



# Building a Workforce Development Office to Strengthen MCH Services in Mississippi

Prepared on September 5, 2023

## Mississippi Team Members

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## Background

In July 2021, Mississippi's Title V Office established a MCH Workforce Development Office (the Office). The primary goal was to build a diverse and culturally sensitive workforce by providing training and development opportunities for Health Services Division staff, health students, and external partners. Additional goals for the Office include offering leadership development opportunities, helping staff address emerging issues, and improving staff ability to lead with attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Mississippi's team engaged with the National MCH Workforce Development Center to strengthen the new Office and its programs. During their Learning Journey, the team created a vision, mission, and strategic plan; implemented leadership lessons from the Learning Journey to strengthen and sustain the Office; surveyed Health Services Division staff to identify training and education needs; strengthened plans for onboarding and training staff; and developed training opportunities for partner organizations.

## Building Mississippi's MCH Workforce Development Office

Among many impressive accomplishments during the Learning Journey, Team Mississippi:

- Completed Vision, Mission, and Aims statements
- Identified staff training needs through "Empathy Mapping" and a MCH Leadership Competencies survey
- Discovered programs that align with training needs
- Hosted two public health graduate student interns who designed an emblem and built a website for the Office
- Partnered with public universities to host student interns and local organizations to offer staff training
- Addressed short-term staff needs by creating a web-based Reading Club, an Educational Update email, and training sessions

The team also aligned initiatives with their strategic plan, including:

- Providing and improving staff orientation
- Addressing staff training in priority areas by becoming a CEU provider and developing an in-house professional development team to design and offer training on an expanded set of topics
- Maintaining the website and adding a training calendar for MSDH staff and community partners
- Publishing an Educational Update email to promote leadership topics and trainings

As a result of the team's body of work and advocacy promoting the importance of workforce development, the Mississippi Department of Health is examining ways to strengthen their workforce more broadly. The Title V MCH Workforce Development Office is well positioned to contribute to these efforts.

### Four Pillars of Mississippi's MCH Workforce Development Office Strategic Plan

1. Build an organizational culture focused on the workforce
2. New approach to training and development, "growing staff with joy"
3. Improve communication
4. Focus on leadership topics, "cheerleaders for leadership"

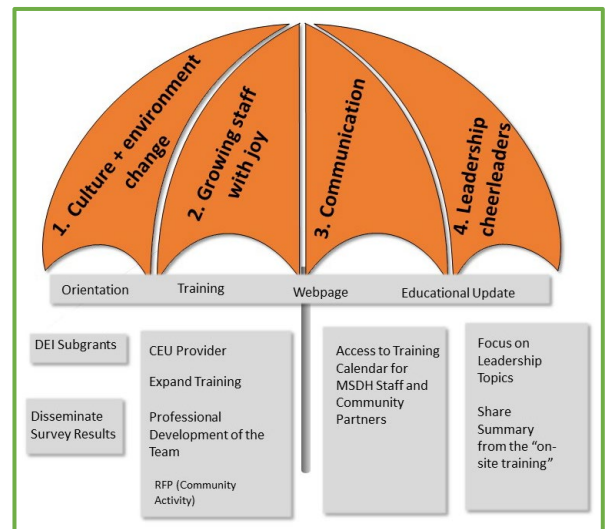
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### Team Leaders Valued Learning Journey Resources and Coaching Support

Six-months after the Learning Journey, Mississippi team leaders reflected back on the features of their experience that they found most useful in working on their team's health transformation efforts. One stated that conversations with Center coaches, "helped me see things in a different way, maybe from a higher up perspective... to see how things can work together and... work better together." This included developing the strategic plan with vision, mission, aims, and the four pillars.

When asked for a specific example of how conversations with Center coaches made a difference, she stated, "the fact that [the coaches] could take our thoughts and place them in a design of an umbrella was very helpful. They were very instrumental with wordsmithing as needed [and] provided exercises to build the program design, support[ing] our needs in so many ways."



***"The support for me as the leader in a new role and new office was outstanding, just what I needed. The support from [the coaches] and other Title V leaders [in the program] was worth it. They helped with forming and focusing the group. The one-day in-person meeting was extremely beneficial. [The program has helped us] to be leadership cheerleaders by focusing on leadership topics [and] being able to be adaptive to situations and make needed changes on the fly."***

During the learning journey, the Center coaches introduced a leadership development tool called the Six Thinking Hats, which helps the team examine problems from multiple perspectives. The leaders embraced this tool, and one went on to become a certified Six Thinking Hats facilitator. Within six months of completing the Learning Journey, Mississippi had already held three sessions for MCH staff, with three more to be scheduled.

Another helpful component of the Learning Journey experience were the web-based peer learning sessions with co-leads from other states/jurisdictions. Mississippi's team leader stated that it was beneficial to hear what other states were doing in MCH leadership and then "collaborat[e] with them to help enhance what we've got going on." Through these sessions, Mississippi became aware that Indiana and Tennessee were also developing staff onboarding projects. They were able to share their current work, ideas, successes, and areas for improvement, while learning from the experiences of other state health departments.

Combined, the coaching support, exposure to new skills and tools from the Center, and peer learning opportunities during the Learning Journey were essential to the long-term success of the new MCH Workforce Development Office. The team will continue to build on these efforts to strengthen their capacity to meet the workforce needs of Title V professionals throughout Mississippi.