. Credit is the ‘coin of the realm’ in professional development and connotes value when attached to training such as that leading to the credential. There are several approaches to credit.

- One is to have the training evaluated to establish it as being equivalent to a set number of college credits, as the National Child Care Association has done. The national organization that does this is the American Council on Education based in Washington, DC. This is the simplest route to establishing credit. The downside of this approach is that the effort to have the credit granted by a college rests with each individual credentialed director.
- Another approach is to design the credential training itself to be credit-bearing. At present there is one community college course in administration, called Administering Preschool Programs, that is taught at all of the public community colleges around the state; it is a 3 semester hour course. Designing the credential training to carry credit could potentially increase the number of administration courses available to directors.
- A third option is to negotiate with the state college and university system to grant a set number of credits for the credential itself, rather than trying to match the credential’s training content to a specific course content. This is the approach that many colleges take with the CDA credential. Negotiating credit for possession of the credential would provide a route for currently credentialed directors to gain college credit.

How much credit is the director credential worth? Consider that 40 contact hours generally equals 3 semester hours of college credit. Based solely on contact hours, the credential course appears to be worth 9 semester hours of credit.

A related issue is credit at what level? Minimally, credit at the community college or junior college level seems necessary. Nearly all credential directors have completed high school and some have completed part of an associate degree. Ideally, arranging for credit to be accepted at various levels

of higher education would benefit the largest number of credentialed directors. An analysis of the relative levels of educational attainment of credential directors would help guide this effort.

Other considerations for granting credit are the extent to which the credential training content matches with the curriculum of a particular college course or courses, whether the credit will count toward degree program requirements or only as elective credit, among other concerns. In whatever arrangements are made for credit in the future, be sure to address the issue of those who already hold the director credential and may want to apply for credit now.

#### **4. Develop at least two levels of the director course.**

There seems to be demand for both 'basic' training and more advanced content. First, credentialed directors themselves are clamoring for advanced courses. The credential designers have responded to this demand by offering six advanced courses on topics identified by credentialed directors. Most of these courses are designed to develop the ability of directors to become trainers of their own staff – that is, the courses are taught with a train-the-trainer approach.

Second, state policies in regulation and subsidy, that rightly recognize and reward programs with credentialed directors, also cause individuals who may not have day-to-day administrative roles to seek the credential. Regulations require a person qualified as director to be on site at all times – the most expedient way to meet this rule is have several staff who have a director credential. Subsidy policy rewards a program that has any staff member with a director credential.

Third, having two levels of credential training would clearly establish a professional development career pathway for directors. Arranging for credit signals that the pathway can lead toward a degree when the director is ready to pursue one.

One option would be to consider the current director credential training curriculum to be the basic level. The advanced courses that already exist could be the beginning foundation for developing an advanced level training sequence. Possibly, two advanced sequences could be built – one on leadership skills and knowledge, and another on curriculum development and staff development. Upon completion of the sequence, an appropriate recognition should be conferred, perhaps, an advanced director credential.

Having two (or more) levels would provide an appropriate place – in the basic level course – for those individuals who want the credential, but who have neither past experience nor a daily role as director. The advanced course could be designed only for practicing directors. This course might include a practicum assignment to be carried out in the center, such as developing a staff training event, presenting it and then evaluating the response to it, and finally making a presentation about it to the advanced course group.

Consider using credentialed directors who complete the advanced course as mentors to directors in the basic course. This will make good use of the 'mentor' directors' skills, knowledge and experience and, if payment for mentoring is established, will begin to address the compensation issues. Additionally, mentoring offers another step along the career pathway for directors.

Another aspect to consider in any re-design of the credential is the feasibility of making the credential renewable on some reasonable term, like 10 years, or adding annual continuing education

requirements to maintain it. At present the credential is like a college degree: once you get it, it's yours for life. The reality is that job-specific training is necessarily fluid and will change – directors know that, which is why they asked for 'refresher' courses.

#### **5. Encourage trainees to become involved in professional organizations and encourage graduates from the same region to develop local peer director networks.**

Fellowship with peers was often mentioned by credentialed directors as "one of the best things" about the training. The Forum has begun to address this issue by having an annual meeting of credentialed directors and holding regional support group meetings in several locations.

The key lies in empowering directors to take charge of this activity. Indeed, several of the more recently developed director credentials, such as those operating in Illinois and in the design stage in Oklahoma, incorporate activities such as developing peer networks and making contributions to professional organizations into their credential. These activities can count for part of the required hours/credits in the advanced level of training.

Directors' groups in Mississippi could, if the directors so desire, become affiliated with one of the existing professional organizations in the state such as Mississippi Early Childhood Association (MECA), the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), or with any other state, regional or national organization that the directors decide is appropriate. Directors could work together on establishing a state affiliate of any existing organization that is not presently in Mississippi. One example among many possibilities would be USA Child Care, a national organization for directors of child care programs. Directors might start an entirely new organization. The goal is empowered directors taking charge of their own professional networks.

#### **6. Review and consider revising the "point system" and other structural aspects of the credential training.**

The current point system deals with attendance, homework and test results. Recognizing that the point system was devised several years ago to address real issues, it is still perceived as too harsh by some. The goal of a revised point system would be to maintain the rigor that makes the credential training demand respect, while acknowledging that the current penalties may be too severe.

Throughout the interviews, there was a discernible undercurrent of concern about flexibility/rigidity in general, in regard to the director credential. It was expressed most concretely in relation to the point system, but was hinted at many times. Another example of this general concern about flexibility/rigidity was the concept of 'testing out,' which was not raised by any credentialed directors, but was brought up by a few stakeholders. The belief is that some directors have to 'sit through' the training, not learning anything new, and should be permitted to take all the tests instead and then be awarded the credential. The results of this study do not support the claim that any directors learn nothing; all credentialed directors said they learned something useful regardless of their education level or years of experience. Furthermore, there is an inherent tension between the concept of allowing individuals to 'test out' of a module and the fact that diversity and fellowship among trainees are strengths of the training design. If the more competent, engaged and experienced directors choose the 'test out' route, then their contributions will be missing in class discussion, problem solving and the overall sense of camaraderie engendered by the classes. And if only the least prepared or least experienced directors are left in the classes, it is likely that the

richness of discussions will decline and/or the instructor will have to contribute beyond the content outline of the curriculum. The curriculum and structure as currently constructed rely on the range of expertise and real-life experience of directors to fuel the small group work and class discussions.

This discussion illustrates the complexity involved in considering these structural issues. The bottom line is that there was enough concern expressed to warrant a re-examination of the structural aspects of the credential training with the goal of increasing flexibility and reducing rigidity, wherever feasible.

#### **7. Revise end-of-module tests to better prepare participants for the final exam.**

Some participants reported difficulty with the final exam and felt unprepared for it. As presently designed, the two test methods used in training are completely different. Tests given at the end of a module are multiple choice with few or no essays. The final exam is entirely essays based on case examples, a good way to assess the integration of knowledge and practice. To ease this problem, all or some of the end-of-module tests could have essay questions, and perhaps one or two might use case examples. Some work is already underway to address this concern.

#### **8. Build impact evaluation methods into the design of credential training.**

One way would be to use a traditional pre- and post-test approach. The pre-test could be given in the first module. The post-test could be mailed to those who complete the training, allowing some time for learning to be translated into action, perhaps three to six months. It is essential that valid and reliable instruments be used, preferably ones that have been used in other evaluations of director training. A good example is the Training Needs Assessment Survey which is designed to measure perceived competence in 28 knowledge and skill area related to early childhood program leadership.<sup>19</sup> The downside is the effort required to code and analyze such a survey. Another way to assess impact is to measure the effect of director training on center staff using a tool such as the Early Childhood Work Environment Survey.<sup>20</sup> This is widely used in assessing the quality of child care and is cost-effective (\$5 per respondent for scoring and analysis). Reports are by center and offer comparison to hundreds of centers nationwide.

#### **9. Set performance goals.**

Performance goals will keep the credential operation focused on the elements that matter. In addition, setting goals will help to keep the spirit of continuous improvement alive in the credential training operation and model the practice for credentialed directors. A few examples of performance goals are statements such as these:

- At least 75% of participants who enroll in Module 1 will complete Modules 2-8 within the same year.
- The response rate on the annual survey of credentialed directors will exceed 50%.
- Satisfaction surveys will be conducted every two years. A report of results, noting how each suggested change made by 5 or more respondents will be addressed, will be distributed to all

<sup>19</sup> Bloom, Paula Jorde, M. Sheerer, N. Richard and I. Blitz (1991). *The Head Start leadership training program: Final report to the Department of Health and Human Services, Head Start Bureau*. Evanston, IL: Early Childhood Professional Development Project, National-Louis University.

<sup>20</sup> Available from Paula Jorde Bloom at National-Louis University in Illinois (phone: 800-443-5522 x. 5551).

credentialed directors and all members of the advisory committee, and will be discussed by the advisory committee.

- At least 85% of those who complete all eight modules will earn the credential.

Appendix

**Figure 1. Comparison of Sample of Credentialed Directors Selected for Interviews to the Universe of Credentialed Directors (1996-1999)**

	Universe N = 404		Sample N = 30	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<b>Race</b>				
Caucasian	155	38%	11	37%
African-American	237	59%	19	63%
unknown	12	3%		
<b>Center Type</b>				
Private	177	44%	14	47%
Head Start	56	14%	4	13%
Church	52	13%	5	17%
Corporate, commercial for-profit & commercial non-profit	52	13%	4	13%
Teen parent, service organization, special needs, and federally funded	38	9%	2	7%
Unknown	29	7%	1	3%
<b>Role</b>				
Director	245	61%	20	67%
Director/Owner	38	9%	3	10%
Assistant Director	35	9%	2	7%
Teacher/Caregiver	60	15%	4	13%
unknown	26	6%	1	3%
<b>Year Credential Granted</b>				
1996	45	11%	4	13%
1997	75	19%	6	20%
1998	129	32%	10	33%
1999	153	38%	10	33%
unknown	2			
<b>Geography (by zip code ranges)</b>				
38500-38899	93	23%	9	30%
38900-39199	80	20%	4	13%
39200-39499	140	35%	10	33%
39500-39799	87	22%	7	23%
unknown	4			

**OCY Director's Child Care Credentialing Project: Trainer Interview**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Training the trainer**

1. How did you become a trainer?

How were you recruited to be a trainer? Who recruited you?  
What was the training like--lecture, group discussion? Who trained you?  
How long did your training take place?

2. Was there anything that you think is important but was not covered during your training?

3. What was your job title at the time of the training?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher
- \_\_\_\_\_ Assistant
- \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher director
- \_\_\_\_\_ Assistant director
- \_\_\_\_\_ Director
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. Where were you working at the time of the training?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Center
- \_\_\_\_\_ Family child care home
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Has your job title or working place changed since you became a OCY trainer?

- \_\_\_\_\_ No
- \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

*For those who are no longer trainers:*

6a. I noticed that you are no longer a trainer for the OCY Director's Credential. Why? (Probe: Were they asked to discontinue training? Did they leave on their own? Why?)

6b. What are you doing now? Where are you working?

*For current trainers:*

7a. I noticed that at one time there were a lot of trainers, but now there are only three current trainers. Why?

7b. How do you maintain consistency among trainers? How do the three of you communicate?

*For all trainers (current and former):*

**Course/Curriculum**

8. What do you think about the training?

Is there anything you think is important but is not covered during the training?

Do your students make any requests, changes or additions to the curriculum or the format?

Can you suggest any improvements for the course?

9. Do any students ask that they be able to take the course for college credit?

Many director credential programs do offer it for credit. Do you think that would that be helpful to your students?

10. Relationships

Do you have a mentoring relationship with students after the training?

What's your relationship with the OCY and the Forum? (e.g., are you a full time employee, do you work with OCY in another capacity?)

**11. Demographic Information**

a) Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_

b) Current trainer? (list years) \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Check list of trainers for info.)*

c) Educational background \_\_\_\_\_

**OCY Director's Child Care Credentialing Project: Director Interview**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Demographic Information**

*(Complete before interview)*

- a) Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Educational background \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Job title at the start of the course \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Work place at start of the course \_\_\_\_\_
- e) Type of center (e.g., Head Start, for profit) \_\_\_\_\_
- f) Zip code \_\_\_\_\_
- g) Year of credential (confirm) \_\_\_\_\_

2. I'd like to find out a little bit about you.

a) Can I ask how old you are?  
\_\_\_\_\_ years

b) How long have you worked in the field of early childhood?  
\_\_\_\_\_ years

c) Are you still in the early childhood field?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Yes (go to question d)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ No (go to question e)

d) What is your current job title?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Assistant  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher director  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Assistant director  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Director  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

e) Where do you work?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Center  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Family child care home  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Other, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

f) Are you working at the same place as when you took the credentialing course?  
*If no, indicate job history since taking OCY course (e.g. worked at a center then left for family day care home because I wanted to work out of my home).*  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
 \_\_\_\_\_ No, I'm now working at: \_\_\_\_\_

- g) When did you start the credentialing course? \_\_\_\_\_ (Month, Year)
- h) When did you receive your credential? \_\_\_\_\_ (Month, Year)
- i) Since you received your director's credential, have you taken any other training or continued your education in any other way? How?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ College courses in ECE/CD
  - \_\_\_\_\_ College courses in administration
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Completed my degree in \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Workshops in the community
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Workshop at a conference
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
- j) Did you participate in the weekend, all-day classes or the monthly evening classes?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Weekend all day
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Monthly evenings

**Recruitment and application**

- 3. How did you first find out about the Credentialing Project?  
(For example: flyer or other advertisement, word of mouth, college class.)
  
- 4. What was the application process like?
  - Was the application form difficult to complete?
  - Did you hear about acceptance right away (or did you wait a unreasonably long time)?
  - Any suggestions for making the application process better?

**Class format and curriculum**

- 5. What did you think about the format of the classes?
  - How much was lecturing compared to small group discussion?
  - Was that balance OK for you?
  - Did you think this course was too easy, too hard, about right?
  - Would you change anything to make the course better (e.g., need more night-time classes, less lecture, smaller class sizes, too much homework).
  
- 6. What was the 'curriculum' like?
  - Were there certain topics that were more helpful than others?
  - Which areas were most important to you; which areas were not very informative?
  - Which workshop exercises was the most helpful (e.g., appropriate practices with preschoolers, handling stress, interview questions).

**Impact, Changes made**

7.

### Improvements

14. Was there anything that was not covered during the course that you would have like to be included?

(e.g., There is now an advanced class on working with parents based on the expressed need of directors--is the interviewee aware of this? What about the support network?)

15. What was the best thing that came out of your taking the course? Anything negative or unexpected?

### College Credit

16. If the credentialing course had been offered for college credit, would you have opted for that? (mention there might have to be a small fee).

Do you think being able to get college credit would be important for people who take this course in the future?

### Prior education

17. *[If the person has a degree, ask]* Before you took the OCY training and got your credential, when was the last time you took any college courses in child development or administration? (If none, ask for any workshops.)

*[If the person does not have a degree, ask]* Before you took the OCY training and got your credential, when was the last time you took any workshops or classes in child development or administration?

### Incentives

18. Why did you take the Director's Credentialing course?

Were you required to take it (e.g., by your Board of Directors, the owners)? *Example probes: To gain additional skills; to meet other directors; as part of continuing education plan; for personal interest.*

Did the course meet your expectations?

***OCY Director's Child Care Credentialing Project: Interview for other key informants***

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

1. Can you tell me about your involvement (direct experience) with the OCY Director Credential?  
(probe for: funder, planner, stakeholder)
  
2. What do you think are the benefits of the Credential?  
(probe for levels: individual, centers, state)
  
3. What are your expectations of the Director Credential (short-term and long-term outcomes or impact)?
  
4. Is there anything you would change about it to make it work better?  
(if needed, probe for: credit, renewal, new topics)
  
5. What future direction(s) do you think the Director Credential should take?

***Content Outline of Mississippi's Director Credential Training Curriculum***

1. Director's role
  - handling stress
  - delegating
  - time management
  - setting priorities
  - long range planning calendar
2. Child development
  - infants and toddlers
  - preschool and schoolage
3. Meeting the needs of children at a center
  - health and safety issues
  - effective guidance for children (e.g., staff are more consistent, learned how to redirect children)
  - discipline
  - special concerns such as ADD
  - changing the way the center looks (center environment)
  - toys and supplies that will help the children's development
  - curriculum, lesson plans
  - instituting procedures to deal with problems such as biting, tantrums, and aggression in children
4. Staff issues
  - recruitment
  - hiring process, interview
  - orientation for new staff
  - observing and documenting staff
  - terminating staff
  - staff handbook
  - job description
  - stages of teacher development
  - staff conflict
  - health and safety issues for staff
  - staff evaluation
  - developing an in-service program for staff
  - motivating and appreciating staff
  - staffing plans (e.g., ratios)
  - substitutes
5. Program development
  - defining population to be served
  - Board of Directors (e.g., membership, officers, duties, by-laws)
  - liability issues

- need for an attorney
  - insurance
  - marketing
  - process for enrolling children
  - parent handbook
  - understanding and supporting working parents
  - communicating and involving parents at the center
  - parent complaints
6. Financial management
- developing a budget
  - what defines the cost of child care
  - policies affecting the budget (e.g., discounts, late fees)
  - cash and accrual accounting
  - types of budgets
  - developing staff salary and benefits
  - purchasing goods and services
  - audits
  - collecting fees
7. Program administration for high quality care
- Administration
    - philosophy of program
    - mission statement
    - legal orientation
    - creating a positive climate at center (e.g., professional growth, collegiality)
  - Health and Safety
    - records for staff and children
    - emergency plans
    - safety policies
    - responsibilities regarding child abuse
    - meal planning (nutritional needs)
  - Developing professionalism
    - NAEYC accreditation
    - code of ethics
  - Evaluation
    - child assessments
    - program evaluation
    - CDA National Credential Program
8. Curriculum
- developing best practices, developmentally appropriate curriculum
  - schedule and room arrangement
  - playground and outdoor play time

***Titles of advanced courses for Credentialed Directors***

The Credentialed Director as a Trainer:  
Orientation for New Caregivers

Advanced Training Course:  
Working with Parents in Early Care and Education Programs

The Credentialed Director as a Trainer:  
Creating a Print-Rich Environment to Support Reading-Readiness

The Credentialed Director as a Trainer:  
Creating a Homeliving Center to Support Reading, Math, and Writing Readiness

The Credentialed Director as a Trainer:  
Creating an Art Center to Promote Writing Readiness

The Credentialed Director as Trainer:  
Creating a Learning Center to Support Math Readiness

Figure 4. Comparison among Director Credentials in the southern U.S.<sup>21</sup>

	<b>Alabama</b>	<b>Oklahoma</b>	<b>Texas</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Mississippi</b>
<b>Name of Credential</b>	Executives in Early Care and Education	Oklahoma Credential for Early Childhood and School-Age Administration <sup>22</sup>	Child Development Director's Credential	National Administrators Credential (NAC)	OCY Director's Child Care Credential
<b>Start Date and Number of Graduates</b>	1993 150 credentials	to begin 2000 Credential not yet offered.	1988 500 credentials	1996 1,200 credentials	Began in 1995 592 credentials
<b>Cost to trainee</b>	\$495	will vary by individual scholarships	\$375 plus \$75 for renewal every 3 years	\$450	\$25
<b>Format</b>	60 clock hours plus 20 hours training prerequisite and 40 hours post-credential training. Training is one day per week for 8 weeks.	Level I will be 40 clock hours. Format will be flexible and dependent on each candidate's needs. Level II to be determined.	Course is 144 clock hours and is taught via 8 weekend intensives.	40 clock hours of training plus 8 hours of outside assignments. Training is one week intensive in a retreat setting.	120 clock hours. Eight classes plus a 15 hour integration module final exam. Training includes weekend-intensives one time per month or classes one night per week.
<b>Management Position Prerequisite?</b>	Yes. Trainee must already be in management position; credential intended to be an advanced class.	No. Oklahoma expects to offer different levels of training consistent with levels in the state "Reach for the Stars" career ladder program.	No. Trainee must be 21 and have a high school diploma or equivalent.	No. Background in child development is assumed.	Yes. Trainee must be employed as director or assistant in licensed child care facility. Others accepted on space-available basis.

<sup>21</sup> The information in this chart comes primarily from the following source and was updated via phone interviews for this report:

Taking the Lead (2000). *Director Credential Action Pack*. Boston, MA: Wheelock College, Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education.

<sup>22</sup> Oklahoma's credential is in the design stage. Training will be community-based, and offered at multiple levels.

	<b>Alabama</b>	<b>Oklahoma</b>	<b>Texas</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Mississippi</b>
<b>College Credit?</b>	No. Designed course to be part of junior college, but none interested in offering to date.	Yes. Expect to award college credit for advanced level training.	No, but some colleges review on individual basis for credit determination. It's an issue they plan to address.	Yes. Approved by American Council on Education as equivalent to 3 semester hour course, or 4 CEUs.	No.
<b>Credit for Prior Learning, Experience or Professional Contribution?</b>	No.	Yes. Like Illinois, tiered training will include credit for professional contributions like membership in professional association	No.	No.	No.
<b>Linked to Licensing Regulations?</b>	No.	Yes. One way to qualify as "director" is high school diploma or equivalent and successful completion of certified training program.	Yes. One way to qualify as "director" is administrator's credential plus two years of experience in a licensed facility.	Varies by state.	Yes. One way to qualify as "director" is OCY credential plus two years of experience in licensed facility.
<b>Link to Director's Peer Group or other Professional Associations?</b>	Yes. Training encourages directors to become NAEYC validators and to work towards accreditation for centers.	Yes, see above. In addition, Oklahoma plans to link trainees to Director's Academies so training and networking can continue.	Offer trainees site visit to prepare for NAEYC accreditation.	Offered by a professional association.	Yes, Forum sponsors occasional support network meetings for graduates. No link to professional associations.
<b>Linked to Increased Subsidy?</b>	No.	Yes. Four tiers of reimbursement linked to training or accreditation.	No.	Varies by state.	Yes.
<b>Reciprocity?</b>	Would like their credential to be reciprocal; are exploring through NAEYC.	Would like to, but have not addressed explicitly.	No, from credentialing agency, but licensing agency may accept other credentials.		No.

	<b>Alabama</b>	<b>Oklahoma</b>	<b>Texas</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Mississippi</b>
<b>Unique Aspects</b>	Part of training is peer review process; which evolved to become Director Peer Groups	Director credential is in continuum of staff training, all have levels keyed to Reach for the Stars licensing/subsidy tiers	Credentialing agency offers site visit as part of training in order to help trainees achieve NAEYC accreditation.		Responsive training formats and very inexpensive to trainees
<b>Contact</b>	Wendy McEarchen Gulf Regional Child Care Agency 601 Bel Air Blvd. Mobile, AL 36606  334-473-1313 GRCMA1@aol.com	Ruth Ann Ball Center for Early Childhood Development 1901 N. Moore Ave Moore, OK 73160  405-799-6383 raball@ou.edu	Yannick O'Loughlin Greater Houston Area Red Cross 2700 Southwest Freeway P.O. Box 397 Houston, TX 77001-0397  713-313-1693 yolough@ghac.org	Suzanne Grace National Child Care Association 1016 Rosser Street Conyers, GA 30012  800-543-7161 nccascg@mindsping.com	Beverly Willis Mississippi Forum for Children and Families 737 N. President Street Jackson, MS 39202  601-355-4813