

By: Representative Clarke

To: Public Health and Welfare

HOUSE BILL NO. 1281

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A MISSISSIPPI CHILDREN'S CABINET AND  
2 PROVIDE FOR ITS MEMBERSHIP; TO EMPOWER THE CHILDREN'S CABINET TO  
3 SERVE AS THE INTERDEPARTMENTAL COORDINATING ENTITY FOR ALL STATE  
4 AGENCIES SERVING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, TO COORDINATE BUDGETS,  
5 MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS AND RECEIVE REPORTS; AND FOR RELATED  
6 PURPOSES.

7 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

8 SECTION 1. (1) As used in this act, "children" means any  
9 child under age nineteen (19) who has not had his or her minority  
10 status removed by court order.

11 (2) To ensure that children's needs are met within the  
12 context of relationships at the family and community level and in  
13 order to maximize the potential for children to succeed in school,  
14 the Legislature finds and declares that:

15 (a) Parents have the primary duty to care for  
16 and educate their young preschool children;

17 (b) Any assistance provided families should consider  
18 a family's preference for care-giving situations reflecting the  
19 family's religious, cultural and community values; and

20 (c) The State of Mississippi has numerous state  
21 agencies which collaboratively support families and communities,  
22 keeping family and children at the heart of all decisions.

23 (3) The Mississippi Children's Cabinet is created to ensure  
24 coordination among the various agencies and programs serving  
25 children, families and communities to facilitate interdepartmental  
26 communication, cooperation and maximum use of resources and to  
27 promote high standards for all programs serving children and their  
28 families in Mississippi.

29           (4) The membership of the Mississippi Children's Cabinet  
30 shall be as follows:

31           (a) The State Superintendent of Education, or his  
32 designee;

33           (b) The Executive Director of the Department of Health,  
34 or his designee;

35           (c) The Executive Director of the Department of Human  
36 Services, or his designee;

37           (d) The Executive Director of the Mississippi  
38 Department of Mental Health, or his designee;

39           (e) The Attorney General, or his designee;

40           (f) A representative from the Office of the Governor.

41           (5) The cabinet shall meet upon call of the Governor not  
42 later than August 1, 2001, and shall organize for business by  
43 selecting a chairman who shall serve for a one-year term and may  
44 be selected for subsequent terms. The cabinet shall adopt  
45 internal organizational procedures necessary for efficient  
46 operation of the cabinet. Cabinet procedures shall include duties  
47 of officers, a process for selecting officers, quorum requirements  
48 for conducting business and policies for any cabinet staff. Each  
49 member of the cabinet shall designate necessary staff of their  
50 departments to assist the cabinet in performing its duties and  
51 responsibilities. The cabinet shall meet and conduct business at  
52 least quarterly. Meetings of the cabinet shall be open to the  
53 public and opportunity for public comment shall be made available  
54 at each such meeting. The chairman of the cabinet shall notify  
55 all persons who request such notice as to the date, time and place  
56 of each meeting.

57           (6) Members of the cabinet shall receive no compensation for  
58 their services, but shall be reimbursed for travel and other  
59 expenses actually incurred in the performance of their official  
60 duties. Such reimbursement shall be paid in accordance with the

61 provisions of Section 25-3-41 and shall be approved by the  
62 chairman of the cabinet.

63 (7) The Mississippi Children's Cabinet shall perform each of  
64 the following duties:

65 (a) Serve as interagency coordinating council for the  
66 various agencies, public and private programs serving children and  
67 their families in the State of Mississippi;

68 (b) Collect, compile and distribute data relating to  
69 all programs and services for children and families, including,  
70 but not limited to, an inventory of the programs and services  
71 available in each county of the state; and identify and make  
72 recommendations with regard to program areas for which an  
73 unfulfilled need exists within the state for accurate and  
74 accessible information;

75 (c) Review and analyze spending priorities for each  
76 state agency which utilizes state or federal funds to administer  
77 or provide programs and services for children and families and  
78 make recommendations thereon to the Legislative Budget Committee  
79 and the Governor;

80 (d) Publish annually, on or before November 1, a  
81 comprehensive report on the status of all programs and services  
82 for children and families in Mississippi and distribute the report  
83 to the Governor, the Legislature, local school districts and make  
84 the report available to the general public, using the following  
85 criteria:

86 (i) Program name and location;

87 (ii) Dates of operation;

88 (iii) Service provided;

89 (iv) Target population and number served;

90 (v) Eligibility requirement;

91 (vi) Funding source;

92 (vii) Amount of funding per unit;

93 (viii) Annual cost;

- 94 (ix) Evaluation type and results; and  
95 (x) The state agency administering the program;  
96 (e) Receive and consider recommendations of the:  
97 (i) Juvenile Health Recovery Board established  
98 under Section 43-27-303 et seq. ;  
99 (ii) The Children's Advisory Council established  
100 and empowered under Section 43-14-1 et seq. ;  
101 (iii) The Interagency Advisory Committee for Early  
102 Childhood Services; and  
103 (iv) The report of any other council task force or  
104 committee charged by law or executive order to develop  
105 recommendations regarding children and family services;  
106 (f) Apply for, receive and administer funds for  
107 research, planning and evaluation of all programs serving children  
108 and their families.

109 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from  
110 and after July 1, 2001.