



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**

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**ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**  
**Administration on Children, Youth and Families**  
330 C Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

June 11, 2018

**CERTIFIED MAIL - RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED**

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Justice Jess Dickinson  
Commissioner  
Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services  
P.O. Box 346  
Jackson, MS 39205

Dear Commissioner Dickinson:

This letter is regarding the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) mandated as a result of the findings of the title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review (IV-E Review) conducted in your state during the week of August 14, 2017. At that time, the state was found in non-substantial compliance with various aspects of the title IV-E program requirements for the period under review (PUR) of 10/01/16 – 03/31/17 and was, therefore, required to develop and submit a PIP in accordance with federal regulations at 45 CFR 1356.71(i).

The PIP document was submitted electronically to the Children’s Bureau Region 4 office on March 27, 2018 and, following our review of the document and discussions with your staff, a final revision was re-submitted on May 25, 2018. We have reviewed the final plan. We are pleased to inform you that Mississippi’s PIP, with the noted revisions, for the title IV-E program is approved as of June 1, 2018. The targeted completion date for the state’s PIP is June 1, 2019. We appreciate the efforts of your staff in developing this plan to improve implementation of the state’s title IV-E program. A copy of the final, approved plan is enclosed for your convenience.

Mississippi’s title IV-E PIP delineates strategies your state will use to address those areas requiring corrective action. The state’s PIP activities provide for the Department of Child Protection Services to collaborate with the state Administrative Office of the Courts to ensure judicial determinations occur and that they are timely and meaningful. The PIP also considers key program concerns affecting agency’s performance identified during PIP planning and development. The planned strategies will help to address the Department of Child Protection Services’ efforts to ensure effective and timely oversight of children in foster care. Child welfare agencies, the courts and other agency partners play integral roles in assuring procedural safeguards are in place to protect children and effectuate proper judicial determinations and that these protections are met within the mandates established by title IV-E of the Social Security Act and its implementing regulations.

Quarterly reports are due to the regional office, consistent with 45 CFR 1356.71, so that we can jointly evaluate your progress in meeting PIP goals and identify and assess technical assistance needed to successfully implement the state's PIP. Each quarterly report must include status information on tasks accomplished, implementation challenges and documentation such as monitoring results and policy updates stemming from actions steps completed for the reporting period. Quarterly reports are to be submitted within 30 calendar days after the end of each reporting period. The first report is due 90 days from the date of this letter and must be sent to our Region 4 Office. A cumulative report summarizing key programmatic milestones and performance outcomes accomplished during PIP implementation also must be submitted within 30 days of the noted PIP completion date of June 1, 2019.

Thank you for your efforts on this mission critical task. We look forward to working closely with you over the next year to assist you with your plan for achieving proper implementation of federal requirements and improving services to children and families in your state. Should you have questions, you may contact Shalonda Cawthon, Regional Program Manager in Region 4, at 404-562-2242 or by e-mail at [shalonda.cawthon@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:shalonda.cawthon@acf.hhs.gov). Alternatively, you may contact Antonette Rollins, Child and Family Program Specialist in Region 4, at 404-562-2833 or by e-mail at [antonette.rollins@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:antonette.rollins@acf.hhs.gov).

Sincerely,



Jerry Milner  
Associate Commissioner  
Children's Bureau

Enclosure

cc: Kris Jones, Deputy Commissioner of Human Resources & Administration; MDCPS;  
Jackson, MS  
Shalonda Cawthon, Child Welfare Regional Program Manager; CB, RO 4; Atlanta, GA  
Gail Collins, Program Implementation Director; CB; Washington, DC  
Jennifer Butler-Hembree, Program Specialist; CB; Washington DC  
Antonette Rollins, Child and Family Program Specialist; CB, RO 4; Atlanta, GA