

Excel By 5 Community Collaboration Summit—2011



Welcome !

Welcome to the 3rd annual Excel By 5 Community Collaboration Summit.

Since the early beginnings of Excel By 5 in 2004, our goal has been to encourage and assist communities to become actively involved in supporting young families and their children in order for those children to be better prepared for kindergarten and the 1st grade.

As we continue to grow, we are constantly amazed with the creative and inno-

vative approaches each community takes to become certified as an early childhood community. We know from the beginning it's an education process not only for the children, but the parents, child care providers, businesses, community leaders and the community Excel By 5 Coalition itself. In many cases it also becomes a learning process for the state Excel By 5 staff as we navigate and work with each community. One thing constantly

stands out. . . . The volunteers in each community who come together with unselfish dedication. Without you there would be no success. Thank you for your continued support and dedication to the children of your community. Together you will make a difference for our state. Keep up the good work and I hope that you enjoy this summit and gain valuable information as you continue down the road of success. ~
Bob Clay, Executive Director, Excel By 5.

Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi commits sponsorship of Excel By 5

On June 30 Excel By 5 Inc. announced its partnership with the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi (CFNM). CFNM will invest to expand Excel By 5 into Northwest Mississippi. Excel By 5 will provide a coordinator to work over the next three years with eight counties to improve early learning opportuni-

ties. "This is a demonstration of our commitment to the children of Northwest Mississippi and it will have far reaching impacts," said Tom Pittman, CFNM executive director. ***"Excel By 5 engages families and communities by promoting best practices in early learning, child develop-***

ment, and education."

Communities within the counties of Coahoma, DeSoto, Marshall, Panola, Quitman, Tallahatchie, Tate, and Tunica will be invited to participate in the Excel By 5 certification process. Crystal Blackmon has been named as the new Excel By 5 Sites Coordinator for the region.

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What Makes an Excel By 5 Community:

- *Parents*
- *Children*
- *Volunteers*
- *Child Care Providers*
- *Businesses*
- *Government*
- *Community Organizations*
- *Churches*
- *Media*
- ***"EVERYONE"***

What Makes an Excel By 5 Community Successful?

"Teamwork"

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Excel By 5 Inc. State Staff. . . .



Bob Clay, Executive Director

Bob Clay is the Executive Director for Excel by 5. Prior to this position he was the sites coordinator with Excel By 5 from 2009—2011 where he recruited and worked statewide with both certified and candidate communities.

Before joining the Early Childhood Institute and Excel By 5, Clay was employed by and retired from the International Business Machines Corporation.

From Madison, MS Bob holds the Bachelor of Science in Personnel Management from the University of Southern Mississippi.



Mechelle Wallace, Sites Coordinator

Mechelle Wallace is the sites coordinator in the Mississippi Delta Region for Excel By 5.

Mechelle earned the Master of Science in Community Development from Delta State University. She is an alderwomen for the Town of Alligator, Mississippi, and the lead coordinator for Alligator's Health and Wellness Project.

She is also a member of the Rural Sociological Society, the Alabama Mississippi Sociological Association, and the Community Development Society, and is a graduate of the Mid-South Delta Leaders Class III.



Crystal Blackmon, Sites Coordinator

Crystal Blackmon is the sites coordinator in northwest Mississippi for Excel by 5.

Ms. Blackmon has worked for the Mississippi State University Early Childhood Institute as a technical assistant, field supervisor and project director with a focus on research-based best practices for early care and education centers. She was previously employed with Friends of Children of Mississippi, Inc., as a Head Start teacher.

From Jackson, Crystal holds the Bachelor of Arts degree in child development from Tougaloo College and a Master of Science degree in elementary education, with an emphasis in early childhood education, from Jackson State University.

Excel By 5 Communities

What a difference two years can make from our early beginnings in 2004 with the four pilot communities of Petal, Pascagoula, West Point and Cleveland.

In 2009 there were nine Excel By 5 Communities. As you can see below we now have eight Certified and 20 Candidate Communities.

With the current efforts in the northwestern part of the state, plus the interest we see in other areas, we expect continued growth.

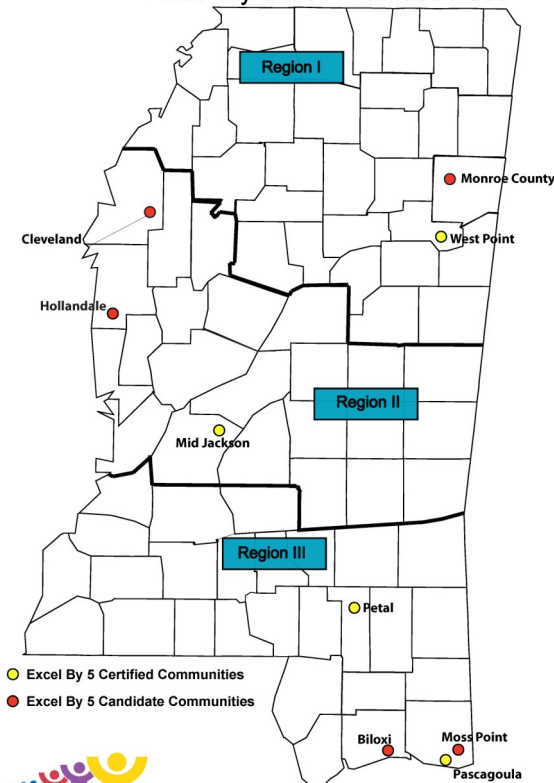
Certified Communities

Petal, West Point, Pascagoula, Mid-Jackson, Monroe County, Moss Point, Biloxi and Cleveland.

Candidate Communities

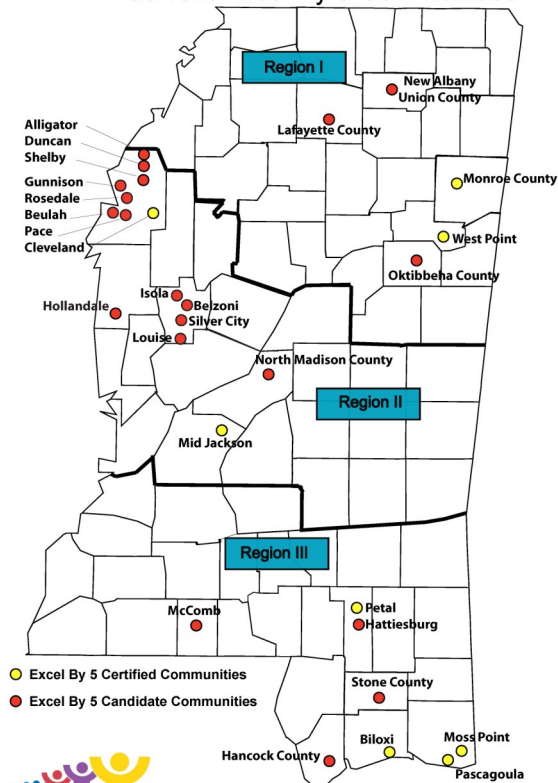
Hancock County, Hattiesburg, Hollandale, Lafayette County, McComb, Union County, North Madison County, Oktibbeha County, Stone County, Duncan, Alligator, Shelby, Beulah, Gunnison, Pace, Rosedale, Belzoni, Isola, Silver City and Louise.

Excel By 5 Communities 2009



Map courtesy of Excel By 5, Inc.

Current Excel By 5 Communities



Map courtesy of Excel By 5, Inc.
Updated 07/27/2011

Lafayette County, Oxford, University Coalition

Submitted by Kerry Holmes, Steering Committee Chair, kholmes@olemiss.edu

At the March meeting of the United Way Board of Directors, the United Way's Education Working Group, led by Linda Glaze, Kathleen Sullivan, Judith Thompson, and Julie Walton, requested that United Way serve as the lead institution on an application to Excel by 5 to enable the Lafayette Oxford University (LOU) community to be certified as a child friendly community.

Through multiple informational and planning meetings, following the guidance of Bob Clay, Sites Coordinator, we established a community coalition that attracted more than 40 people who volunteered to work in one of the four focus groups and recruited our Certification Manager, Mary Harrington, Director of Institutional Research and Assessment at the University of Mississippi. The University of Mississippi School of Education provided a PT graduate student to support the coalition's certification work. We have met with directors of child care centers and Head Start to determine their needs and distributed needs assessment surveys to parents through local businesses and organizations, child care centers, pre-k programs at the local schools, Chamber of Commerce, Head Start, Baptist Memorial Hospital's 2011 Kid's Fair, and the United Way's Kick Off. We are working on the following ongoing projects: distribution and analysis of the needs assessment surveys, planning monthly child care and assessment training meetings with the directors of child care and Head



Start centers, finding a suitable location for the resource center, and the development of resource guides for parents of children 0-5.

Communication and cooperation among the focus groups are hallmarks of our coalition that include churches, businesses, parents, local child care centers and Head Start programs, Baptist Memorial Hospital, MS Department of Health, Project Run, North MS Regional Center, Family Crisis Center, Kiwanis Club, Chamber of Commerce, Oxford City and Lafayette County schools, Oxford Lafayette Public Library, Northwest Community College Early Childhood Education Center, Mississippi State University Research and Referral Center, and The University of Mississippi School of Education, Child Advocacy and Play Therapy Institute, National Food Service Management Institute, and the Center for Population Studies. To date, we have submitted a proposal to the Lafayette Oxford Foundation for Tomorrow (LOFT)

seeking funds for materials to establish a resource center. We participated in a Webinar with the UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities to explore the possibility of using their Early Development Instrument (EDI) to collect baseline data on early childhood needs related to children's school readiness within our community. Data would be used to create a cycle of assessment, analysis, and action that would help us build a dynamic program that meets the health and education needs of the children in our community.



CANDIDATE
EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY

LAFAYETTE COUNTY • OXFORD • UNIVERSITY

Hancock County—“Walk In My Shoes”

Submitted by Cathy Wilson, Certification Manager, cwilson@hancock.k12.ms.us

As Hancock County began their certification process and learn about what resources were available to families and children ages 0-5, the Hancock County Excel By 5 Coalition participated in a “Walk in My Shoes” workshop that placed coalition members in role playing scenarios involving families with children under 5.

The objective was to identify, locate and experience the resources in our community through the eyes of parents. The scenarios ranged from being a single low income father to a dual career family with young children looking to move to the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Two person teams were given a scenario and a phone book and sent to get the help required by the scenario they were given. We invited community leaders to join us for lunch and discussion if they were unable to join us for the morning. We had representatives from Waveland and Bay St. Louis. We plan to run the workshop again and involve more of the commu-

nity. The exercise was eye opening. We were made aware of the resources that exist in our community, what we take for granted

“The exercise was eye opening... We plan to run the workshop again and involve more of the community.”

and what resources are missing or hard to find. The workshop served to motivate and revitalize our team and made the need for a

strong resource guide more than evident.



CANDIDATE
EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY
HANCOCK COUNTY



Hancock Child Development Center—Bay St. Louis, MS

Web Site Up To Date?

Once of the ways families in your community can obtain information about your efforts is through the Community Excel By 5 web site. There are areas for contact information, resources, an event calendar and photographs.

Many times at your community wide events and training sessions

people want to know more about Excel By 5 and what your community has to offer. This is not just for the citizens in your community but also about having a presence as people and businesses look at your community as a future home. Be proud of what you do. “Share the Good News.” If you need assistance maintain-

ing your web site or need a new userid and password, please contact the state office.

“Remember it only takes a minute to add information that can change the life of a child.”

Oktibbeha County

Submitted by Ellen Goodman, Certification Manager, okcountyexcelby5@bellsouth.net

The 2011 Back to School Bash and Health Fair held on July 30th at the Starkville Sportplex had 1,097 community members attending. The Oktibbeha County Excel By 5 Coalition and Oktibbeha County Families First Resource Center partnered to sponsor the event.

Over 30 area agencies were present to share with the families about the services they offer.

Health screenings were available including vision, hearing, simple blood sugar, blood pressure, height, and weight. Donated school supplies were available to families in attendance provided by area service clubs, churches, and support agencies.

New to the event this year was the distribution of free car seats and installation by certified car seat installers. Also area barbers

were present to provide free haircuts for children.

The event was successful because many agencies, churches and organizations came together to provide funding and/or volunteers. This is the second year the Oktibbeha County Excel By 5 Coalition has participated in the Back to School Bash.



CANDIDATE
EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY
OKTIBBEHA COUNTY

City of Petal Re-invests in Excel By 5

Submitted by Julie Fondren, Committee Chair, Julie.fondren@petalschools.com

The city of Petal celebrated its' certification as an Excel By 5 community on Saturday, April 9, 2011 at the city's Relay Park. The day included fun activities and healthy foods during the art-themed celebration. Activities were geared for children ranging in age from two to eight and offered a variety of hands-on art experiences. Community artists provided exhibits ranging from chalk drawing and collage to flower arranging, jewelry making and even creative movement. Additionally, the city of Petal presented to the Petal Excel By 5

Coalition, a check for \$30,000 to support the early childhood work in the community. Mayor Hal Marx stated that while the city's

Mayor Hal Marx stated . . . city leaders look at this as an investment in the future!

budget is tight, city leaders look at this as an investment in the future. The amount actually represents a \$5,000 increase over the amount given during the past four years. On hand to accept the

check were the school district superintendent, school board members and the Petal Excel By 5 Coalition chair and coalition members.

The EXCELebration recognizes Petal's status as an Excel By 5 community - the first in the state - as well as celebrating Petal's youngest citizens and bringing attention to the numerous support programs available to families through Excel By 5. The celebration also kicked off the national observance of "The Week of the Young Child".



CERTIFIED
EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY
PETAL



Cleveland, Mississippi

Submitted by Patsy Clerk, Certification Manager, Patsy_Clerk@yahoo.com

We are so excited in the Mississippi Delta because our hometown, Cleveland, Mississippi, is an Excel By 5 Certified Early Childhood Community. Our community has wrapped its arms around its most vulnerable citizens: infants and children ages 0-5 with their families.

Business and community leaders, schools, the health care system, child care providers, parents, churches, and many others have all come together to support parents and their young children.

This was not an easy process as our community faced many challenges along the way; however, our eyes are on our prizes -- the children and the benefits for them are immeasurable.

It is an honor, as well as a privilege for Cleveland to be a part of Mississippi's family of Certified Early Childhood Excel By 5 communities. Our community has worked effortlessly helping our children to become healthy, happy, and ready for "Big School".



Excel By 5 Web Site—Links for Information

Have you visited the Excel By 5 Links page on the EB5 website? There are many links that will assist your coalition, caregivers, parents and others to provide information and topics on children 0-5. Here are some examples of the information you can find on the [LINKS PAGE](#).

- **Born Learning**
Helps parents, caregivers and communities create quality early learning opportunities for young children by providing important information about how young children learn. There are easy fun activities that parents, grandparents and caregivers can use every day.
- **Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers**
How teachers can help children from birth to 3 years to learn and grow in language, social-emotional and physical development and to practice and master basic concepts and skills in mathematics, science, and self-help.
- **Everything Preschool**
Contains over 30,000 early childhood education ideas separated into over 100 themes, 26 Alphabet Idea Sections, & Lesson Plans.
- **Healthy Smart Grow Smart**
This series of booklets takes a month by month look at a baby's development from birth to one.

Hattiesburg, MS

Submitted by Dan Kibodeaux, United Way, dan@unitedwaysems.org

The Hattiesburg Excel By 5 coalition has been busy getting its steering committee organized, focus area teams meeting, and working on its initial plan of action. The Hattiesburg Excel By 5 resource directory was published in late-July and has been distributed widely throughout the community. An online version of the directory will be available soon. At the next coalition meeting in

November, we will be working on finalizing our community action plan and scheduling community events for the coming months.

The coalition participated in the Hattiesburg Public School District's "Ready, Set, Go!" back-to-school event on August 2. This event was held mainly for elementary school-age children and their families, but over 100 pre-

school children came to the event. Information about Excel By 5 and the Hattiesburg Excel By 5 community resource directory were distributed to parents at the event.

In the photo below, Dr. Bitsy Browne Miller and Dan Kibodeaux are shown presenting Excel By 5 information to a Hattiesburg parent.



The ***Pine Belt Child Care Directors Network*** was established in 1998. PBCDN began as a vehicle for Owners and Directors to meet, network, and share experiences. We began with 8 charter members and have grown to 28 member centers from not only Hattiesburg, but Petal, Collins, Waynesboro, Wiggins, Columbia, and Brooklyn.

Our monthly meetings soon grew to include staff trainings for our members' childcare staff providing at least 12 of the required 15 hours of staff development per year. There are two special projects we do every year, in addition to our conference. During Caregiver Appreciation Week, we host a catered dinner for our members' staff with 100+ attending. Also, each year the network chooses a special project for our Christmas donation.

In 2001, PBCDN began the "For Our Children" Conference. Ten years later, our conference has grown to 400+ attendees and up to 35 presenters from all over the state, covering many different topics of interest to childcare professionals.

Through monthly meetings and conferences, we have made it a priority to inform the child care community about regulations and legislation affecting the industry in our state. We also work diligently to bring awareness and/or training of projects and activities of interest to child care professionals. These include the Mississippi Quality Rating System, the Early Learning Guidelines, ITERS-R and ECERS-R, Child Abuse & Neglect and Excel By 5. ~ **Margie Nobles—Play School Child Care Center**

Biloxi, Mississippi

Submitted by Susan Hunt, Certification Manager, huntsd41@yahoo.com

The Biloxi Excel by 5 Coalition, Biloxi Public Schools and the City of Biloxi sponsored the first “Countdown to Readiness Fair” on Thursday, May 5, 2011. The event was held at Lopez School and the Biloxi Family Resource Center from 4:30pm - 6:30pm. Participating schools included Cedar Lake Christian Academy, Our Lady of Fatima Elementary, Gorenflo Elementary, Jeff Davis Elementary, Nativity BVM Elementary, North Bay Elementary and Popp’s Ferry Elementary.

When the families registered, they received a “Countdown to Readiness Fair” Stamp Card. The 7 different schools were assigned one of the designated skills such as Syllable Count Skill, Sequence Skill, Number Recognition Skill, Color Recognition Skill, Fine Motor Skill, Shape Recognition Skill and Alphabet Recognition Skill. There was also the Library Station; the Rest Rooms Station; Cafeteria and School Bus Stations. Families also had the opportunity to tour the Biloxi Family Resource Center.

After the children completed 7 out of the 12 choices, they received a Biloxi bag. The bag included a Kindergarten information booklet which was designed and created by the coalition readiness committee. The booklet included contact information for all the local elementary schools in Biloxi; top ten things parents can do; Colors, Shapes and Numbers; Alphabet and Sounds; Sight Words; the Common Core State Standards; Kindergarten Readiness Activities; information from the Mississippi

Department of Health on the proper procedures for washing hands. Many volunteers assisted with this event. It was a great success!



CERTIFIED
EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY

BILOXI

West Bolivar (Beulah, Gunnison, Pace, Rosedale)

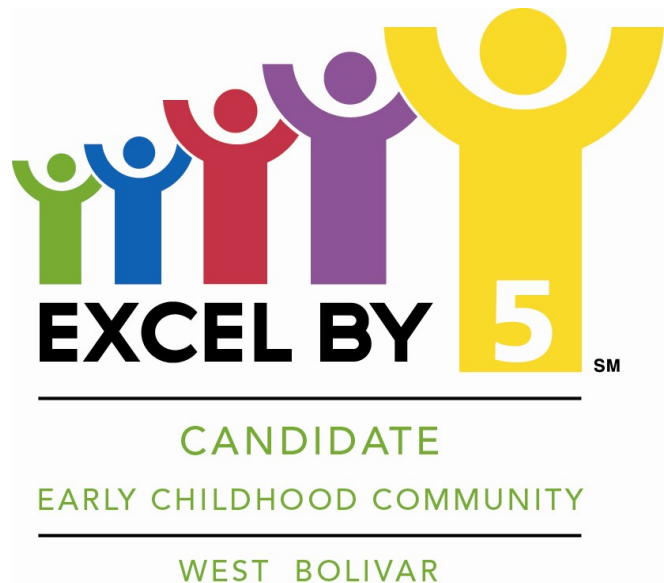
Submitted by Crystal Tucker, Certification Manager, ctucker_2004@yahoo.com

West Bolivar continues to work towards certification. The West Bolivar communities consist of the towns of Beulah, Gunnison, Pace and Rosedale. We continue towards certification by gaining access to all available resources, including building strong community partnerships, establish relationships with the school district, and making parents aware of the West Bolivar Excel By 5 Coalition activities. In addition we have partnered with SPARK

(Supporting Parents to Assure Ready Kids) and the West Bolivar School District to help our communities become child friendly.

We have collaborated and partnered with three activities. The activities were two health fairs and a back to school bash. At the health fairs we provided information on the immunizations for children ages 0 to 5, distributed the food guide pyramid, 150 ways

to tell a child good job, and gave them information on different places where they can go and obtain services. All three of these activities were a great success. We are delighted to have this great opportunity to make our communities child friendly. Excel By 5 is a great asset to the people of the West Bolivar communities and we hope to continue to thrive to make our community child friendly!



Excel By 5 & Excel By 5 Community Facts

- 28 Cities/Counties/Neighborhoods
- 20 Community Coalitions
- 8 Certified Communities
- 250+ Coalition Volunteers
- 60+ Annual Community Wide Events
- 80+ Annual Coalition Meetings
- 60+ Annual Family Parent Workshops
- 60+ Annual Education Partner Sessions
- 469,615 people in Excel By 5 Communities
- 35,085 Children 0-5 in Excel By 5 Communities.
- Potential impact with 372 Full & Part Time Child Care Centers
 - 17,743 Children Enrolled
 - 4,212 Employees.

Monroe County

Submitted by Beverly Haney, Beverly@gilmorefoundation.org

The Monroe County Excel By 5 Coalition continues to work to touch children’s lives in our area. Through our lead agency, Gilmore Early Learning Initiative, (GELI), we provide reading parties for the young children of our community, and GELI Dog continues to delight children of all ages, while teaching the importance of “building brainpower”.

On July 30, 2011, we hosted a community-wide Excel By 5

“Treasure Hunt” at the Monroe County Advanced Learning Center. While children and their families enjoyed entertainment, food, games and fun, complete with a pirate theme and accessories, we also provided information on the Common Core Curriculum Standards and the Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines, along with school supplies, instructional handouts, and enthusiastic participation from county elementary school teach-

ers and Horizon child care centers. The children and their families undertook a “treasure hunt” to complete tasks needed for kindergarten readiness; as they completed each task on their treasure map, they received a prize to fill their “bag of loot”. The Monroe County Excel By 5 Coalition is active in promoting a community-wide focus on providing the best environment possible for the youngest citizens of our area.



Mid-Jackson

Submitted by Eileen Beazley, eileenbeazley@midtownpartners.org

Mid-Jackson Excel By 5 recently hosted, "All Aboard the Kindergarten Express." This event was the Mid-Jackson Early Education and School Readiness event. The event consisted of vendors supplying information regarding resources for children 0 to 5 and their families. Parents had the opportunity to attend a workshop highlighting the parent's role in preparing young children for Kindergarten. The following comments are taken from the event's evaluations. The comments are reported exactly as written on the evaluation.

At this event, I learned:

"Other resource options available for parents. I enjoyed the fact that the principal and kindergarten teacher were involved."

- Mid-Jackson Parent

"These parents do want to be involved and informed about what is going on in our schools."

- Kindergarten Teacher of Elementary School in Mid-Jackson

"I met one of the kindergarten teachers and other Brown Parents/Guardians. I also learned

that being involved and having a routine is vital for my child to succeed."

- Mid-Jackson Parent

There are numerous other comments from parents, vendors, and volunteers who participated in this event that echoed similar response. The response that parents and community members want to be involved and work together to make their community a place that supports children and families.



CERTIFIED
EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY

MID-JACKSON



Mississippi Child Care Resource & Referral Network

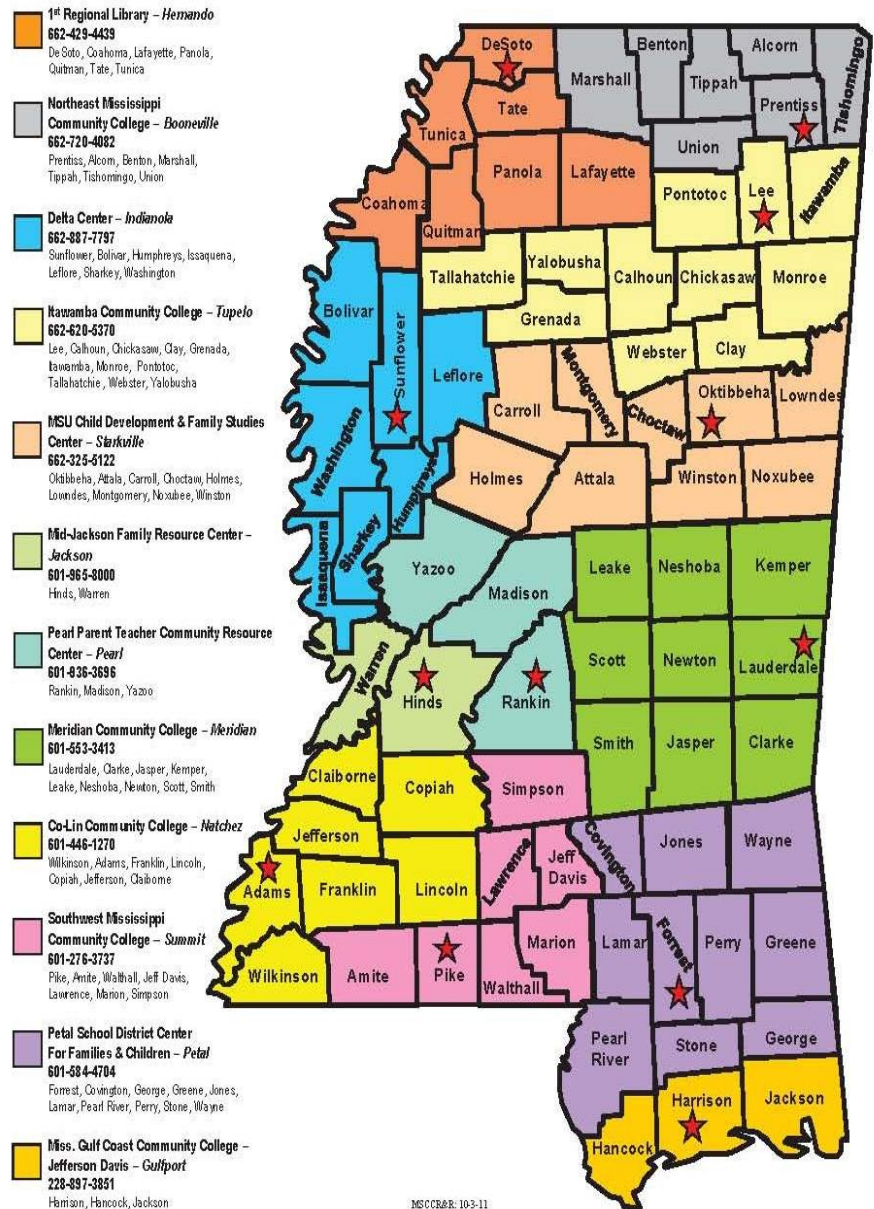
Growing Mississippi's Children

The Mississippi Child Care Resource and Referral Network (MSCCR&R) offers many services that are of interest to Excel By 5 Coalitions. MSCCR&R can assist you in meeting your certification requirements for your communities.

MSCCR&R Network services include:

- Professional development hours for child care providers and families on an assortment of topics;
- Technical assistance to assist child care providers in offering quality care including environmental evaluations;
- Publications including a brochure on choosing quality child care;
- Child Development Associate Credential Online for those wanting to obtain their CDA credentialing and additional professional development;
- A referral process to assist families in locating child care and in-home providers;
- Resource Checkout Centers located at 12 sites across the state for providers and families;
- Mobile Resource and Referral unit that can be scheduled to come to your area; and
- Nurturing Homes Initiative information for your records of in-home providers.

Mississippi Child Care Resource & Referral Network



Contact the resource and referral site in your area to schedule a time to discuss the unique needs of your community.

Mississippi Child Care Resource & Referral Network
 Box 9745
 Mississippi State, MS 39762
 MSCCR&R@ext.msstate.edu
 Toll-free: 1-866-706-8827
MSUCARES.COM/CHILDCARE



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Launched in the Fall of 2004, Excel By 5 is an innovative community certification, that is designed to encourage and assist communities to become actively involved in supporting their young children. The first of its kind, this certification emphasizes the important roles parents, primary caregivers and the community play in educating children during their most formative years, birth to five.

This project identifies gaps in community resources, promotes community collaboration, volunteerism and economic development. On the whole, we expect children in Excel By 5 communities will be healthier and better prepared for kindergarten and first grade. Excel By 5 certification requirements are divided into four groups: Community Involvement; Family and Parent Support; Early Care and Education; and Health and vary according to community size and capacity. The certification process takes about two years to complete, and the certification is awarded for three years.