

Child Care Connection

MSDH Child Care Licensure Bureau

February 2026

“Bridging the gap between Child Care Providers and MSDH Child Care Licensure Bureau in order to provide a safe and healthy environment for Mississippian children and families.”

♥ February Focus: Love, Kindness & Compliance ♥

Happy February, Child Care Providers!

February is a beautiful reminder to lead with love, kindness, and care—not only for the children and families we serve, but also for one another. As we nurture hearts and minds this month, we also want to ensure everyone stays informed, prepared, and in full compliance with licensing regulations.

Below are a few important reminders to help keep your program running smoothly and confidently:

✦ General Compliance Reminders:

📄 Accident & Incident Reporting

Owners and Directors are reminded to promptly submit all Accident/Incident Reports through **Provider Record Maintenance**, then select **Self-Report**. If you're unsure which incidents require reporting, please reach out to your licensing official for guidance—they're there to help.

🌿 Health & Safety Awareness

Take time to review and familiarize yourself with:

- **Appendix B – Reportable Diseases**
 - **Appendix I – Communicable Diseases/Conditions and Return to Child Care**
- Staying informed ensures quick action and helps protect the health of children, staff, and families.

🌸 Spring Planning Ahead

As you begin planning spring activities, programs, and special events, please remember to review the rules and regulations regarding **refreshments (Rule 1.13.3)** to ensure compliance.

📋 Policies & Procedures Check-Up

Now is the perfect time to review your facility or center's policies and procedures. Make sure all information is current and that families are notified of any updates made for the new year.

☀️ Closing Thoughts

Thank you for your continued dedication, professionalism, and heart for the work you do every day. Your commitment to compliance, safety, and quality care makes a lasting difference in the lives of children and families. As we move through February, let's continue to lead with kindness, stay connected, and support one another in creating nurturing, compliant, and thriving child care environments.

Wishing you a month filled with love, learning, and success! 💖

February 2026 Trainings

Date	Time	Training Topic	Location	Trainer
February 2 nd	9:00am-12:00pm	Child Care Regulations Part 1	Olive Branch, MS	J. Dockery
February 2 nd	12:30pm-3:30pm	Child Care Regulations Part 2	Olive Branch, MS	J. Dockery
February 3 rd	9:00am-12:00pm	Directors' Orientation	Olive Branch, MS	J. Dockery
February 3 rd	12:30pm-3:30pm	Playground Safety	Olive Branch, MS	J. Dockery
February 4 th	5:30pm-8:30pm	CCDF Health & Safety	Virtual/Online	J. Dockery
February 10 th	5:30pm-8:30pm	Child Care Regulations Part 1	Virtual/Online	J. Dockery
February 11 th	5:30pm-8:30pm	Child Care Regulations Part 2	Virtual/Online	J. Dockery
February 12 th	5:30pm-8:30pm	Directors' Orientation	Virtual/Online	J. Dockery
February 18 th	5:30pm-8:30pm	Playground Safety	Virtual/Online	J. Dockery
February 20 th	9:00am-12:00pm	Child Care Regulations Part 1	Oxford, MS	J. Dockery
February 20 th	12:30pm-3:30pm	Child Care Regulations Part 2	Oxford, MS	J. Dockery
February 21 st	9:00am-12:00pm	Directors' Orientation	Oxford, MS	J. Dockery
February 21 st	12:30pm-3:30pm	Playground Safety	Oxford, MS	J. Dockery
February 23 rd	5:30pm-8:30pm	CCDF Health & Safety	Virtual/Online	J. Dockery
February 24 th	5:30pm-8:30pm	Infant Safety in the Classroom	Virtual/Online	J. Dockery
February 25 th	5:30pm-8:30pm	Regulations Governing Licensure of Child Care Family Homes for 5 OR Fewer Children	Virtual (ONLY for Family Homes Centers)	J. Dockery
February 10 th	5:30pm-8:30pm	Afterschool Regulations	Virtual	S. Smith
February 11 th	9:00am-12:00pm	Child Care Regulations Part 1	Hinds	S. Smith
February 11 th	12:00pm-3:00pm	Child Care Regulations Part 2	Hinds	S. Smith
February 12 th	9:00am-12:00pm	Playground Safety	Hinds	S. Smith
February 12 th	12:00pm-3:00pm	CCDF Health and Safety	Hinds	S. Smith
February 19 th	9:00am-12:00pm	Child Care Regulations Part 1	Magee	S. Smith
February 19 th	12:00pm-3:00pm	Child Care Regulations Part 2	Magee	S. Smith
February 23 rd	8:30am-11:30am	Child Care Regulations Part 1	Bogue Chitto	S. Smith
February 23 rd	11:30am-2:30pm	Child Care Regulations Part 2	Bogue Chitto	S. Smith
February 23 rd	2:30pm-5:30pm	Playground Safety	Bogue Chitto	S. Smith
February 10 th	9:30 am-12:30pm	Child Care Regulations Part 1	Greenwood	M Jordan
February 10 th	1:00 p.m.-4:00pm	Child Care Regulations Part 2	Greenwood	M Jordan
February 10 th	5:00 pm-8:00pm	Child Care Regulations Part 2	Clarksdale	M Jordan
February 11 th	9:30 am-12:30pm	Director's Orientation	Greenwood	M Jordan

February 11th	1:00pm-4:00pm	Playground Safety	Greenwood	M Jordan
February 17th	9:30 am-12:30pm	Child Care Regulations Part 1	Winona	M Jordan
February 17th	1:00 p.m.-4:00pm	Child Care Regulations Part 2	Winona	M Jordan
February 18th	9:30 am-12:30pm	Director's Orientation	Winona	M Jordan
February 18th	1:00 p.m.-4:00pm	Playground Safety	Winona	M Jordan
February 21st	TBA	TBA	Greenwood	M Jordan
February 24th	9:30 am-12:30pm	Child Care Regulations Part 1	Clarksdale	M Jordan
February 24th	1:00 p.m.-4:00pm	Child Care Regulations Part 2	Clarksdale	M Jordan
February 25th	9:30 am-12:30pm	Director's Orientation	Clarksdale	M Jordan
February 25th	1:00 p.m.-4:00pm	Playground Safety	Clarksdale	M Jordan
February 4th	9:00am – 12 pm	Nutrition & Menu Writing	Virtual	J. Smith
February 11th	9:00 am –12 pm	Child Care Regulations Part 1	Starkville	J. Smith
February 11th	1:00 pm– 4:00 pm	Child Care Regulations Part 2	Starkville	J. Smith
February 12th	9:00 am –12 pm	Playground Safety	Starkville	J. Smith
February 12th	1:00 pm– 4:00 pm	Directors Orientation	Starkville	J. Smith
February 17th	9:00 am –12 pm	Child Care Regulations Part 1	Virtual	J. Smith
February 17th	1:00 pm– 4:00 pm	Child Care Regulations Part 2	Virtual	J. Smith
February 18th	9:00 am –12 pm	Playground Safety	Virtual	J. Smith
February 18th	1:00 pm– 4:00 pm	Directors Orientation	Virtual	J. Smith
February 24th	9:00- 12 pm	CCDF Health & Safety	Virtual	J. Smith

*Happy
Valentine's
Day*

FOOD ALLERGY FACT SHEET

Common Questions: Child Care Centers

What resources can I use to educate child care staff about food allergies?

In addition to this series of fact sheets, there are a variety of resources you can use. The National Food Service Management Institute has several resources on food allergies (www.nfsmi.org/foodallergy). Organizations, such as the Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network (www.foodallergy.org/), also have educational resources on their Web sites. Local medical professionals may be willing to offer assistance.

What are the most common foods that cause allergies?

The following eight foods are responsible for 90% of food allergies:

- milk
- eggs
- peanuts
- tree nuts (for example walnuts, almonds, cashews, pistachios, and pecans)
- wheat
- soy
- fish
- crustacean shellfish (for example shrimp, lobster, and crab)

What are the common symptoms of a food allergy?

Allergy symptoms could include any of the following:

- itching in the mouth and throat
- skin rashes
- cramps, nausea, diarrhea, and/or vomiting
- swelling of the tongue or throat
- breathing difficulties
- drop in blood pressure
- loss of consciousness
- anaphylaxis

Will all children display the same symptoms during an allergic reaction?

No. Children can display different symptoms, even if they have the same allergy. Each time a child has a reaction, the symptoms may be different.

What should I do if a child consumes a food to which he or she is allergic?

Follow the child's individual food allergy plan. If the allergy has the potential to cause a severe reaction, call emergency medical services immediately. Contact the child's parent/guardian as soon as possible.

What should I do if a child with a food allergy complains of symptoms but looks fine?

Take all complaints from a child with food allergies seriously. Follow the allergy plan for that child and notify a parent/guardian.

What if meals are served family style?

Hands should be washed before and after each meal. Take extra precautions with serving utensils and serving containers to prevent cross-contact. It may be helpful for the child with food allergies to be served first. Children should not be allowed to share food or eating utensils.

Are there ways other than meals or snacks that a child could be exposed to an allergen?

Yes. Foods containing allergens are sometimes used in art projects or crafts. Foods for parties or rewards could also contain an allergen. Anyone entering the day care, including children, parents, and staff, could bring food that contains the allergen or have the allergen on their hands. Determine what policies are needed to help avoid exposure to food allergens.



FOOD ALLERGY FACT SHEET

Are pot holders and oven mitts sources of cross-contact?

Yes. Use only dedicated pot holders and oven mitts when making allergen-free food items. Wash hands after using pot holders and oven mitts.

Should certain foods not be allowed in the child care center?

If a child could have a severe allergic reaction to a particular food, consider having a “food free” policy limiting that particular food. Even with a policy in place, all ingredient labels should be checked. Home-made items and items without food labels should be discouraged as it is difficult to know if the ingredients are safe.

Is additional funding available to cover the cost of special food that may be requested to accommodate a child with food allergies?

No, but extra expenses for allergy-safe meals can be minimal by choosing an allergy-safe menu from the items already being offered.

How do I provide the correct food for a child with multiple food allergies?

Discuss with the child’s parent the accommodations you can reasonably make. In some cases, the parent may choose to provide the child’s food. For the meal to be reimbursable by USDA regulations, you must provide at least one component of the meal.

Can I use a website to check food labels for allergens?

Although websites can be helpful, they may not be up to date. To make sure a product is safe, read the ingredient label each time you purchase it and call the manufacturer if you have questions.

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service through an agreement with the National Food Service Management Institute at The University of Mississippi. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government.

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LEARNING AT HOME

Brushing Teeth

Math

- How many teeth do you have? Count how many teeth you have lost.
- How many items are used in brushing teeth?
- How long is your toothbrush? The toothpaste tube? Which one is longer? Which one is heavier?
- How would we measure out mouthwash? (length or volume)

Vocabulary

- Discuss what oral hygiene is. Talk about what good practices of oral hygiene are.
- Talk about what a dentist and hygienist is. How are they similar? Different?
- What does it mean to rinse after your brush your teeth?
- What is floss? What is its purpose?
- Discuss what mouthwash it and its purpose?
- Talk about what tooth decay is. What are the different ways we can prevent tooth decay?
- Use appropriate terminology when brushing teeth. (brush, rinse, mouthwash, floss, etc.)



Most
importantly
HAVE
FUN!

Books to Listen To

- The Berenstain Bears Visit the Dentist
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mO82L_brx2o
- Little Rabbit's Loose Tooth
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PWCqbOeniw>

Discussion Topics

- Why should we turn off the water after we wet the toothbrush?
- Why is it important to keep our teeth healthy?
- What people in our community help keep our teeth healthy? (dentists & hygienists)
- What is the difference between tooth and teeth?

Reading & Writing

- Discuss or write down the steps involved in brushing teeth. Talk about what the effects might be if a step is skipped.
- Compare and contrast dentists and hygienist with medical doctors and nurses.

LEARNING AT HOME

Cleaning Up

Math

- Use a timer and give your child a time frame for cleaning up.
- Sort and pick up all of one item at a time (blocks, crayons, etc.)

Most importantly ...
HAVE FUN!

Vocabulary

- Discuss what it means to be tidy? What is the opposite of tidy?
- Talk about what the word organize means. Find one thing that your child can help you organize in the house.
- What does helpful mean? Let your child talk about all the ways they can be helpful around the house.
- Use appropriate cleaning terminology when cleaning up (tidy, organize, etc.)

Books to Listen To

The Berenstain Bears and the Messy Room

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptshmzam_5s

How Do Dinosaurs Clean Up Their Room

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDuaK6l3tuA>

Discussion Topics

- Why do we need to pick up toys? (safety, keeps toys from being broken, less likely to get lost, etc.)



Reading & Writing

Write or tell a short story about a toy that is in charge of making sure all the other toys are safe. Which toy would be in charge? What would that toy tell the others about staying safe?

Make it a Game

- **Divide the room in half** and have 1 kid take each side – or *you* compete against your child! Clean your side as fast as possible, and whoever finishes first, wins!
- **The lava game** – Lay out some towels (or something the kids can jump on) and pretend that they are safe, and everything else is lava! You have to clean the whole room without touching the “lava”
- **The guessing game** – Have 1 person leave the room (kid 1), and while they’re gone, the other person (kid 2) cleans up a set of toys (ex: all the blocks, all the balls, etc.). Call kid 1 back in and have them try and guess what kid 2 put away!

What Children Can Expect in Kindergarten

Working independently & in groups



Recognizing & writing their name



Learning to read, write, count, & add



Using the bathroom independently



A full schedule of learning including things like:
Storytime, work time, & creative activities



Opening their items independently
(e.g. lunch items, jacket, backpack)



2

Making new friends!



3

Skills to Practice at Home to Get Kindergarten-Ready

- Locking/unlocking bathroom stall doors
- Going to the bathroom and washing hands independently
- Knowing parents'/guardians' legal names
- Opening snacks, peeling fruit independently
- Coloring, cutting, painting, drawing
- Cleaning up messes and putting things where they go
- Controlling their body/ keeping their hands to themselves

4



- Following directions and paying attention
- Recognizing and writing their first name
- Using imagination in their play
- Moving between tasks with little distraction

5



L Leadership,
A Awareness, &
U Understanding to
N Navigate our
C Children
H Higher

to **EXCEL**ence

applications due by November 30
for Spring 2026 cohort

Program History

The LAUNCH to EXCElence Leadership Academy equips leaders across Mississippi to connect early childhood, community engagement, and workforce development. Developed in partnership with Huntington Ingalls Shipbuilding in 2019, LAUNCH began as a local leadership pilot in Jackson County. Between 2019–2021, three cohorts completed the Academy, training educators, community leaders, and business partners to advocate for early childhood as a cornerstone of workforce development. In 2025, new state appropriations reignited the program statewide through Excel By 5, expanding access to all four congressional districts.

LAUNCH to EXCElence develops local champions who understand that child care and early learning are not just education issues—they are economic, community, and family priorities.

Program Partners



Sponsoring
Developer
2018-2020



Sponsor
2025



Host
Organization

Program Initiatives



Leadership
Academy



Professional
Development



Engagement

LAUNCH

to **EXCEL**ence



Systems Change

Leadership

Advocacy

Community

Collective Action

Partnership

Leadership Academy

Ideal LAUNCH participants include:

- School district leaders (superintendents, principals, PK collaborative, career and technical directors)
- Community and civic leaders (chambers, libraries, local government, United Way, nonprofits)
- Health and social service professionals (hospitals, DHS, health departments, CASA, extension agents)
- Business and industry partners committed to workforce and community development
- Early childhood educators, childcare directors, and teachers
- Parents, advocates, and emerging leaders invested in improving outcomes for children birth to five

Essentially, LAUNCH is for people who:

- Live or work in Mississippi and care deeply about their community
- Are passionate about supporting young children and their families
- Represent diverse sectors (education, health, business, faith, government, nonprofit)
- Want to strengthen leadership, collaboration, and advocacy for early childhood as economic infrastructure



Apply and Learn
More Here!



DHA Resource & Referral Centers

Our Services

Quality Professional Development

- Local Area Coaching
- Coaching & Training on Specific Topics
- Virtual & In-person Trainings

(Trainings are done through MDHS)

Quality Professional Development

- Computer Access for Career Development
- Access to Educational Resources for children ages 0-12yrs
- Information on Health, Social Services, & Job Training

Children must be accompanied by a parent/guardian.

Scan our QR code to find a center near you!



Makers Space

- Order Ellison Die Cutouts
- Lamination
- Poster Maker
- Resources for Completing School Projects.

Lending Library

- Developmentally & Age-Appropriate materials for ages 0-12yrs
- Mock Classroom Setup
- Supervised Play
- Storytime



Resource and Referral Network



**DELTA
HEALTH
ALLIANCE**

HEALTH • EDUCATION • COMMUNITY

Mississippi Lift is a program of Mississippi Department of Human Services.

MECIC provides on-site support for early childhood teachers and directors!

individualized ● challenging behavior ● supporting all children

MECIC Referral

To request on-site support, follow
the QR code and answer a few
questions!



SCAN HERE

Let us know if we can help you.



Greetings Early Childhood Administrators:

The MDE, through the Office of Early Childhood, is offering a free full-day training opportunity, **Everyday Practices for Preventing Problematic Behaviors**. In this training participants will learn about implementing the Pyramid Model's Tier 1 practices. These foundational practices are built on starting with a high-quality early childhood environment and the importance of building a strong relationship with each child in the classroom. These practical and effective approaches help to support young children's social and emotional development and prevent common behavioral challenges. The training will cover key principles that can be immediately applied in the classroom, including creating a positive classroom environment, establishing clear and consistent routines, positive reinforcement strategies, and fostering social and emotional development.

This training is available to all public, private, and Head Start administrators, principals, district leaders, directors, teachers, and assistant teachers of early childhood classrooms. SEMIs and contact hours will be offered at no cost and CEUs (Continuing Education Units) will be available for purchase.

Registration will be on a first-come-first-served basis at <https://gsmu.mdek12.org/public/course/browse>. Registrants will need to verify that they are registering for the correct location, as multiple offerings will appear in the GoSignMeUp course listing page.

Contact the Professional Learning Team at earlychildhoodtrainings@mdek12.org if there are questions regarding registration.

See date, time, and location below.

2/19/26

8:30am-4:00pm

Lamar County Schools Technology Complex

17 Pioneer Rd. Hattiesburg, MS

2/26/26

8:30am-4:00pm

Center for Teaching and Learning

1415 Skip Ave. Pascagoula, MS

RESOURCE & REFERRAL CENTER

WE ARE OPEN IN AN AREA NEAR YOU!



Center Locations:

- Leland, MS
- Greenwood, MS
- Indianola, MS
- Cleveland, MS
- Belzoni, MS
- Clarksdale, MS
- Batesville, MS
- Senatobia, MS
- Hernando, MS
- Grenada, MS
- Winona, MS

- * Technical assistance
- * Professional development
- * Lending library for childcare providers and families.

Scan our QR code for more information!



New Trainings
**Available
Now!**

REGISTER TODAY

Find us on:
<https://portal.lift-ed.ms>

Mississippi
EARLY CHILDHOOD
INCLUSION CENTER

Professional Development series are offered in-person, statewide, and virtually via Zoom.

Participants will receive four contact hours upon successful completion of the series.

Follow the steps below

- 01 Professional Development Opportunities
- 02 Advanced Search
- 03 Sponsoring Organization
- 04 MECIC

