

# **Notice of Infant/Toddler and Family Rights**



To Receive Early Intervention Services  
in Mississippi

Revised 08/31/07

Acknowledgement goes to students from the University of Southern Mississippi,  
Early Intervention Master's program, for their input and assistance.

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# Notice of Infant/Toddler and Family Rights

## INTRODUCTION

### **What is Early Intervention under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?**

The IDEA Part C system in Mississippi, known as First Steps Early Intervention, involves families in each step of the process. Your input and consent will be asked for before an evaluation is conducted or services are given. The Mississippi Department of Health (MDH), as lead agency, makes sure that Early Intervention (EI) services are available for eligible infants and toddlers, birth to age three, and their families. Safeguards or rights have been established to protect parents and children. Parents must understand these rights so they can make informed decisions in obtaining and accessing services for their families and children. Participation in the First Steps Early Intervention system for infants and toddlers is voluntary for you and your family.

### **What rights do families have in the Early Intervention system?**

- The right to an evaluation by a team of professions and the development of an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) within forty-five (45) days of referral to First Steps (if eligible for the program);
- The right to early intervention services as addressed in your IFSP within 30 days;
- The right to evaluation, assessment, IFSP development, service coordination, provision of services, and procedural safeguards *at no cost to your family*;
- The right to refuse evaluations, assessments, and services;
- The right to be invited to and participate in all evaluations, assessments, and IFSP meetings;
- The right to receive written notice at least 5 working days before an evaluation or IFSP meeting;
- The right to receive services in your child's natural environment;
- The right to maintenance of confidentiality;
- The right to review and correct early intervention records;
- The right to file an administrative complaint;
- The right to mediation to resolve complaints; and
- The right to an impartial due process hearing to resolve disagreements.



**These rights are explained in greater detail in the following pages.**

## **IFSP**

### **What is an Individualized Family Service Plan?**

In Mississippi, “appropriate early intervention services” are determined through the IFSP process. You will be a part of a team who writes the IFSP. The IFSP will contain your priorities, concerns, resources; outcomes, activities and strategies; and schedule of services. The IFSP must outline early intervention services to meet the unique needs of the child and the family.

## **PARENTAL CONSENT**

### **What is informed consent?**

- You have been informed about the activity in your native language or other type of communication (such as sign language, if needed).
- You understand and agree in writing to the activity.
- You have been given a description of the activity, listing the records (if any) that will be released and to whom.
- You understand that granting consent is voluntary and you may change your mind at any time.
  - Changing your mind will not affect other early intervention services under First Steps.

### **For which activities will I need to sign a consent form?**

- Conducting evaluations and assessments
- Provision of early intervention services
- Releasing records to parties who would not otherwise have authorized access as a partner in Early Intervention



### **What happens if I do not give my consent?**

The lead agency will:

- explain the activities;
- explain that your child will not be able to receive these activities unless consent is given;
- provide you with relevant literature or other materials;
- offer you peer counseling to help you understand the value of early intervention and to address your concerns about participation in the First Steps system;
- give you information about who to contact if you change your mind; and
- check with you from time to time to see if you have changed your mind about participation in First Steps.

## **PRIOR NOTICE**

### **When will I find out about meetings, evaluations or services for my child?**

Written notice must be given to you at least 5 working days before the lead agency plans to evaluate your baby, develop an IFSP, or make changes in your child's program.

### **What is included in the written prior notice?**

Written prior notice contains:

- the action being proposed or refused;
- the reasons for taking the action;
- procedural safeguards; and
- the First Steps complaint procedures (see section on Administrative Complaints).



### **What if I do not speak English or I use another type of communication?**

The lead agency will make sure the notice is translated to your native language or other type of communication you use. Some of the legal wording can be difficult to understand. If the materials are confusing, please ask questions.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION, INCLUDING RELEASE OF RECORDS**

### **What is the lead agency's responsibility for confidentiality?**

Early Intervention records are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

### **Can I examine and inspect my child's records?**

You may look at evaluation and assessment documents, IFSPs, formal complaints, and any other EI record regarding your child and your family. You might want to see records before an IFSP meeting or because of a hearing about your evaluation or early intervention services. The lead agency must let you see those records as soon as possible, but no later than 45 calendar days after you make your request.

### **Can I get copies of my child's records and will someone explain them to me?**

You have the right to get copies of your child's early intervention records. The lead agency will explain and interpret the early intervention records if you ask. You have the right to appoint someone else to look at your child's early intervention records. The lead agency assumes that you are entitled to review your child's records. If there are questions about custody issues, you might be asked to supply evidence that you have the right to look at the records. MDH will not charge families for copies of Early Intervention records.

### **Can other people look in my child's records and get copies?**

Sometimes other people need to look at early intervention records and get copies of records, for evaluating/assessing your child, providing services, paying for services, and monitoring/auditing purposes. A document will be kept in your child's record to indicate the name of the person looking at or getting copies of your child's records, the date access was given, and the purpose. The lead agency can tell you about the types and locations of early intervention records, if you would like to know.

The First Steps system includes many partners who contract with MDH to provide evaluations and services. MDH has cooperative agreements with other state agencies who partner with MDH in the provision of or payment for early intervention services. When a partner is providing an evaluation, assessment, service, or payment, records will be reviewed or exchanged as part of the process. FERPA does not require these contractual partners to obtain written consent for the release of Early Intervention records between MDH or other EI partners for children they are serving. All partners are bound by the provisions of FERPA.

### **What if I do not want a particular agency or provider to have access to my child's records?**

If you do not want your child's records released to a particular provider or agency, you must provide your refusal in writing to MDH, along with your reason for your refusal. Partners providing evaluations and services will ask you to give written consent if there is any question about their authority to obtain or release records. Signed consent is required to obtain information from or release information to persons who do not have a contractual relationship or cooperative agreement with MDH, such as your doctor.



### **How do HIPAA and FERPA work together?**

Medical records are protected by the Health Information Protection and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Medical records that become a part of the Early Intervention record are used for evaluation, assessment and programming purposes. When they become a part of your child's early intervention record, they are protected by FERPA instead of HIPAA.

### **What if I think something is wrong with my child's records?**

If you believe that information in early intervention records is wrong or violates your privacy or other rights, you may ask the local lead agency to change the information. If the agency refuses to change the information, they will tell you why. You can ask for a hearing to challenge the information. If the hearing officer thinks that the information is wrong or violates your privacy, the MDH will change the information in the record. At any time you can write a comment about the information in the record. Your statement will be placed in the EI record and must stay with the information in question.

## **How do I know that my child's records will be protected?**

The following safeguards protect Early Intervention records:

- MDH protects the confidentiality of records collected, stored, disclosed, and destroyed.
- An MDH official is responsible for insuring the confidentiality of EI records.
- Everyone using early intervention records is trained on FERPA policies.
- MDH keeps a list of all people who can look at EI records without a release.
- Early Intervention records are destroyed at the request of the parents.
- Permanent early intervention records include the child's name, address, phone number, and dates of early intervention services. This record can never be destroyed.

## **RESOLUTION OF INDIVIDUAL CHILD COMPLAINTS**

### **How do I resolve individual child complaints?**

You have the right to make a complaint about the Early Intervention system. Forms are available, or you may send a letter or email. When you sign a complaint, you have the right to have a written response explaining how the matter will be resolved within 60 days. To resolve differences, you can make a written signed complaint; ask for mediation; and/or request an impartial due process hearing.

## **MEDIATION**

### **What is mediation?**

Mississippi offers mediation to help solve disagreements. Mediation is voluntary and freely agreed to by both parties. Mediation may not be used to deny or delay your right to an impartial due process hearing or any other rights available through the First Steps program. When filing a request for mediation you must also ask for an impartial due process hearing. If an agreement is reached in mediation, the due process hearing is canceled.



### **How long will mediation take?**

If mediation is requested, a mediation session must occur within 30 calendar days after the agency receives your written request. This request must state the problem and be signed by the parties filing the request.

### **Where will mediation take place and who will help with the process?**

The mediation session is held in a location convenient to both parties. A qualified and impartial mediator who is trained in effective mediation techniques will meet with both parties to help them find a solution to the complaint in an informal, non-adversarial atmosphere.

### **How does the mediation process end?**

A mediation agreement will be written to satisfy both parties. The agreement cannot conflict with state or federal law or policy of the First Steps program. Both parties must sign the agreement and get a copy of the written agreement at the end of the mediation session. Discussions that occur during the mediation process are confidential. Information from mediation sessions may not be used as evidence in any impartial due process hearings or civil proceedings. All parties will be required to sign a confidentiality pledge.

### **What are the costs of mediation?**

Mediation is offered at no cost to parents.



## **IMPARTIAL DUE PROCESS HEARING**

### **What is an impartial due process hearing?**

An impartial due process hearing is a formal procedure conducted by a hearing officer.

### **What are the duties of the hearing officer?**

The duties of a hearing officer include:

- Being assigned by the State Lead Agency
- Impartial to the persons involved in the case
- The hearing officer must have knowledge of the provisions of First Steps and the needs of, and services available for, eligible children and their families
- Listening to the presentation of relevant views about the complaint/disagreement;
- Examining all information related to the issues
- Seeking to reach a timely resolution of the disagreement; and Providing a record of the proceedings, including a written decision

### **What does impartial mean?**

Hearing officers used in an impartial due process hearing and mediators used in mediation must be “impartial.”

Impartial means that the person appointed to serve as the hearing officer (or mediator):

- Is not an employee of any agency or program involved in providing early intervention services to or care of the child;
- Does not have a personal or professional interest that would conflict with his or her objectivity in implementing the process;
- Is not an employee of the Local or State Lead Agency.

A person who is otherwise qualified under this section is not considered an employee of an agency solely because he/she is paid by the agency to implement the disagreement resolution process.

## **What are my rights related to a due process hearing?**

Through First Steps, you are given the rights listed below in any impartial due process hearing carried out under this section:

- To be accompanied and advised by a lawyer and by individuals with special knowledge or training about early intervention services for children in Mississippi through First Steps;
- To present evidence and confront, cross examine, and to compel the attendance of witnesses;
- To prohibit the introduction of any evidence at the proceedings that has not been disclosed to you at least 5 calendar days before the proceeding;
- To obtain a written or electronic verbatim (word by word) transcription of the proceeding;
- To obtain written findings of fact and decisions.

## **How long will this process take?**

The impartial due process hearing must be completed, and a written decision made, within 30 calendar days of the request. Mediation, if attempted, must occur within the same 30 calendar days. The hearings must be carried out in a time and place that is reasonably convenient to the parent.

Any party that has a disagreement about the results may bring a civil action in state or federal court. During the time period of any proceeding involving a parent/provider complaint, unless the local lead agency and you otherwise agree, your child and family will continue to receive the appropriate early intervention services currently being provided.

If the disagreement (complaint) involves an application for initial services, your child and family must receive those services that are not in dispute.



## **ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINTS**

### **Who can file a written complaint, and where should it be filed?**

In addition to the Individual Child Complaints process (discussed in the previous section) an individual or organization, including ones from another state, may file a written signed complaint that any public agency or private service provider participating in First Steps is violating a requirement of the Part C program.

Complaints may be filed by contacting:

First Steps Early Intervention Program  
Mississippi Department of Health  
Mailing Address: P. O. Box 1700, Jackson, MS 39215-1700  
Physical Address: 570 East Woodrow Wilson, Jackson, MS 39215  
Toll-Free #: 1-800-451-3903; Phone: (601) 576-7427; Fax: (601) 576-7540

## **What must I include in the complaint?**

You should provide:

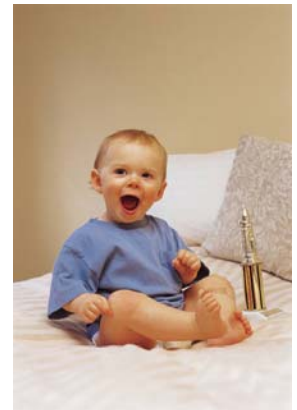
- A statement that a requirement of Part C has been violated by the local lead agency;
- The facts on which the complaint is based, giving as much detail as possible;
- Information so you can be contacted (address, phone number, email).

## **How long do I have to file a complaint?**

The complaint must be filed with the State Lead Agency within a year of the alleged violation. The period for filing the complaint may be longer if the violation is still occurring. Two (2) years are given to file the complaint if it is in request of reimbursement or corrective action for a violation.

## **What action is taken after I file a complaint?**

Once the State Lead Agency has received the complaint, they have 60 calendar days (unless exceptional circumstances exist) to investigate the complaint and issue a written decision that contains the facts and conclusions, and the reasons for the final decision. The individual or organization filing the complaint has the opportunity to submit additional information, either orally or in writing, about the complaint. If the final decision indicates that appropriate services were/are not being provided, the State Lead Agency must address how to make the services appropriate including the awarding of reimbursement or other corrective action. The State Lead Agency must also address appropriate future provisions of services for all infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. For more information about these complaint procedures, contact First Steps at (601) 576-7427 or 1-800-451-3903.



## **What if I am filing a complaint that has already been decided or contains many issues?**

If a written complaint is received that is also the subject of a due process hearing, or contains multiple issues, of which one or more are part of a hearing, the State must set aside any part of the complaint that is being addressed in the due process hearing until the conclusion of the hearing. However, any issue in the complaint that is not a part of the due process action must be resolved within the 60 calendar day timeline using the complaint procedures described in this document, unless a time extension for exceptional circumstances is warranted with respect to a particular complaint. If an issue is raised in an administrative complaint that has been previously decided in a due process hearing involving the same parties, the hearing decision is binding, and the State Lead Agency must inform the complainant to that effect.

A complaint alleging a public agency's or private service provider's failure to implement a due process decision must be resolved by the State Lead Agency.

## **SURROGATE PARENTS**

### **How do I become a surrogate parent?**

To become a surrogate parent an individual must meet the following requirements:

- There must be a determination that the child needs a surrogate parent.
- State law determines the selection of the parent(s).
- A surrogate parent must
  - have no interest that conflicts with the interest of the child he or she represents;
  - have knowledge and skills that ensure the child will be properly represented;
  - not be offering that child any early intervention services or be an employee of anyone who is;
  - live in a similar area of the child, whenever possible.

### **What are the rights of a child who might be assigned a surrogate parent?**

A child who has been assigned a surrogate parent(s) is:

- Protected under First Steps;
- Protected even if no parent can be identified;
- Protected even if the local lead agency, after reasonable effort, cannot find the parents;
- Protected even if a ward of the state under the laws of Mississippi.



### **As a surrogate parent how may I represent the child?**

A surrogate parent may represent the child in all matters relating to:

- The evaluation and assessment of the child;
- Development and implementation of the child's IFSP, including annual evaluations and periodic reviews;
- The ongoing provision of early intervention services to the child;
- Any other rights established under First Steps.

## GLOSSARY

**Assessment:** The ongoing procedures used by appropriate, qualified personnel throughout the period of a child's eligibility under First Steps to identify:

- (a) the child's unique strengths and needs and the services appropriate to meet those needs;
- (b) the resources, priorities, and concerns of the family, and the supports and services necessary to enhance the family's capacity to meet the developmental needs of their infant or toddler with a disability; and
- (c) the nature and extent of early intervention services that are needed by the child and the child's family to meet the needs in (a) and (b) above.

**Disclosure:** To permit access to or the release, transfer, or other communication of education records, or the personally identifiable information contained in those records, to any party. Disclosure may be by multiple means, including oral, written, or electronic means.

**Evaluation:** The procedures used by appropriate, qualified personnel to determine a child's initial and continuing eligibility under First Steps. The procedures used must be consistent with the definition of "infants and toddlers with disabilities" in 34 CFR 303.16, including determining the status of the child in each of the developmental areas.

**Family:** Defined according to each family's definition of itself, including significant others.

**Family Assessment:** Identification of the family's resources, priorities, and concerns, and the identification of the supports and services necessary to enhance the family's capacity to meet the developmental needs of the child.

**Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):** Protects the privacy of student education records. FERPA is found in statute at 20 U.S. C. §1232g, and in regulations at 34 CFR Part 99.

**Impartial Due Process hearing:** A hearing that any parent may initiate when there is a complaint about services. It is run by a hearing officer.

**Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP):** A written plan for providing early intervention services to eligible children/families that:

- (a) is developed jointly by the family and appropriate, qualified personnel providing early intervention services;
- (b) is based on the multidisciplinary evaluation and assessment of the child and the assessment of the strengths and needs of the child's family, as determined by the family and as required in 34 CFR 303.322;
- (c) includes developmental outcomes, strategies, and activities; and
- (d) includes services necessary to enhance the development of the child and the capacity of the family to meet the special needs of the child.

**Local Lead Agency:** Refers to the Mississippi Department of Health, which administers the First Steps Early Intervention system through each of the nine (9) local health districts.

## GLOSSARY

**Mediation:** Mediation is a process that helps parents, First Steps, and providers resolve a disagreement in an informal, non-adversarial atmosphere. Mediation is voluntary and both parties must freely agree to participate. It is quicker than going to a hearing or court. Both parties participate in writing an agreement and must approve the agreement. Mediation may not be used to deny or delay your right to an impartial due process hearing.

**Multidisciplinary:** The involvement of two or more disciplines or professions in the provision of integrated and coordinated services, including evaluation and assessment activities in § 303.322 and development of the IFSP in § 303.342.

**Native Language:** The first language a person has, or the language of the country where a person is from.

**Natural Environments:** Settings that are natural or normal for children who are your child's age and who do not have a disability.

**Parent:** "Parent" means a natural or adoptive parent(s), a guardian, a person acting in the place of the parent, such as a grandparent or stepparent with whom the child lives, a person who is legally responsible for the child's welfare, an assigned surrogate consistent with First Steps standards in §303.406, or a foster parent.

**Personally Identifiable Information:** Any information that, when read or heard by another person, would clearly identify who was being discussed. Examples include names, social security numbers, addresses, phone numbers, etc.

**State Lead Agency:** Refers to the Mississippi Department of Health, as the appointed state lead agency for Part C of IDEA in Mississippi.

**Type of Communication:** Any way in which one person shares information with another. Examples would include oral or written communication, Braille, and Sign Language.

**Note:** All citations contained in this glossary are references to 34 CFR Part 303.

## First Steps Early Intervention Program Complaint Process

First Steps strives to maintain open communication among personnel and families. Your opinions and concerns are important to us. If at any time you have concerns about the Early Intervention services offered to you and your family, please let us know. You may express your concerns through an informal process, including conversations with your provider(s), Service Coordinator, District Coordinator, or Part C Coordinator. Your feedback helps us to evaluate the services that your child and family receive and to make continuous improvements in the program.

If you are not satisfied with the results obtained through the informal process, you have the right to make a signed written complaint. You may do this using the complaint form attached, or through a letter sent to the Part C Coordinator at the state office. Written complaints must be resolved within 60 days, unless a time extension for exceptional circumstances is warranted with respect to a particular complaint. You may ask for mediation at no cost to you to resolve disagreements. Mediation must be requested in writing. The mediation session must occur within 30 calendar days of the agency's receipt of your request. Due process hearings must be requested by writing the Part C Coordinator. Due process hearings must be completed and a written decision rendered within 30 days of receipt of your request for a hearing. You are encouraged to obtain the services of an advocate if you want additional assistance. A list of advocacy groups is provided for your convenience.

Contact information is given below to help you with the process.

| <u>Service Coordinator</u> | <u>District Coordinator</u> | <u>Part C Coordinator</u>              |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| _____                      | _____                       | Danita Munday                          |
| _____                      | _____                       | Mississippi State Department of Health |
| _____                      | _____                       | 507 E. Woodrow Wilson                  |
| _____                      | _____                       | Jackson, MS 39215                      |
| _____                      | _____                       | (601) 576-7427                         |
| _____                      | _____                       | 1-800-451-3903                         |
| _____                      | _____                       | Fax: (601) 576-7540                    |
| _____                      | _____                       | danita.munday@msdh.state.ms.us         |

Once a year Early Intervention will conduct a Family Outcomes Survey to help determine to what extent Early Intervention helped your family meet its goals. We respect and appreciate all opinions, comments, and concerns. In an effort to make continuous improvements in the Early Intervention Program, we assure that your comments are confidential and will be addressed in a professional manner.

Your signature indicates that you received a copy of this Complaint Process document, the Infant/Toddler and Family Rights document (Revision Date: \_\_\_\_\_), a Complaint Form, and a list of advocates. Please return a signed copy of this Complaint Process document to your Service Coordinator for the case file. Keep a copy in your records, along with your Family Rights document, a blank Complaint Form, and your advocate list.

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Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Date

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Witness(es) Date



Mississippi Department of Health

COMPLAINT FORM UNDER PART C
OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT 2004 AMENDMENTS

Please indicate your efforts to work out the situation:

Table with 2 columns: YES, NO

I have talked with the Service Coordination and/or District Coordinator about this issue. If yes, please indicate with whom and when.

Table with 2 columns: YES, NO

I have met with other health district personnel and/or my provider(s) about this issue. If yes, please indicate with whom and when?

Table with 2 columns: YES, NO

I have been a part of an IFSP team meeting to discuss this situation. If yes, when? What was the result? Who were members of the team?

Table with 2 columns: YES, NO

This alleged violation occurred not more than two (2) years prior to the date the complaint was received by the Mississippi Department of Health.

If the alleged violation occurred more than two (2) years prior to the date that the complaint was received by the Mississippi Department of Health, respond to the following two statements.

I believe a longer period of time is reasonable because I believe the violation is continuing.

OR

I am seeking compensatory services for a violation that occurred not more than three (3) years prior to the date the complaint was received.

Person Filing Complaint

Relationship to Child

Are you the child's legal guardian?

YES NO

Signature of Person Filing Complaint

Address

Name of Organization, if Applicable

Telephone Number or Other Method of Contact

Send completed form to:

Mississippi Department of Health
First Steps Early Intervention Program
570 E. Woodrow Wilson
Jackson, MS 39215
Fax: (601) 576-7540

## MISSISSIPPI ADVOCACY GROUPS AND RESOURCES

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### **The ARC of Mississippi**

7 Lakeland Circle #600  
Jackson, MS 39216  
Phone: (601) 982-1180  
Toll free: (800) 717-1180  
Fax: (601) 982-5792  
Email: [matt@arcms.org](mailto:matt@arcms.org)  
Website: [www.arcms.org](http://www.arcms.org)

### **Blind and Physically Handicapped Library Services/MS Library Commission**

3881 Eastwood Drive  
Jackson MS 39211-6473  
Phone: (601) 432-4116  
Toll free nationwide: (800) 446-0892  
Fax: (601) 432-4476  
Website: [www.mlc.lib.ms.us](http://www.mlc.lib.ms.us)

### **Brain Injury Association of Mississippi**

P.O. Box 55912  
2727 Old Canton Road, Suite 191  
Jackson, MS 39296  
Phone: (601) 981-1021  
Toll Free: (800) 641-6442  
Fax: (601) 981-1039  
Website: [www.members.aol.com/biaofms](http://www.members.aol.com/biaofms)

### **Catholic Charities, Inc.**

530 George Street  
Jackson, MS 39255  
Phone: (601) 355-8634  
Website: <http://www.catholiccharitiesjackson.org>

### **Central Mississippi Autism Support Group**

Pam Dollar  
149 Dry Creek Road  
Magee, MS 39111  
Phone: (601) 594-9314  
Fax: (601) 849-3981  
Website: <http://www.teaam.org/supportgroups.htm>

### **Central Mississippi Down Syndrome Society (CMDSS)**

Jean Weiss, President  
P.O. Box 2189  
Brandon, MS 39043  
Phone: (601) 397-DOWN (3696)  
Website: [www.cmdss.org](http://www.cmdss.org)

## MISSISSIPPI ADVOCACY GROUPS AND RESOURCES

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### **Cerebral Palsy Foundation of MS**

P. O. Box 16924  
Jackson, MS 39236-6924  
Phone: (888) 852-1961  
Fax: (601) 854-6225  
Email: cpfofms@aol.com  
Website: [www.cpfoms.org](http://www.cpfoms.org)

### **Children's Center for Communication and Development-USM**

Margaret Buttross-Brinegar  
USM Speech and Hearing Building, Room 109  
118 College Drive #5092  
Hattiesburg, MS 39402  
Phone: (601) 266-5222  
Fax: (601) 266-6566

### **Christians in Action/Abuse, Neglected Children**

Janice Wilder, Organizer  
214 Magnolia Street  
Jackson, MS 39203  
Phone: (601) 353-1942

### **Citizens for Quality Education, Inc.**

Ellen Reddy, Organizer  
109 Swinney Lane  
Lexington, MS 39095  
Phone: (662) 834-0089  
Website: [www.citizensforqualityeducation.net](http://www.citizensforqualityeducation.net)

### **Client Assistance Program**

Mississippi Society for Disabilities  
3226 N. State Street  
P. O. Box 4958  
Jackson, MS 39296-4958  
Phone: (601) 362-2585

### **Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities**

Mary Troupe, Organizer  
615 Barksdale Street  
Jackson, MS 39202  
Phone: (601) 969-0601  
Website: [www.mscoalition.com](http://www.mscoalition.com)

## MISSISSIPPI ADVOCACY GROUPS AND RESOURCES

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### **Council for Children with Behavior Disorders**

David Walker, President  
33 Paul Watkins Drive  
Petal, MS 39465  
Phone: (601) 266-5239

### **Diabetes Foundation of MS**

Mary Fortune  
16 Northtown Drive, Suite 100  
Jackson, MS 39211  
Phone: (601) 957-7878  
Website: [www.msdiabetes.org](http://www.msdiabetes.org)

### **Dubard School of Language Disorders**

Maureen K. Martin, Ph.D., Director  
118 College Drive #10035  
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001  
Phone: (601) 266-5223  
Fax: (601) 266-6763  
Website: [www.usm.edu/dubard](http://www.usm.edu/dubard)

### **EMPOWER Community Resource Center**

Agnes Johnson  
136 S. Poplar Street  
Greenville, MS 38702  
Phone: (662) 332-4852  
Fax: (662) 332-1622  
Website: [empower@cox-internet.com](mailto:empower@cox-internet.com)

### **Epilepsy Foundation of Mississippi**

Beth Scarbrough, Executive Director  
2001 Airport Road, Suite 307  
Jackson, MS 39232  
Phone: (601) 936-5222  
Toll Free: (800) 898-0291  
Fax: (601) 939-0824  
Email: [bethmsepilepsy@bellsouth.net](mailto:bethmsepilepsy@bellsouth.net)

### **Family Support Center of Metro Jackson**

Joe Bennett, Executive Director  
826 North Street  
Jackson, MS 39202  
Phone: (601) 944-1055  
Fax: (601) 944-1273

## MISSISSIPPI ADVOCACY GROUPS AND RESOURCES

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### **First Steps Early Intervention System**

Danita Munday, Division Director  
Mississippi Department of Health  
570 East Woodrow Wilson Blvd.  
Jackson, MS 39215-1700  
Phone: (601) 576-7427  
Toll Free: (800) 451-3903  
Fax: (601) 576-7540  
Website: [www.msdh.state.ms.us](http://www.msdh.state.ms.us)

### **Gulf Coast Autism Support Network**

Patty Gautier, Organizer  
5908 Tolar Road  
Moss Point, MS 39562  
Phone: (601) 228-9805  
*Support group meets 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month in Ocean Springs, MS*

### **Learning Disabilities Association of Mississippi**

4080 Old Canton Road  
Jackson, MS 39216  
Phone: (601) 362-1667  
Website: [www.ldams.org](http://www.ldams.org)

### **LIFE**

Christy Dunaway, Executive Director  
754 North President Street, Suite 1  
Jackson, MS 39202  
Phone: (601) 969-4009  
Toll Free: (800) 748-9398  
Website: [www.lifeofms.com](http://www.lifeofms.com)

### **Low Vision Clinic School for the Blind**

Margie Owens  
1252 Eastover Drive  
Jackson, MS 39216  
Phone: (601) 984-8210

### **March of Dimes, Mississippi Chapter**

Carolyn K. Green, State Director  
330 North Mart Plaza, Suite 1  
Jackson, MS 39206  
Phone: (601) 362-8947  
Toll Free: (800) 842-5117  
Fax: (601) 362-9959  
Website: [www.marchofdimes.com](http://www.marchofdimes.com)

## MISSISSIPPI ADVOCACY GROUPS AND RESOURCES

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### **Satellite Office Central Division/March of Dimes**

Anita Bales, Division Director  
330 North Mart Plaza, Suite 1  
Jackson, MS 39206  
Phone: (601) 362-8947  
Fax: (601) 362-9959

### **Satellite Office North Division/March of Dimes**

Tanya Finch, Division Director  
777-B Holly Hill Drive  
Tupelo, MS 38801  
Phone: (662) 844-6901  
Fax: (662) 844-6963

### **Satellite Office Coast Division/March of Dimes**

Kay Daneault, Division Director  
452 Courthouse Road, Suite F  
Gulfport, MS 39503  
Phone: (228) 896-0886  
Fax: (228) 896-8997

### **Mississippi Association of Partners in Education**

Linda Aldy, Organizer  
141 Executive Drive, Suite 5  
Madison, MS 39110  
Phone: (601) 573-0896  
Fax: (601) 853-4408  
Website: [www.mapie.org](http://www.mapie.org)

### **Mississippi Council for Exceptional Children**

Teresa Walker, President  
33 Paul Watkins Drive  
Petal, MS 39465  
Phone: (601) 583-9929

### **Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities**

100 Robert E. Lee Building  
239 North Lamar Street  
Jackson, MS 39201  
Phone: (601) 359-1270, (601) 359-6238  
TDD: (601) 359-6230  
Fax: (601) 359-5330  
Email: [info@cdd.md.gov](mailto:info@cdd.md.gov)

## MISSISSIPPI ADVOCACY GROUPS AND RESOURCES

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### **Mississippi Department of Education: Special Education**

Ann Moore, Director  
Office of Special Education  
P.O. Box 771  
Jackson, MS 39205-0711  
Phone: (601) 359-3498  
Website: [www.mde.k12.ms.us/special\\_education/](http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/special_education/)

### **Mississippi Department of Education: Programs for Children with Disabilities, Ages 3 through 5**

Gloria Lacey, 619 (Pre-School) Coordinator  
Office of Special Education  
Division of Technical Assistance  
P.O. Box 771  
Jackson, MS 39205-0771  
Phone: (601) 359-3498  
Website: [www.mde.k12.ms.us/special\\_education/](http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/special_education/)

### **Mississippi Department of Health: Programs for Children with Special Health Care Needs**

Larry Clark, Division Director  
Children's Medical Program  
Mississippi Department of Health  
350 West Woodrow Wilson, Suite 3504  
Jackson, MS 39215  
Phone: (601)987-3965  
Toll Free: (800) 844-0898

### **Mississippi Department of Mental Health**

1101 Robert E. Lee Building  
239 N. Lamar Street  
Jackson, MS 39201  
Phone: (601) 359-1288  
Website: [www.dmh.state.ms.us](http://www.dmh.state.ms.us)

### **Mississippi Department of Mental Health/Division of Children and Youth Services**

Department of Mental Health  
1101 Robert E. Lee Building  
239 N. Lamar Street  
Jackson, MS 39201  
Phone: (601) 359-1288  
Website: [www.dmh.state.ms.us](http://www.dmh.state.ms.us)

## MISSISSIPPI ADVOCACY GROUPS AND RESOURCES

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### **Mississippi Department of Mental Health/Bureau of Mental Retardation**

Department of Mental Health  
1101 Robert E. Lee Building  
239 N. Lamar Street  
Jackson, MS 39201  
Phone: (601) 359-1288  
Website: [www.dmh.state.ms.us](http://www.dmh.state.ms.us)

### **Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services Office of Vocational Rehabilitation**

Gary Neely, Director  
P.O. Box 1698  
Jackson, MS 39215-1698  
Phone: (601) 853-5230  
Website: [www.mdrs.state.ms.us](http://www.mdrs.state.ms.us)

### **Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind**

Michael Gandy, Director  
P.O. Box 1698  
Jackson, MS 39215-1698  
Phone: (601) 853-5100  
Website: [www.mdrs.state.ms.us](http://www.mdrs.state.ms.us)

### **Mississippi Families as Allies for Children's Mental Health**

Tessie Schweitzer or Tressa Knutson-Eide  
5166 Keele Street, Building A  
Jackson, MS 39206  
Phone: (601) 981-1618  
Fax: (601) 981-1696  
Email: [info@msfaacmh.org](mailto:info@msfaacmh.org)  
Website: [www.msfaacmh.org](http://www.msfaacmh.org)

#### **Satellite Office/MS Families as Allies for Children's Mental Health**

Tiffany Larsen  
6537 Firefly Cove  
Walls, MS 38680  
Phone: (662) 781-0447

### **Mississippi Protection and Advocacy**

5330 Executive Plaza, Suite A  
Jackson, Ms 39206  
Phone: (601) 981-8207  
Toll Free: (800) 772-4057  
Website: [www.mspas.com](http://www.mspas.com)

## MISSISSIPPI ADVOCACY GROUPS AND RESOURCES

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### **Mississippi School for the Blind**

Dr. Rosie Pridgen, Superintendent  
1252 Eastover Drive  
Jackson, MS 39211  
Phone: (601) 984-8200

### **Mississippi School for the Blind/Comprehensive Home-based Intervention Program (CHIP)**

Ted Dear, Director  
1252 Eastover Drive  
Jackson, MS 39211  
Phone: (601) 984-8223, (601) 984-8222, (601) 984-8221  
Fax: (601) 984-8230

### **Mississippi School for the Blind & Deaf Combined Services**

Tahnya Tremonte, Director  
1403 Eastover Drive  
Jackson, MS 39211  
Phone: (601) 984-8102

### **Mississippi School for the Deaf**

Dr. Delores Mack  
1253 Eastover Drive  
Jackson, MS 39211  
Phone: (601) 984-8000

### **Mississippi Speech and Hearing Association (MSHA)**

P. O. Box 22664  
Jackson, MS 39225-2664  
Phone: (800) 664-6742  
email: [mshahelp@mshausa.org](mailto:mshahelp@mshausa.org)  
web: [www.mshausa.org](http://www.mshausa.org)

### **National Kidney Foundation of Mississippi**

Gail Sweat  
3000 Old Canton Road, Suite 100  
Jackson, MS 39206  
Phone: (601) 981-3611

### **North East Mississippi Down Syndrome Society**

(serving Alcorn, Clay, Chickasaw, Itawamba, Lafayette, Lee, Lowndes, Monroe, Oktibbeha, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tippah, Tishomingo, Union and Webster counties)  
Scott and Michelle Knight  
Phone: (662) 871-2387, (662) 871-8308, (662) 869-3211  
[nemdss@bellsouth.net](mailto:nemdss@bellsouth.net)

## MISSISSIPPI ADVOCACY GROUPS AND RESOURCES

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**Office of the Governor  
Division of Medicaid  
State CHIP Program**

Robert E. Lee Building, Suite 801  
239 N. Lamar Street  
Jackson, MS 39201-1399  
Phone: (877) 870-3110  
[www.dom.state.ms.us](http://www.dom.state.ms.us)

**Parent Training and Information Center (PTI)**

Judy Higginbotham, Coordinator  
Region 2 Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers  
ECAC  
907 Barra Row, Suite 102- and 103  
Davidson, NC 28036  
Phone: (704) 892-1321, ext 38; (800) 962-6817  
email: [empower@cox-internet.com](mailto:empower@cox-internet.com)  
web: [www.msempower.org](http://www.msempower.org)

**Project START (Assistive Technology)**

P.O. Box 1698  
Jackson, MS 39215  
Phone: (601) 987-4782  
Toll Free: 800-852-8328  
Website: [www.msprojectstart.org](http://www.msprojectstart.org)

**Ronald McDonald House**

2524 North State Street  
Jackson, MS 39216  
Phone: (601) 981-5683  
Fax: (601) 981-3613  
Website: [RonaldMcDonaldHouseMS.com](http://RonaldMcDonaldHouseMS.com)

**Spina Bifida Association of Mississippi**

Amy Wilkinson, Executive Director  
P. O. Box 180594  
Richland, MS 39218  
Phone: (601) 420-0030  
email: [sbaofms@yahoo.com](mailto:sbaofms@yahoo.com)

**TEAAM (Together Enhancing Autism Awareness in Mississippi)**

Dr. Mark Yeager  
125 Scanlan Street  
Newton, MS 39345  
Phone: (601) 683-6840  
Website: [www.TEAAM.org](http://www.TEAAM.org)

## MISSISSIPPI ADVOCACY GROUPS AND RESOURCES

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### **Telecommunications Relay Services for Individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or with Speech Impairments**

Phone: (800) 582-2233 (V/TTY); 711 (TTY)

Phone: (800) 229-5746 (Speech to Speech-English)

Phone: (866) 260-9470 (Speech to Speech-Spanish)

### **Tourette Syndrome Association Mid-South Office**

Sonia Bartosek, Mississippi Coordinator

Phone: (601) 366-1766

Website: [www.tsa-usa.org](http://www.tsa-usa.org)

### **United Mitochondrial Disease Foundation**

Mississippi Group Contact: Julie Manley

(601) 906-5442

[manley\\_family@comcast.net](mailto:manley_family@comcast.net)

Website: [www.umdf.org](http://www.umdf.org)

### **University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities**

Jane Z. Siders, Director

The Institute for Disability Studies

University of Southern Mississippi

118 College Drive, #5163

Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: (601) 266-5163

Website: [www.ids.usm.edu](http://www.ids.usm.edu)

### **Very Special Arts of Mississippi**

V.A. Patterson, Executive Director

3310 North State Street Studio 1

Jackson, MS 39216

Phone: (601) 713-3311

Fax: (601) 713-3344

Website: [www.vsarts.org/x316.xml](http://www.vsarts.org/x316.xml)