

2019

MISSISSIPPI FAMILY FIRST INITIATIVE

*SUMMARY REPORT TO THE MISSISSIPPI SUPREME COURT'S
COMMISSION ON CHILDREN'S JUSTICE
PROGRAM YEAR 2019*



REFLECTIONS FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI



Office of the First Lady

DEBORAH BRYANT
300 EAST CAPITOL STREET
JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI 39201

July 19, 2019

Dear Friends,

I can't believe it has been a year since we launched the Family First Initiative. I am so excited about the progress that has been made in our pilot counties. Congratulations to the local committee members for this year's success. I am encouraged to see silos broken down to help our families succeed. When we all share our resources for the betterment of the community, there is nothing we cannot accomplish.

A stable family environment is key to the success of future generations. By providing resources to individuals to help the family unit, we are reducing childhood trauma and positively influencing future outcomes.

I look forward to expanding the program to more counties and sharing best practices across the state. I am so grateful to see this collaborative initiative taking root at the local level. This tremendous effort would not be possible without each of you. Thank you for your dedication.

God Bless You,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Deborah Bryant".

Deborah Bryant
First Lady of Mississippi



SUPREME COURT OF MISSISSIPPI

POST OFFICE BOX 117
JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI 39205-0117

DAWN H. BEAM
JUSTICE

(601) 359-2094
jbeam@courts.ms.gov

July 23, 2019

Re: Reflections from the First Year of Mississippi Family First Initiative

Dear Fellow Members of the Children's Justice Commission:

Last year at this time, Governor Phil Bryant and our First Lady Deborah Bryant joined me in inviting leaders from across our State to kick off the Mississippi Family First Initiative "to promote safe, stable and self-sufficient families for Mississippi's children, **ONE FAMILY AND ONE COMMUNITY AT A TIME.**"¹ It was an opportunity for State leadership to acknowledge that healthy families raise well adjusted, productive children who are our State's future. At the State level, I have had the honor of co-chairing the Mississippi Family First Initiative with our First Lady in an effort to examine how we at the State level can make policy decisions that will strengthen families. But we are quick to acknowledge, that the real impact on our children is going to be as we support one family and one community at a time. The Summit ended with judiciary leaders from six pilot areas covering eight diverse Mississippi counties leaving with a "tool kit" to bring the community together and identify and prioritize the needs of families and children.

This has been an incredible year as we have seen community leaders rally local efforts to equip families and care givers with the tools needed to provide a healthy and safe environment for our children. Local resources have collaborated like never before to help these families **to not just survive but to thrive!** These local leaders have created plans based upon input from residents and members of education, health, mental health, government and non-government agencies, faith-based leaders, elected officials, business leaders, and others. I had the opportunity to be at all of the initial meetings around the State and was reminded that we have the most generous people in the country right here in Mississippi who are willing to lift each other up. Connecting needs with resources is the key to strengthening Mississippi families.

¹ Mississippi Family First Initiative Vision Statement. (Emphasis added)

This Summary Report for Program Year 2019 and Newsletter are our effort to summarize many of the great accomplishments of the year. With the highest poverty rate in the country, lack of education and job readiness, and so many more challenges, we will not get out of this position in just one year - just as we did not get in this position overnight. However, I believe that this past year is the beginning of the climb and that many troubled families are beginning to see "hope". With our State being on the heels of electing new leadership, my prayer is that God will take this effort and what Mrs. Bryant, the State Advisory Council and Local Advisory Councils have done and multiply it in the coming years so that it will be a movement - that we can look back on one day and say, "July 30, 2018 is when Mississippi united in mind and heart and began this great effort to change the trajectory of families and children in our State!"

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dawn Beam". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dawn H. Beam

Mississippi Family First Initiative

Summary Report to the Mississippi Supreme Court’s Commission on Children’s Justice
Program Year 2019

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Acknowledgements: Justice Dawn Beam, Mississippi Supreme Court
Deborah Bryant, First Lady of Mississippi
Melissa Carter, Barton Child Law and Policy Center, Emory Law School
Cindy Cheeks, Mississippi Family First Initiative
Kimberly Russell, Mississippi Family First Initiative
Trenton Winford, Judicial Intern for Justice Dawn Beam

INTRODUCTION

Vision Statement

The vision of the Mississippi Family First Initiative is to promote safe, stable, and self-sufficient families for Mississippi's children, one family and one community at a time.

Goals and Objectives

Mississippi's Family First Initiative is a judicially-led effort to prevent child maltreatment and the unnecessary removal of children to foster care by engaging communities in the development of collaborative strategies to deliver localized services that strengthen families.

Background

In Mississippi, a majority of children are removed from the physical and legal custody of their biological parents due to circumstances that are entirely preventable. As of May 2019, the number of children in state custody totaled 4,707.¹ Instances of *neglect*²—rather than *abuse*—make up the vast majority of the state's removal cases (currently 62%). Within families where children were removed due to neglect, parents were deemed unfit to look after their child for three prominent reasons: 1) *parental drug abuse* (43%), 2) *inadequate housing* (30%), and 3) *caretaker inability to cope* (25%).³ When unaddressed, these parental stressors and lack of resources can result in neglectful conditions in the home, which in turn, present a risk for a child's removal and entry into foster care.

State intervention in families, even when justifiable, causes trauma to children and their families. The trauma of removal compounds the intergenerational trauma often present in families that become system-involved. Many of these families have experienced chronic poverty and lack the ability to secure adequate familial supports.⁴⁻⁵ Existing practices and limited capacity in child welfare systems place the onus on parents to "fix" themselves. In its current design, this system is primarily reactive. The current system must wait for harm to occur to a child instead of working proactively to mitigate risk and stop harm from ever happening.

But what if Mississippi was able to assist families *before* a call was ever placed to the child protection agency? What if the state could *truly prevent or manage the risks* created by poverty instead of waiting for neglect to occur?

In 2006, Mississippi's Supreme Court established and charged Mississippi's Commission on Children's Justice (CCJ) with:

¹ MDCPS data. This number represents an overall reduction of 28% from the last quarter of 2016 through the last quarter of 2018, but more can be done.

² Neglect occurs when a child "whose parent, guardian or custodian or any person responsible for his care or support, neglects or refuses, when able so to do, to provide for him proper and necessary care or support, or education as required by law, or medical, surgical, or other care necessary for his well-being." Miss. Code Ann. § 43-21-105 (2019).

³ MDCPS data

⁴ John Eckenrode, et al. *Income Inequality and Child Maltreatment in the United States*, 133 (3) *Pediatrics* 454-461 (2014).

⁵ According to the Census Bureau (American Community Survey) 30.6% of Mississippi families with children under the age of 18 are in poverty; 53.5% for female householders with children under 18 years.

“... developing a statewide comprehensive approach to improving the child welfare system; coordinating the three branches of government in assessing the impact of government actions on children who are abused or neglected; and recommending changes to improve children’s safety, strengthen and support families and promote public trust and confidence in the child welfare system.”

Beginning July 30, 2018, the Court and its CCJ partners became laser-focused on the need for concerted efforts to reduce child maltreatment and the unnecessary removal of children to foster care. Statewide statistics revealed a large disparity between the prevalence of child neglect and the prevalence of child abuse, and the associated reasons for removal.⁶ In response, the Court ordered the creation of the Mississippi Family First Initiative (MFFI) under the charge of the Commission.

DESIGN & APPROACH

The first step in designing the initiative was the development of a collaborative framework. State leaders representing 5 collaborating sectors -- Judiciary, Non-Profit and Non-Government Agencies, Government, Industry, and Faith-Based – convened to identify the state’s available resources and gaps in services. This group became the State Advisory Council (SAC) out of which Co-Chairs Justice Dawn Beam and First Lady Deborah Bryant appointed a State Steering Committee (SSC). The SSC became the driver for researching programs, further refining framework, and determining how to move the Initiative forward. The SSC reports to the SAC, which serves as a governing body for reviewing the SSC’s plans.

The Initiative was launched at the community level through 8 pilot counties selected to represent the diversity of Mississippi. The first group of demonstration sites included the Capitol Metro Area, the Mississippi Gulf Coast, East Mississippi, Northeast Mississippi, and the Mississippi Delta. Prior to identifying pilots, Initiative leaders sought input from state and community stakeholders including representatives from state agencies such as the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services and the Mississippi Department of Health, non-profit organizations, faith-based organizations, the for-profit sector, and various levels of the judiciary.

Given the diversity of state regions, the SAC ultimately concluded that supporting at least one pilot county in each region would be vital in evaluating the impact of Initiative strategies and activities. Criteria considered in pilot selection included local child welfare data, judicial leadership, geographic diversity, demographic and economic makeup.

These considerations resulted in the Initiative’s eight pilots: **Lee, Bolivar, Rankin, Madison, Hinds, Pearl River, Jackson, and Lauderdale**. The pilot programs are designed to be representative of the demographic diversity and geographic regions of the state. Each offers a unique context against which implemented strategies can be understood for their effectiveness in addressing specific needs within a community.

⁶ In 2018, 87% of children were removed from their home due to neglect with similar reflections of drug abuse, inadequate housing, and caretaker inability to cope as the leading causes of removals within the neglect subset.

Pilot county structure mirrored state-level framework with County Advisory Councils (CACs) and County Steering Committees (CSCs). Chancery, Circuit, and Youth Court Judges in each county were charged with heading local Initiative efforts.

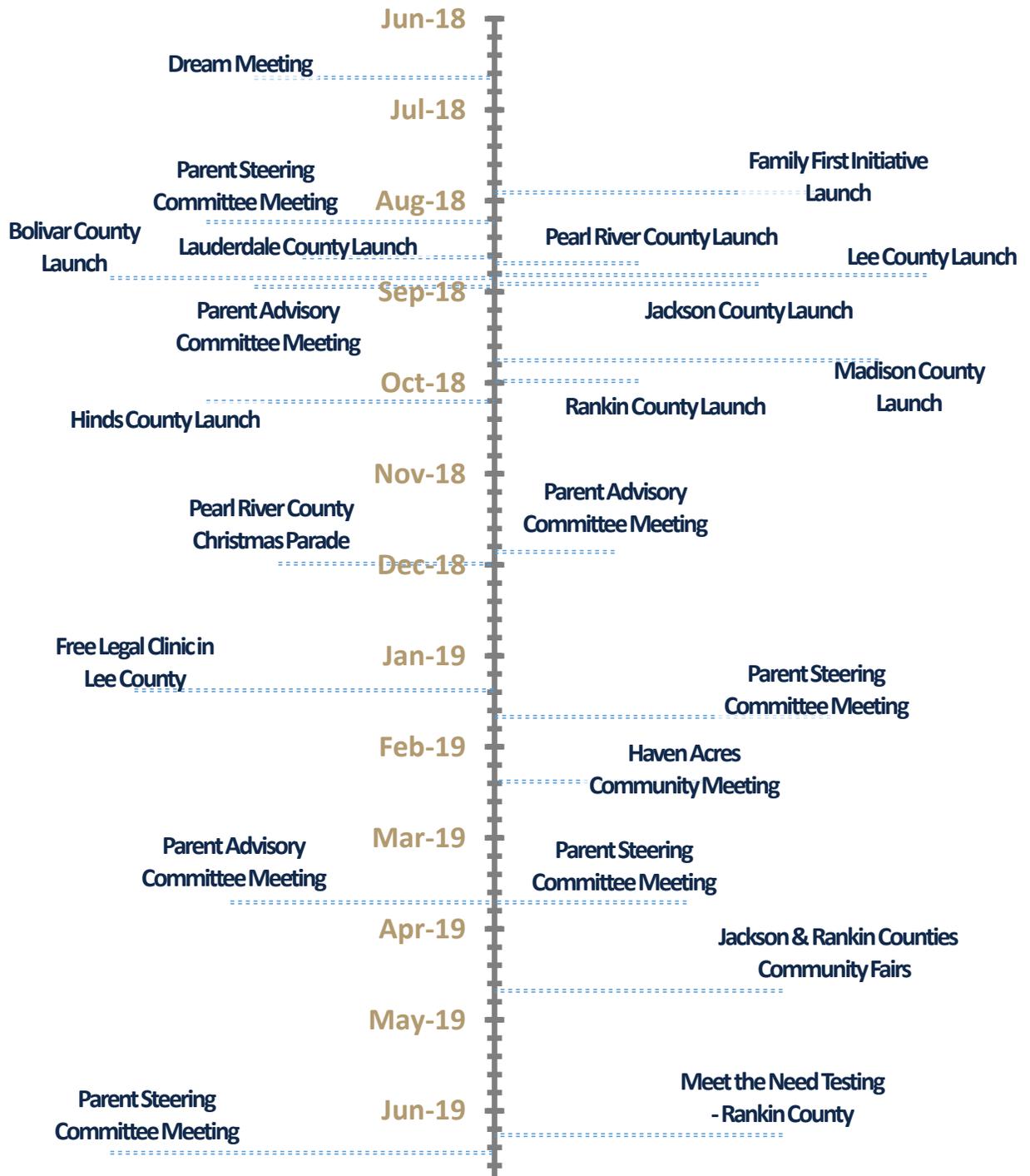
All eight pilot efforts were managed by two Strategic Initiative Coordinators, contracted through the Court.⁷ The Coordinators worked with the local judiciary, CACs and CSCs to implement a three-step process for prevention planning: 1) conducting a SWOT analysis of the community, 2) identifying Priorities for Change, and 3) developing an Action Plan.

Selected Characteristics—MFFI Pilot Counties								
County	Total Population	White	Black	Hispanic or Latino	Owner Occupied Housing Rate	High school graduate or higher, age 25 years+, 2013-2017	Median Household Income (2017)	Persons in Poverty
Bolivar County	31,333	32.7%	64.0%	2.1%	55.4%	76.1%	\$ 29,169.60	32.4%
Hinds County	237,085	24.4%	72.5%	1.6%	59.3%	86.3%	\$ 40,136.60	20.2%
Jackson County	143,277	67.7%	21.8%	6.5%	70.2%	87.8%	\$ 49,608.40	14.5%
Lauderdale County	75,317	52.6%	43.6%	2.2%	65.6%	86.2%	\$ 41,007.20	20.5%
Lee County	85,202	65.4%	30.0%	2.6%	67.3%	83.2%	\$ 44,902.20	14.0%
Madison County	105,630	55.4%	38.2%	3.0%	70.7%	90.9%	\$ 68,847.40	10.7%
Pearl River County	55,387	82.0%	12.4%	3.1%	76.6%	84.2%	\$ 44,900.40	17.2%
Rankin County	153,902	74.1%	20.6%	2.7%	75.2%	89.7%	\$ 61,446.40	9.3%

⁷ Cindy Cheeks and Kimberly Russell served as the Strategic Initiative Coordinators.

PROJECT YEAR TIMELINE

PY2019 Timeline



STRATEGIES & ACTIVITIES

Mississippi Family First Initiative hosts quarterly meetings of the SAC at which Initiative Coordinators and CSC representatives present on the progress of the pilot counties. More frequent meetings of the SSC are hosted to consider and discuss Initiative developments and challenges at both state and pilot levels.

Since August 2018, and with virtually no funding, pilot counties and their local judiciary have worked to implement programs with prevention in mind. Under the direction of Initiative Co-Chairs, Justice Dawn Beam and First Lady Deborah Bryant, a summit was held in Jackson on July 30, 2018 – the official launch of the Mississippi Family First Initiative.

In August and September, the Strategic Initiative Coordinators worked with the local judiciary in each of the eight pilot counties to host Pilot Launch Meetings. Many of these meetings were also attended by state-level MFFI members. County-wide stakeholders gathered to learn about the Initiative and conduct SWOT analyses of their communities as an initial step of strategic planning. These representatives were asked to commit to the Initiative through the CACs. Finally, CSC members were identified to lead local efforts.

The CSC members attended short orientations led by the Strategic Coordinators followed by county-specific geo-data reviews.⁸ Geo-data focused planning attention to specific areas in which heightened risks for child maltreatment were present. The CSC then proceeded to assess the community needs and identify existing gaps in services that, if properly addressed, would strengthen the community. These strategic priorities are referred to as “Priorities for Change.” Each CAC identified at least three Priorities for Change.

<i>County</i>	Priorities for Change
<i>Lee</i>	Education, Addiction, Poverty
<i>Bolivar</i>	Poverty, Transportation, Domestic Abuse, Substance Abuse, Crime
<i>Rankin</i>	Poverty, Education, assessing further needs
<i>Madison</i>	Poverty, Drug Abuse, Crime/Re-Entry, Education
<i>Hinds</i>	Assessing further needs
<i>Pearl River</i>	Housing, Transportation, Employment, Poverty
<i>Jackson</i>	Physical and Mental Health Services, Centralized Resources, Awareness
<i>Lauderdale</i>	Awareness, Mentorship, Academic Preparedness

These Priorities aid CSCs in creating Community Action Plans to address specific needs in targeted areas. When executed, the Action Plans guide community collaboratives in their efforts to prevent child maltreatment by strengthening families. The Pilot Action Plans identified needs related to broad socio-economic issues such as **poverty** and **education**. They also included needs

⁸ *The data in this report are made available through an agreement between Fostering Court Improvement at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services. The data are generated from the federally required Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) datasets. Any questions concerning the data may be directed to Christopher Church at cchurch@law.sc.edu*

related to local service and resource capacity such as *substance abuse treatment, adequate housing, in-home parenting training, mental health care, employment and job training, and transportation*. Systemic issues such as *criminal justice reform* were also highlighted. Through regular meetings, CSC and CAC members worked together to build, execute and review the effectiveness of these plans.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Starting in August 2018, the eight pilot communities began evaluating and addressing local capacity for prevention through identified Priorities for Change and Action Plans setting forth potential strategies, activities, and projects that could be coordinated and implemented at the local level with the backing of the State Steering Committee. The following are just a few of the examples of actions that are currently being implemented in the pilot counties to strengthen families and reduce removal of children to foster care. Many activities are producing positive results, such as risk intervention that prevents the removal of children to foster care, public awareness of local support available to families, collaboration among various stakeholders to localize and strengthen family support services, and positive changes in services based on community feedback.

Risk Intervention

Several pilot counties are using information provided by the County Advisory Council members at launch meetings to connect needs with available resources and in doing so, meet needs of families experiencing circumstances that could put their children at risk of being removed to foster care. One example in Pearl River County involved a disabled veteran parent and child whose home suffered damage from a storm. Without funds to make repairs, the family was without power for several days. Imminent weather conditions could result in extreme and dangerous living conditions for the family. The County Resource Coordinator was alerted to the situation and contacted various members of the Initiative Advisory Council. Members readily agreed to help, collaborated on supplies, permits, and labor, and worked quickly to repair the damage. Together, they restored suitable living conditions to the family before the next storm arrived. Similar stories of intervention by Initiative members have been repeated in counties including Rankin, Jackson, and Lee.

Free Legal Clinics

Lee County tackled the unmet civil legal needs of families with its creation of County Legal Appointments. The Supreme Court of Mississippi's Commission on Access to Justice partnered with the Lee County MFFI Pilot and the Family Resource Center to provide monthly two-hour pro se clinics. Volunteer attorneys helped prescreened families resolve legal matters presenting issues of child welfare concern. Topics ranged from housing problems to adoption to child custody. Legal assistance provided in this way helped families avoid interaction with the child welfare system by preemptively resolving problems before they developed into cases of neglect or abuse.

Similarly, Bolivar County is looking to offer primary preventive legal services through expungement clinics.⁹ Bolivar County's CSC will offer free legal clinics with a focus on assisting with expungement proceedings for individuals with criminal records. By working to dismantle one of the key barriers to better employment, the Initiative is able to specifically target a cause of poverty at the community level with the goal of effecting greater economic opportunity for the whole county.

Skills Training and Education

The pervasiveness of poverty impacts not only the present circumstances of families, but the future, as well. Many parents are unable to seek higher paying jobs because of a lack of qualifications or education¹⁰, and they cannot afford to miss work today for only the hope of a better job tomorrow. Further, parents are often forced to miss out on opportunities because of the lack of availability and affordability of childcare. In response to this need, Pearl River County Initiative members are working together to provide support to parents to attend technical training programs or GED classes, and the Initiative also provides assistance with childcare while the parents are attending the trainings or classes.

"Whole-Family" Models

The Initiative encouraged CSC members to explore opportunities to coordinate services and their delivery with the "whole family" in mind. Often services provided for parents are at one location while similar services for children are provided across town. Madison County CSC members including Youth Court Judges and doctors from University of MS Medical Center's Department of Child Psychology discussed coordinating parental opioid addiction treatment with mental health services for both caregiver and child. Delivery and funding models are being explored. This is a promising example of the multi-generational approach promoted through the Initiative. Hinds, Jackson, and Rankin Counties are contemplating similar "whole-family" delivery models.

Awareness Events

Challenges identified in each pilot county concerned a general lack of awareness within the community about resources available to individuals and families. In many instances, programs and services addressing specific needs exist but are underutilized due to this lack of awareness. Conversely, Initiative members recognized their need to learn from residents what resource gaps existed at the neighborhood level.

With a goal of bridging these gaps, the Initiative organized resource fairs so that programs and organizations can provide information and interact directly with members of the community

⁹ One of the causes of poverty is the lack of available, well-paying jobs for individuals with a criminal record, as the unemployment rate for formerly incarcerated citizens in the United States is 27%. Further, people who are employed following release take home 40% less in annual pay than those without a record, as they are more often in lower paying jobs. See Couloute, Lucius, and Dan Kopf. "Out of Prison & Out of Work." Out of Prison & Out of Work | Prison Policy Initiative. July 2018. Accessed May 30, 2019. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/outofwork.html>.

¹⁰ In Mississippi, the poverty rate for families in which the primary householder did not graduate high school is 32.6% compared to only 23.3% for families in which the primary householder has a high school diploma or equivalent.¹⁰

who might need their specific assistance. Jackson County experienced attendance of 200+ community members at the first of four Community Fairs in April, 2019. A similar April outreach effort in Rankin County garnered over 500 in attendance. The result was families connecting with resources and sharing their needs. In Jackson County, the public transportation system is considering a re-design of routes based on that feedback. A local church is providing evening meals for families and is collaborating with the youth court on a pilot mentor program for parents working toward reunification with their children in foster care.

Other awareness efforts in pilot counties include Initiative info and contact cards distributed at public events – Pearl River, Jackson, and Rankin; beneficiary surveys – Jackson and Rankin; and town-hall style meetings with target community residents – Lee, Bolivar, and Hinds.

LOOKING FORWARD

The purpose of the pilot programs of the Initiative are twofold: (1) to develop, implement and assess activities and strategies that aim to safely reduce foster care numbers in pilot communities; and (2) to identify any challenges or areas of weakness that need to be addressed before implementing Initiative standards and practices statewide. The Initiative envisions a three-year pilot process. Program Year 2019, discussed in this report, is the establishment phase, where the community collaborations are organized, needs are assessed, plans are developed, and the early stages of implementation are undertaken. Program Year 2020 will be the primary implementation phase, where the identified activities and strategies are fully implemented and measured to determine their success and to identify challenges. Program Year 2021 will be the primary evaluation phase, where the activities and strategies are properly assessed against the two purposes listed above to inform how the Initiative can be fully launched across the state.

Protective Factors Framework

MFFI is considering multiple means of data analysis for its evaluation plan. Activities and impact evaluation will be guided by the Protective Factors Framework. Protective factors are characteristics, strengths, or conditions of families, individuals, and communities that mitigate risk factors and work to buffer the effects of risk such as stress or trauma. Research proves that promotion of these factors is key in intervention and prevention strategies that will improve the well-being of children and youth. A protective factors framework is an organized set of strength-based ideas that are used to guide programs, services, supports, and interventions aimed at preventing child maltreatment and promoting healthy outcomes.¹¹

The Children’s Bureau¹² has concentrated on six protective factors that are frequently a focus of prevention services in the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) community:

- 1) Child Development
- 2) Concrete Supports
- 3) Family Functioning
- 4) Nurturing and Attachment

¹¹ Center for the Study of Social Policy. *Protective Factors Framework*. <https://cssp.org/our-work/projects/protective-factors-framework/>

¹² FRIENDS, *Protective Factors*, <https://www.friendsnrc.org/protective-factors>

- 5) Social Support
- 6) Children’s Social and Emotional Competence

Within MFFI’s research, much consideration has been given to the Protective Factors Surveys (PFS) from FRIENDS National Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention. These surveys evaluate both parents and caregivers participating in family support and child maltreatment prevention services. All of the tools are freely available on the FRIENDS website. Tools include the two surveys as well as a detailed pre-formatted spreadsheet for data entry and analysis. MFFI is looking to implement this framework and the surveys as a means to initially evaluate the families receiving services in the community, measure changes within those families, and identify areas where stakeholders can focus on increasing protective factors.

Hope Survey

An emerging and growing area of scientific research tracking the impact of hope on children and families is also being reviewed by MFFI. With the help of Casey Family Programs, MFFI is reviewing literature designed to keep trauma-informed practices in mind while also working to generate and measure hope within children and families. Much of these areas and surveys are based on the adverse childhood experiences study (ACEs). MFFI is reviewing *Hope Rising* and considering implementing its survey tools and methods as another means to measure outcomes and guide further development of prevention efforts within the state.

Shared Case Management

One of the original drivers behind MFFI is the idea of a shared technology platform that would help service recipients connect with providers in a more coordinated and intentional way. This idea grew to include efforts that would encourage community providers to work together and allow more accurate tracking of received services in order to identify both successes and gaps. The development of such a computer system quickly met several hurdles, leading MFFI to look at a different system of approach – Meet the Need (MTN).

MTN is a free, web-based communication platform which provides members with a directory of local member providers and allows for shared case management among those resources. The platform is not proprietary, is customizable and has a variety of reports beneficial to both providers and the Initiative. Platform developers are working on a new interface that allows the public to “see” and contact existing service providers in their geographical area. All information is maintained in a database format that allows for personalized organizational metrics and tracking for later evaluation. Rankin County volunteered to test the platform as a viable option for the original computer program idea. The test was launched in June, 2019. Other pilots have expressed interest and if proven, the Coordinators will work with MTN developers on options to build out additional functions and reports that serve Initiative objectives.

Standards and Practices

All three data collection and outcome measurement approaches offer great opportunities for developing statewide standards and practices. MFFI plans to continue research and development of each metrics avenue. Initial considerations include standardized surveys distributed to beneficiary and service providers at the beginning of prevention services, throughout the services, and at termination of services. Additionally, Coordinators and CSC

volunteers will input data to track results of Action Plans and to inform the modification of programs. Protective factor surveys and outcomes are being referenced in conjunction with web-based communication platform development and metrics reporting. The platform and the surveys will be used to generate next steps for MFFI and formulate expansion efforts to the rest of the state.

A data collection and outcome measurement methodology will be thoroughly solidified through PY 2020 and used for analysis in PY 2021. Data will be used to show the progress within each pilot, indicate areas for improvement, and create a basis for statewide rollout of MFFI.

CONCLUSION

The Mississippi Family First Initiative's first year has been the catalyst of unprecedented collaboration among state and local providers toward the common goals of reducing child maltreatment and strengthening families. Though the reduction in the foster care population is certainly to be celebrated, there is still much work to be done. Initiative members are determined in their collaborative efforts to deliver programs and services that promote safe, stable, and self-sufficient Mississippi families. Only through such dedicated collaboration can we, together, effect positive change in Mississippi - one child and one family at a time.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Family First Initiative Order

Serial: 220201

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF MISSISSIPPI

No. 2018-AD-00001-SCT

IN RE: FAMILY FIRST INITIATIVE

FILED

JUL 27 2018

OFFICE OF THE CLERK
SUPREME COURT
COURT OF APPEALS

ORDER

Before this Court en banc is the matter of the strategic efforts by the Family First Initiative, a branch of this Court's Commission on Children's Justice. The Commission has created the Initiative in order to focus efforts on prevention of child maltreatment and prevention of unnecessary placement of children in foster care, thereby reducing the need for state intervention in families and preserving the family unit.

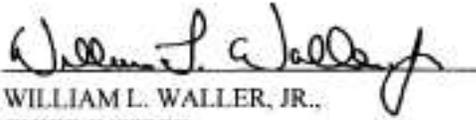
At the State level, the Initiative will be Co-Chaired by First Lady of Mississippi and Justice Dawn Beam, who will be assisted by a State Level Family First Advisory Committee and a State Level Family First Parent Steering Committee selected by the Co-Chairs. These State Level Committees will provide guidance and support to stakeholders in local communities. At the community level, several judges have agreed voluntarily to convene community leaders and stakeholders, who will conduct a collaborative assessment to identify service gaps in their communities, develop targeted action plans to address those service gaps, and communicate action plans with State Level Family First Parent Steering Committee.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED:

1. The Court hereby commends the Commission on Children's Justice creation of the Family First Initiative to promote the safety of Mississippi's children and the stability and self-sufficiency of Mississippi's families.

2. The Clerk of the Supreme Court shall spread this order upon the minutes of the Court and transmit to each appointee a true copy hereof.

SO ORDERED, this the 21st day of July, 2018.


WILLIAM L. WALLER, JR.,
CHIEF JUSTICE

APPENDIX B – Membership

STATE STEERING COMMITTEE

Governor Phil Bryant	Office of the Governor
Deborah Bryant	Office of the First Lady
Dawn Beam	Supreme Court Justice
David Ishee	Supreme Court Justice
Latrice Westbrook	Court of Appeals Judge
Judge John Hudson	Jurist in Residence, MS Supreme Court
Andy Taggart	Taggart Rimes & Graham
John Damon	Canopy Children's Solutions
Neddie Winters	Mission Mississippi
Melissa Carter	Casey Family Programs
Nancy New	Families First for Mississippi
Christi Webb	Families First for Mississippi
Karla Tye	Children's Advocacy Centers of MS
John Davis	MS Dept. of Human Services
Jess Dickinson	MS Dept. of Child Protection Services
Sally Doty	Lt. Gov. Appointee
Pattie B Marshall	Retired ~ Office of the Attorney General

STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL¹³

Judge Thomas Broome	Co-Chair of Children's Justice Commission
Jason S. Dean	Tenax Aerospace
Ted DiBiase, Jr.	MS Dept. of Human Services
Mary Fuller	Administrative Office of Courts
Chris Howard	MS Dept. of Rehabilitation Services
Toni Kersh	MS. Dept. of Education
Nicole H. McLaughlin	MS Access to Justice Commission
Sean Milner	Baptist Children's Village
Sandra Parks	MS. Dept. of Mental Health
Ledger Parker	Mississippi United to End Homelessness
Earl Scales	Office of the Attorney General
Rt. Rev. Brian R. Seage	Episcopal Church of Mississippi
Mary Simons	Open Doors Homeless Coalition
Victor D. Sutton	MS Dept. of Health
Melody Winston	MS Dept. of Mental Health
Dorthy Young	MS Dept. of Medicaid
Pattie B Marshall	Retired ~ Office of the Attorney General Casey Family Programs

¹³ Members of the State Steering Committee also serve on the larger State Advisory Committee.

COMMUNITY-LEVEL MEMBERSHIP

Lee County

Community Members:

*Kristy Luse – Steering Chair
Judge Staci Bevill – Youth Court
Shelly Brooks
David Cole
Katrin Fischer
Gloria Holland
Willie Jennings
Zell Long
Nicole McLaughlin*

*Chancellor Jacqueline Mask
Amy Bratton
Henry Cobb
Ormella Cummings
Beverly Gonzalez
Ed Hood
Joyce Johnston
Tracy Malone
Stewart McMillan*

*LeighAnne Newton
Mary Samuels
Rick Spencer
Wade Williams
Brian Pounders
Freddie Samuels
Markel Whittington*

Bolivar County

Community Members:

*Pam Chatman – Steering Chair
Judge Hunter Nowell – Youth Court
Pastor Taurean Morton
Kierre Rimmer
Pearlean Day
Megan Murro
Chris Harris
LaGwenda Hayes*

*Judge Linda Coleman
Judge Catherin Farris-Carter
Dr. Shakebra Young
Carolyn D. Quin
Patti Coggins
Lane Riley
Dorothy King Grim
Jacqueline Lambert*

*Henry Phillips, Jr.
Joseph McKee
Beverly Johnson
Jenifer Jenkins
John Coleman
Bobbie Rogers
Marvin Strotter, Sr.
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Pearl River County

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Nance Stokes
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Jackson County

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Cheryl Doyle
Elizabeth Boyle
Lori Cox
Mike Ezell
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Frances Allsup
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Dr. Tyler Sexton
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