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**CONTACT:** Paul Nelson, MDHS Communications Director (601)-359-4517

### **ADDITIONAL MILLION DOLLARS ALLOCATED TO IMPROVE CARE FOR MISSISSIPPI CHILDREN**

The State Department of Health and the Department of Human Services strive daily to improve the availability and the quality of child care services and programs offered to the children being served in Mississippi's licensed child care centers. Over the past several months, our agencies have worked closely together to improve the coordination of services, to improve the quality and oversight of child care centers.

The Department of Health is the licensing agency and has state regulatory authority for licensed child care centers. Over the past few years, the Department of Health has made efforts to conduct two inspections a year to monitor the child care center's compliance with state licensure regulations. Both agencies feel that by expanding and enhancing the child care licensure program, additional technical assistance and oversight can be provided which will benefit the licensed providers to improve and achieve the quality of care desired for Mississippi's children.

The Department of Human Services has increased funding to the Department of Health for the operation of the child care licensure program from 1 million to 2 million dollars annually. The Department of Health will use these funds to employ additional staff to decrease the center-to-inspector caseload, to increase the number of inspections from two annually to four annually, to establish a designated complaint unit, and to increase staff and child care center training.