mlicci

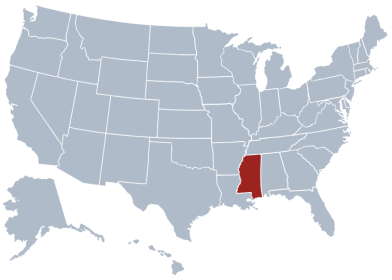
COUPLING CHILD CARE WITH PATHWAYS TO NONTRADITIONAL, HIGHER PAYING WORK: BRIDGING MISSISSIPPI'S SKILLS AND WAGE GAP

An Opportunity to Rethink Workforce Training for Low-Income Moms

A POLICY BRIEF

June 2017

Mississippi has a "Middle Skills Gap" or a labor force scenario in which available jobs that require some postsecondary education or technical training outnumber workers who are qualified to fill them. Mississippi's rate of workforce participation remains stubbornly low and has stagnated at the bottom of national rankings for many years.



While Mississippi's overall labor force participation rate hovers between 55% and 60%, single moms with dependent children below the age of 18 participate at an even higher rate, but most are stuck in low-wage jobs and don't have the training or education to get into work that pays income above poverty level.[1] To help moms – and, by extension, families – become economically self-sufficient and to help increase the state's skilled labor pool, the workforce system should prioritize low-income, low-skill moms for workforce training and apprenticeships.

But giving moms priority isn't enough. Prioritizing moms for training also requires prioritizing child care – so moms can successfully participate in training and transition into work or apprenticeships – and it also means prioritizing training that leads to higher-paying jobs. If moms are only receiving training that will lead back to low-wage work, even if child care is provided, the training will only reinforce patterns of gender wage disparity and occupational segregation. In the realm of middle-skill occupations, higher paying work for women generally means nontraditional work, in industries in which women are drastically underrepresented, but better paid.[2]

Current data paints a grim picture for Mississippi's working low-income women, but strides are being made in small pockets of the state. New requirements under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) are coinciding with shifts in child care policy. With innovative examples of federal Department of Labor (DOL) funding and federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) revenue working together to support real transitions from dependence to self-sufficiency currently underway, policymakers, workforce trainers and stakeholders have an opportunity to rethink how moms are served by the state's current workforce system.

One of the major workforce challenges revealed by Mississippi's WIOA implementation teams was the lack of affordable child care as a major barrier

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[1] State of Mississippi, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, "Mississippi Works Smart Start Career Pathway," http://www.mississippiworks.org/downloads/WIOA_MS_03_21_2016.pdf. MLICCI calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, Table S2302, B23007.

[2] The United States Department of Labor's Women's Bureau has defined nontraditional occupations (male-dominated) as those in which women are 25% or less of the employed workforce. See, https://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/nontra_traditional_occupations.htm.

to employment.[3] Moore Community House Women in Construction (MCH WinC) and the Mississippi Low Income Child Care Initiative (MLICCI) are working together to address this challenge with an integrated, innovative program design enabled by a Strengthening Working Families Initiative (SWFI) grant awarded to MCH WinC by the DOL through a major partnership that will serve as a model for other comprehensive one-stop centers under development in Mississippi's new WIOA strategy.

Current conditions for single moms, the growing needs of employers and Mississippi's changing workforce and child care systems will require state policymakers and employers to think creatively about how to invest a range of public funds to meet the needs of parents and children. To improve the state's economy, child care needs priority, investment and a linkage to job training that leads to higher paying work for low-income moms.

This policy brief highlights the need to invest in pathways to higher paying work and presents MCH WinC as a solution to Mississippi's "Middle Skills Gap" that promises to place mothers with child care needs onto pathways toward higher-paying jobs by coupling nontraditional workforce training with child care and other critical supports. Through the innovative use of TANF Block Grant funding and DOL job training support, WinC is able to focus on providing real child care to participants throughout training, job search and initial employment. MCH WinC's model provides nontraditional pre-apprenticeship job training leading to higher paying jobs or apprenticeships for low-income women and comprehensive case management to ensure the unique needs of different participants are met.

Child Care Reaches Too Few Working Moms

In Mississippi, working moms with young children are overrepresented in jobs that pay too little to support their families.[4] Median family income for single mom-headed families in Mississippi is just $19,000 a year, compared to $32,900 for single dads and $70,700 for married couple families. Women overall are half of Mississippi's workforce, yet they are two-thirds of minimum wage earners.[5] Low-income Mississippi moms work, but they are trapped in low-wage jobs with few promising pathways to better earnings. But low-income mothers face many obstacles in obtaining education or training that leads to higher-paying, higher-quality job opportunities. A majority of single moms below poverty in Mississippi lack the training and education required for higher-paying middle-skill and high-skill jobs. Women overall are drastically overrepresented in lower-paying occupations requiring low- and middle-skills and underrepresented in nontraditional, male-dominated middle-skill occupations that pay higher wages.

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[3] See, State of Mississippi, http://www.mississippiworks.org/downloads/WIOA_MS_03_21_2016.pdf.

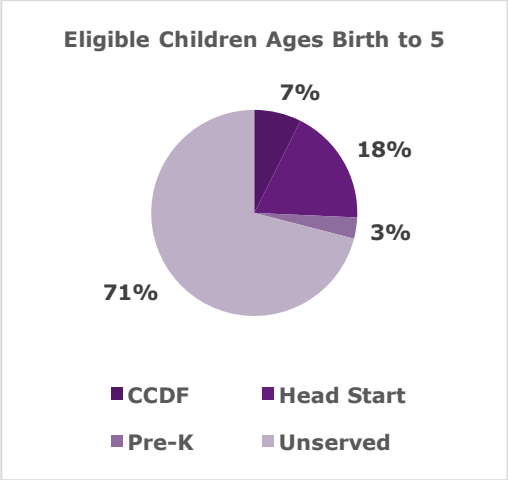
[4] MLICCI calculation of U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, Table B19126.

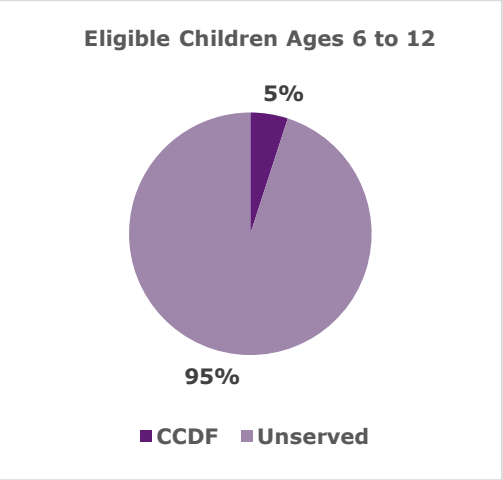
[5] National Women's Law Center (2015), https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Women-and-the-Minimum-Wage-State-by-State-Tables.pdf.

The most basic and daunting obstacle to overcome for a single mom is also the work support that makes the biggest difference in single mom-headed families' economic security: child care. Single moms, including those who work, struggle to afford child care.

While providing child care to low-income moms increases their opportunity to participate in the labor force, the reality is that child care assistance is woefully inadequate relative to Mississippi's need and the current investment level can only reach a sliver of eligible moms. Neither the workforce system nor the child care system prioritizes child care for parents seeking training or education for higher-paying work.[6] For a single mom, child care can make the difference between making it to work or participating in job training. Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) vouchers, which pay all or part of child care costs for working parents with income below 85% of state median income, only reach 12% of eligible Mississippi children.[7] Work training programs do not typically provide child care, unless a participant is one of the few who already receives it, and very few programs target women for nontraditional work while also providing supports like transportation or stipends to purchase uniforms, tools or licenses.

Child Care Assistance Reaches Few Eligible Children[8]





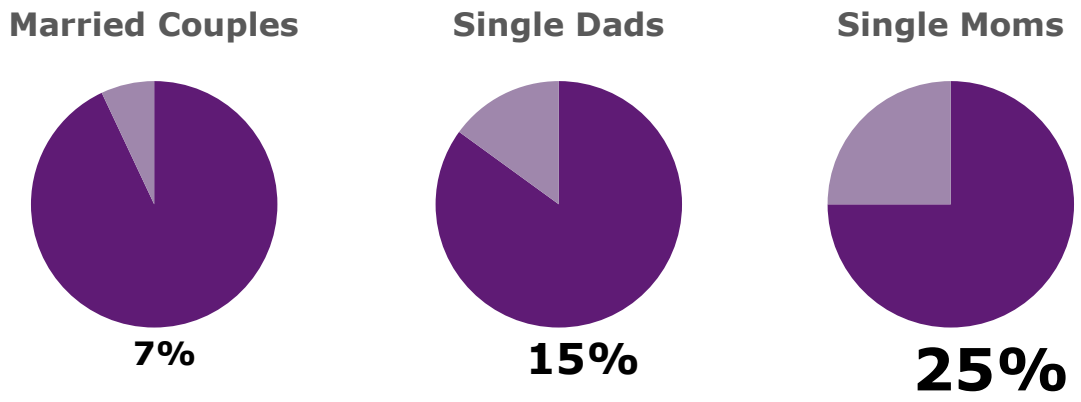
6 Gina Adams and Caroline Heller, "The Child Care and Development Fund and Workforce Development for Low-Income Parents: Opportunities and Challenges with Reauthorization," *Urban Institute* (2015).

7 The figure is specific to Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) vouchers. Stephanie Schmit and Christina Walker, "Disparate Access: Head Start and CCDBG Data by Race and Ethnicity," *Center for Law and Social Policy* (2016), http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/Disparate-Access.pdf.

8 MLICCI calculations of U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services data, MS Department of Education data, National Center for Children in Poverty, 2015 American Community Survey 1-year data. MLICCI defined low-income children as those in households with annual earnings below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline, or roughly 85% of MS state median income. Low-income working families with infants and young children can receive child care services through CCDF vouchers, through Head Start and through public Pre-Kindergarten. Head Start, CCDF and public pre-kindergarten reaches about 28% of Mississippi's eligible low-income infants and young children. Assistance for children between the ages of 6 and 12 is generally limited to CCDF. CCDF reaches only 5% of eligible low-income children between the ages of 6 and 12.

Mississippi must invest in child care for current and future workers because assistance in its current form reaches too few in need. And for single moms, child care costs eat up a larger share of earnings compared to married-couple families and even single dads.[9]

Average Annual Infant Care Costs as a Percent of Median Family Income (1 child)



Child care makes a huge positive difference in a low-income mom's ability to work and particularly to transition from low-wage work or unemployment to full-time work or apprenticeships. Recent studies show child care subsidies increase earnings outcomes for single moms, increase a single mom's likelihood of enrolling in school or training and significantly decrease the probability that a single mom will end employment.[10]

Child care also leads to better outcomes for workforce training participants. In neighboring Arkansas, the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative (CPI) provides adult education and postsecondary training to disadvantaged students, many of whom are current or former recipients of public assistance. Using part of the state's TANF block grant, CPI provides funding for case management, child care and transportation assistance for these participants.[11]

Wraparound services have had a significant impact on CPI participant outcomes. Specifically, those participants who received child care and other supportive services were nearly twice as likely to obtain a degree or credential compared to non-CPI students. Students receiving TANF assistance who

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[9] Infant care costs from Economic Policy Institute, Child Care Costs in the United States, http://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/MS, and Income data from 2011-2015 American Community Survey, Table B19126.

[10] Kogan, Deborah, Anne Paprocki, and Hannah Diaz. *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training (E & T) Best Practices Study: Final Report.* Prepared by Social Policy Research Associates for the *U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service*, (2016), https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/ops/SNAPEandTBestPractices.pdf.

[11] Brooke DeRenzis and Kermit Kaleba, "Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative: How TANF can support skills for low-income parents, and how policymakers can help," *National Skills Coalition* (2016).

participated in CPI also achieved higher earnings outcomes than TANF recipients who did not receive enhanced work supports.

A 2014 joint federal agency study, "What Works in Job Training: A Synthesis of the Evidence," acknowledged the importance of child care as a work support for disadvantaged people seeking work training, stating that, "along with work experience, education, and training, a range of supports and services is needed, such as child care and transportation, to enable disadvantaged individuals to participate in job training."[12]

Mississippi Single Moms Need a Pathway to Family Economic Security

When it comes to workforce training for parents, particularly single moms, child care is only one key element of a holistic approach. The other key is to ensure workforce training will lead to a higher-paying job. Even if child care is provided in perpetuity, training or education that does not allow a mom to lift her family out of poverty will simply perpetuate the long-established cycle.

Mississippi's economy will increasingly require a workforce that has training or education beyond high school. In 2015, an estimated 58% of available jobs in the state required some level of education or training beyond high school, while only 50% of the state's workers had skills that matched. The National Skills Coalition projects that Mississippi's rate of "middle skill jobs" will hold steady for years to come.[13] "Middle Skill Jobs," many of which are technical trades professions, promise higher wages for low-income working single moms who are languishing in low-wage, low-skill jobs with no clear pathway out.

This leaves Mississippi policymakers with a targeted need for investing in the support services that low-income, working parents need to succeed in and complete workforce training that leads to higher paying work. Training alone isn't enough for a single mom. Women heads of household need fundamental supports, particularly child care, to succeed in their course of training and transition into promising apprenticeships and careers.

A 2016 Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) report shows that women are more than half of all workers in middle-skill occupations, but that a significant disparity exists between the distribution of women in middle-skill occupations paying a lower wage, or less than $30,000 per year, and those in

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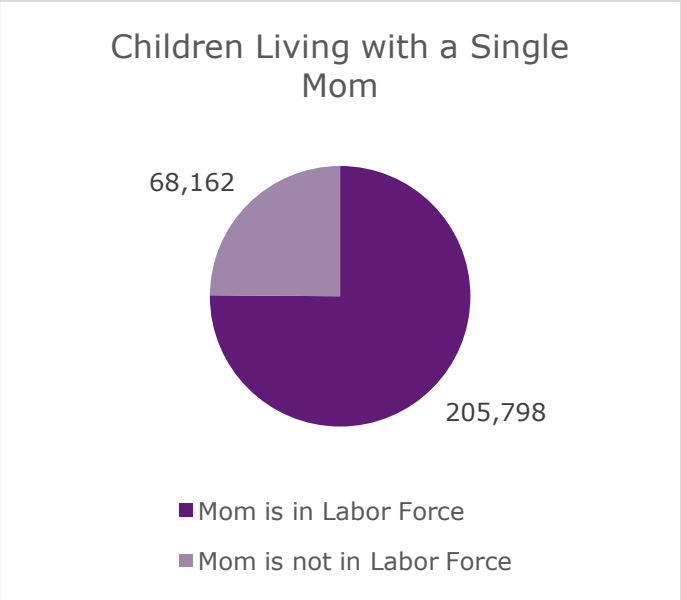
[12] What Works in Job Training: A Synthesis of the Evidence," *U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2014),* https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/jdt/jdt.pdf.

[13] Mississippi's Forgotten Middle," National Skills Coalition (2016), http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/2017-middle-skills-fact-sheets/file/Mississippi-MiddleSkills.pdf.



better paying middle-skill jobs.[14] Gendered perspectives about traditional versus nontraditional work for women play into the gender disparity of middle-skill jobs. For instance, when comparing the distribution by gender of workers in "good" middle-skill jobs, IWPR estimated that women are 77% of workers in "good" middle-skill health occupations (i.e., registered nurses, certified nursing assistants, medical assistants, etc.), yet less than 10% of workers in good transportation and advanced manufacturing jobs and a mere 3% of workers in "good" construction jobs.[15]

The most recent data shows 110,100 single moms with one or more of their own, dependent children under 18 in Mississippi. An estimated 87,500 of these moms participate in the labor force and about 76,100 were either employed or in the Armed Forces, based on 2011-2015 U.S. Census averages.[16]

In about 72% of the estimated 182,000 married couple families with children under age 18, moms either work along with spouses or are the sole breadwinners.[17]

Approximately 85% of children living with single parents live with a single mom and most live with a mom who participates in the labor force.[18]

While these single moms work, their income is far lower than other types of families.[19] Single moms are often providing all or most of the care for their children and this can have an effect on a mom's ability to work. This reality leads to single moms churning in and out of low-wage work, which diminishes the likelihood of raises, retirement or real economic security. If a job is inadequate to pay for private, full-time child care, then a single mom may only be able to work part-time, even if she wants to work more.

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14 Ariane Hegewisch, et all, "Pathways to Equity: Narrowing the Wage Gap by Improving Women's Access to Good Middle-Skill Jobs," *Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR),* (2016), See pg. 8, http://womenandgoodjobs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Middle-skills_layout-FINAL.pdf.

15 Ibid.

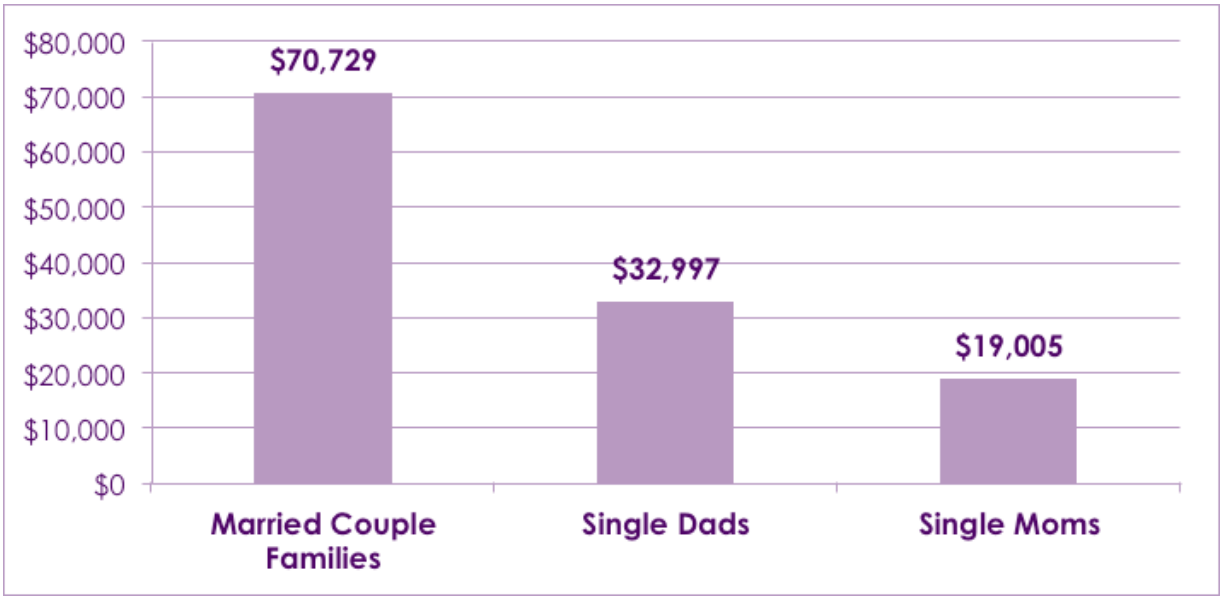
16 MLICCI calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, Table S2302, B23007.

17 MLICCI calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, Table S2302.

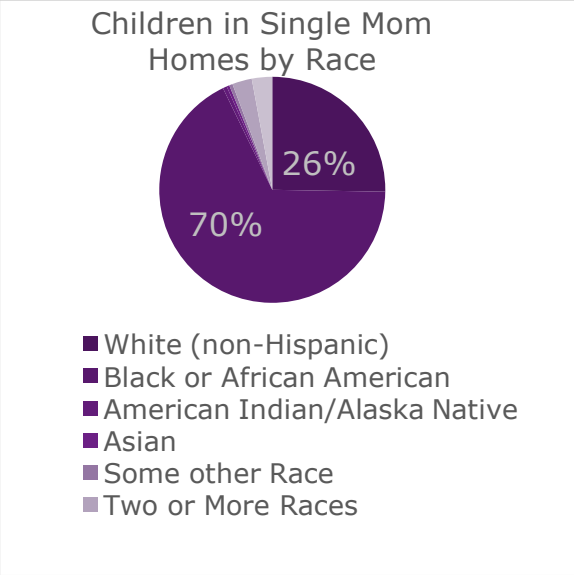
18 MLICCI calculation of U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, Table B23008.

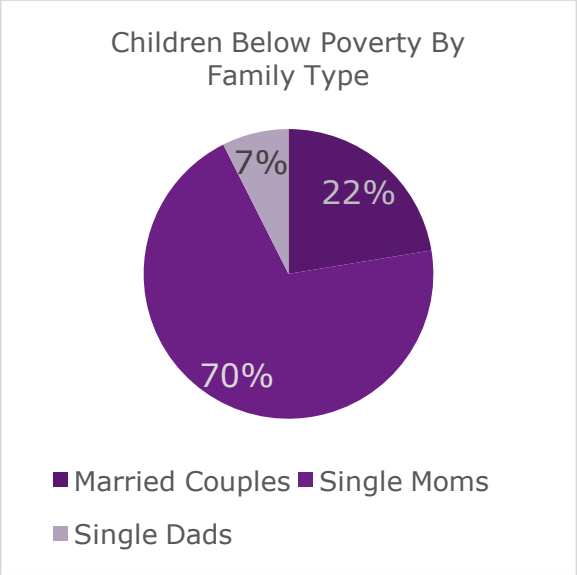
19 MLICCI calculation of U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, Table B19126.

Median Family Income, 2011-2015



The vast majority of children living with single moms are African American and below poverty.[20]

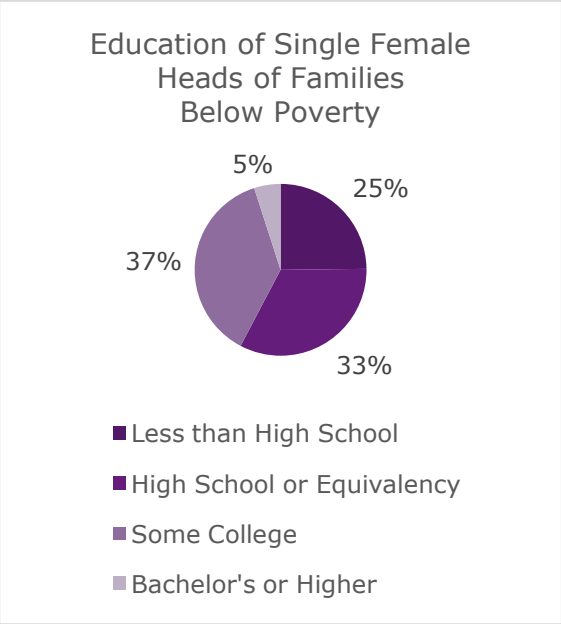


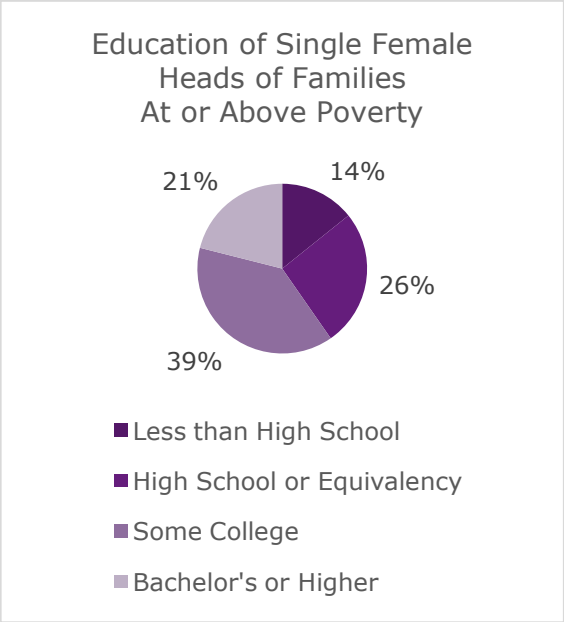


Single moms face many obstacles in obtaining education and training that leads to higher paying jobs. Most who are below poverty lack skills and

[20] MLICCI calculation of U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, S0901.

credentials needed to obtain middle- or high-skill employment, along with a significant portion of those at or above poverty.[21]





The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) created the "Living Wage Calculator" to calculate exactly how much an individual must earn to support their families, taking into account basic expenses like food, child care, medical, housing, transportation, taxes and beyond. In Mississippi, a single mom with 2 children would have to earn at least $24.68 per hour to support her family, or more than $51,000 annually to be self-sufficient.[22]

But in Mississippi, the reality is that single moms and women exiting work training programs are not coming close to earning a "living wage." Child care assistance can help single moms, but ultimately a pathway into non-traditional middle-skill work that results in higher wages is the most viable option for Mississippi's single moms and advances one of the state's primary WIOA goals – increasing the work participation rate by closing the middle skills gap.

Occupational segregation plagues Mississippi's workforce landscape and contributes to the persistence of the gender pay gap and the middle skills gap. Typically, there are far fewer middle-skill job opportunities for women. Nationally, a little more than 22% of middle-skill occupations are currently dominated by women, while 43% are dominated by men. And those middle-skill jobs that are

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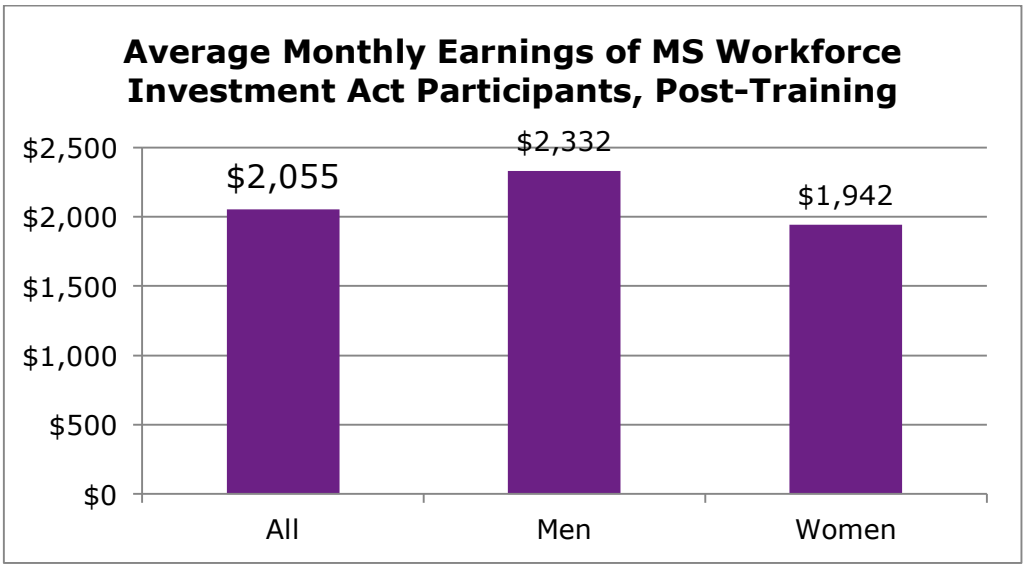
21 MLICCI calculation of U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, Table B17018.

22 "Living Wage Calculator," *Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)*, (2017), http://livingwage.mit.edu/states/28.

dominated by women tend to pay far less than those dominated by men.[23] IWPR reports that median earnings for workers in female-dominated middle-skill occupations are $31,985 versus $48,550 in male-dominated middle-skill jobs.[24] According to IWPR, "Occupational gender segregation is a result of many factors: stereotypes, social values, myths about women's work skills, and discriminatory practices in training programs and workplaces."[25]

Using data obtained from the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES), MLICCI analyzed the outcomes of 1,480 workforce training participants by gender receiving services through Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funding at 45 different providers. Across these WIA-funded programs offering different types of middle-skill training to Mississippians, women earned less than men on average.[26]



Gendered work perspectives play into occupational segregation in workforce training.

While this overall disparity in earnings outcomes by gender is revealing, it includes a variety of training programs at community colleges, universities and private training providers with a varying degree of gender diversity. A closer look at education and training programs that are segregated by gender reveals a

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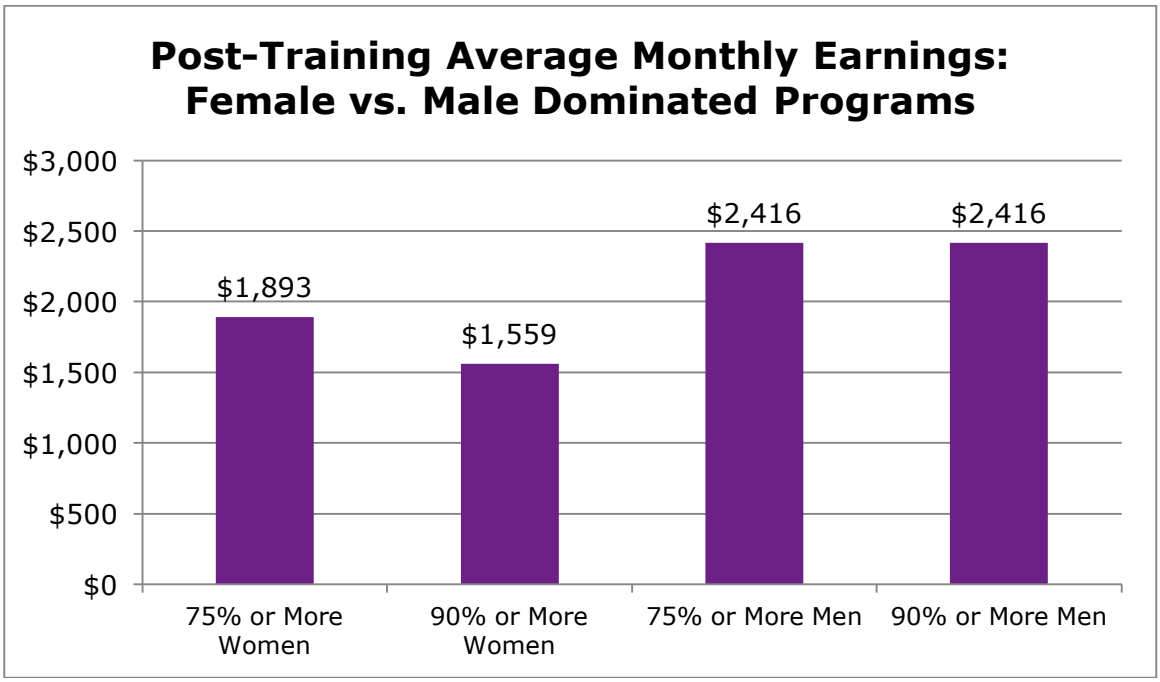
[23] Ariane Hegewisch, et al., "Pathways to Equity: Narrowing the Wage Gap by Improving Women's Access to Good Middle-Skill Jobs," *Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR),* (2016), See pg. 10, http://womenandgoodjobs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Middle-skills_layout-FINAL.pdf.

[24] Ibid, pg. 9.

[25] Ibid, pg. 11.

[26] MLICCI obtained data from the MS Department of Employment Security (MDES) in 2015 reflecting only WIA-funded training providers. The data is generated by MDES to "meet EO requirements of the WIA program." The data provides outcomes by gender for 1,480 training participants receiving federal WIA services. It is unclear exactly what type of job training was provided at some providers due to lacking information.

greater earnings disparity between male-dominated vs. female-dominated training programs. As the percent of women participants gets higher in Mississippi workforce training programs included in this sample, earnings tend to drop further below the average – and significantly lower than male-dominated programs on average.



Too often, workforce training programs that are primarily targeted to women lead to jobs that perpetuate both low-wages, making child care unaffordable, and a lack of benefits like paid family and medical leave and health insurance.

There is far less variation in post-training earnings for male dominated programs compared to female dominated programs. Highly female-dominated programs (including cosmetology, certified nursing assistant, and administrative training) result in lower earnings outcomes compared to highly male-dominated programs (including truck driving, for instance) and on average would keep a mom with two children below the federal poverty guideline, or what the average single mom in Mississippi is already accustomed to earning.

Beyond workforce training in Mississippi, occupations are heavily segregated by gender, which is one of the main contributing factors to the state's persistent gender wage gap. A national IWPR study found that earnings start to decrease as the percentage of workers who are women in a particular occupational category start to increase.[27] Researchers discovered that this

[27] Ariane Hegewisch, et al., "Separate and Not Equal? Gender Segregation in the Labor Market and the Gender Wage Gap," *Institute for Women's Policy Research*, (2010), https://iwpr.org/publications/separate-and-not-equal-gender-segregation-in-the-labor-market-and-the-gender-wage-gap/.

relationship is strongest when it comes to jobs requiring a lot of education and skill, but the effect is even strong with low-skill and middle-skill jobs.

In Mississippi, Census data largely confirms this bleak outlook for women. Looking at 2011-2015 Census averages of full-time, year-round civilian workers, women earn less than men both in occupations they dominate and in occupations where they are only marginally represented. However, the average gap in earnings between male and female workers is actually far narrower in occupations where women are vastly underrepresented, versus those in which they are the vast majority of workers.

Using a list of 25 occupational categories, the below table provides data on full-time, year-round workers including the share of workers who are female and median earnings for both female and male workers.[28]

On average, across these 25 occupational categories, male median earnings are 35% higher than female median wages across the range of low-, middle- and high-skill jobs. Occupations where women are most represented include mostly healthcare, education and administrative work. In high-skill occupations where women make up a majority of Mississippi's full-time, year-round workforce, like health diagnosis/treatment and legal occupations, their earnings are drastically lower than median male earnings. Of the 25 occupational categories in this dataset, only four reflect median wages for women on par with MIT's Living Wage estimate for a mom with two children (or about $51,000 per year).[29]

Occupations where women are least represented but that offer wages that are higher than average reveals an opportunity for women in Mississippi to pursue nontraditional work. In particular, single moms with limited educational attainment could pursue construction and extraction occupations, which offer higher than average wages compared to female-dominated occupations with minimal training and education beyond high school. Employers in these occupations also would benefit from achieving greater gender diversity as they are obligated to meet minimum gender diversity targets by some federally funded projects.

In Mississippi, women make up a mere 2% of full-time, year-round workers in construction and extraction occupations, yet for the few women working in these occupations, their median earnings are significantly higher than for women overall, and particularly higher than female median earnings in other middle-skill occupations (compared to transportation occupations, for instance) at $40,652. Mississippi women earn significantly less in other middle-skill occupations where a large portion of the female workforce is employed (for instance, healthcare support/technician, office/administrative support and

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[28] MLICCI analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, Tables B24022 and S2402.

[29] Ibid.

production occupations), compared to construction/extraction occupations, where very few women are employed.

For instance, 88,000 women in Mississippi are employed in office and administrative support occupations where female median earnings are $28,630, compared to a mere 1,200 women employed in construction and extraction occupations where female median earnings are 42% higher. Female earnings in construction and extraction occupations are even comparable to female median earnings in some high-skill occupations employing large shares of Mississippi's female workforce, such as business and financial operations occupations which employ 19,000 Mississippi women.[30]

Occupational Category	Female Workers	Percent Female	Female Median Earnings	Percent Male	Male Median Earnings
Healthcare support occupations	16,904	91%	$21,615	9%	$29,858
Health technologists and technicians	16,735	80%	$35,282	20%	$47,995
Office and administrative support occupations	88,002	77%	$28,630	23%	$33,857
Education, training, and library occupations	42,896	77%	$36,387	23%	$46,109
Health diagnosing and treating practitioners and other technical occupations	31,809	75%	$54,894	25%	$97,686
Personal care and service occupations	16,983	73%	$20,868	27%	$32,072
Business and financial operations occupations	19,003	59%	$41,014	41%	$58,362
Food preparation and serving related occupations	16,748	59%	$17,225	41%	$19,495
Community and social services occupations	9,436	57%	$35,883	43%	$39,137
Legal occupations	4,839	54%	$50,306	46%	$98,816
Sales and related occupations	36,497	46%	$25,372	54%	$43,725
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations	2,934	38%	$40,109	62%	$47,315

[30] Ibid.

Management occupations	32,264	38%	$45,176	62%	$64,150
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	9,110	35%	$18,844	65%	$25,267
Computer and mathematical occupations	3,956	34%	$51,939	67%	$65,958
Life, physical, and social science occupations	1,917	33%	$45,205	67%	$52,212
Production occupations	22,999	28%	$24,022	72%	$36,763
Law enforcement workers including supervisors	3,114	25%	$27,318	75%	$36,346
Fire fighting and prevention, and other protective service workers including supervisors	1,943	17%	$25,719	83%	$32,872
Material moving occupations	4,053	16%	$24,089	84%	$27,034
Architecture and engineering occupations	1,651	13%	$51,853	87%	$65,840
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	669	10%	$28,698	90%	$26,455
Transportation occupations	3,442	9%	$26,005	92%	$38,867
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	1,565	4%	$32,345	96%	$41,365
Construction and extraction occupations	1,220	2%	$40,652	98%	$36,980
Average Earnings			$33,978		$45,781

To disrupt the current trends and to bridge Mississippi's "Middle Skills Gap," Mississippi's workforce system and Mississippi's child care system must prioritize investment in child care for moms seeking education and training in fields that they may not be traditionally guided toward, but that promise higher wages.

The MCH WinC Model: Leveraging Federal Dollars to Couple Child Care with Nontraditional Workforce Training for Low-Income Moms

The WIOA and the recently reauthorized Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) bring Mississippi substantial federal funds to address the issue of child care as a barrier to work and both emphasize providing low-income, low-skilled parents with training that leads to higher paying work and with child care so parents can work and so children benefit from early learning curriculums. While the goals of these systems are aligned, current policies and practices fail to disrupt the pattern of referring mothers to jobs or job training that perpetuates inequity in wages and in job quality. For the jobs and training mothers are referred to, child care assistance is not guaranteed and without this work support a single mom will face serious challenges in completing training and transitioning to work.

The Moore Community House Women in Construction Strengthening Working Families Initiative (MCH WinC SWFI) model includes two key components: job training and job placement for women into higher paying,

nontraditional middle-skill jobs, paired with work support services to remove significant barriers, in particular a lack of affordable child care.

MCH WinC has expanded their successful nontraditional job training pre-apprenticeship program for women with the support of SWFI funds. Leveraging this federal investment, WinC received support from the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) to provide the full range of needed work supports, unique to individual student needs.

MCH WinC's model can serve as a best practice example as the state of Mississippi implements an innovative approach to meeting the needs of women by advancing a "gen+" Approach and its new WIOA state plan, which envisions a workforce system that is fully integrated with the public assistance system. The ultimate goal of this proposed system is to treat each individual and their family holistically by braiding all available services together and eroding arbitrary barriers created by services that are currently delivered simultaneously, but separately, and which sometimes work against each other.

Mississippi's state policymakers and industry representatives, working through the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB), developed a new WIOA State Plan in 2016. As part of that effort, a needs assessment was conducted in 2015 which concluded that a serious challenge facing training providers is "…a lack of coordinated ancillary services…such as child care to get people to take advantage of education and training opportunities."[31] The WIOA State Plan recognized that parents who are currently in the "Middle Skills Gap" will need child care as a "barrier mitigation" while they seek employment, education or training. To overcome barriers to employment and training that parents will face, the WIOA State Plan proposes a higher level of interagency coordination, which is particularly important given the reality that state agencies operating child care assistance and other work support services have been "disconnected" from the workforce system.[32] Eliminating these barriers will help the state improve its workforce participation rate. The State Plan asserts that Mississippi's low labor force participation rate is more linked to skill-level than the number of available jobs. Citing 329,000 middle-skill jobs that Mississippi workers are not currently filling, the State Plan estimates that 235,000 low-skill individuals need training and education to enter the workforce. To close the gap between the state's current labor force participation rate and the national average, the state would have to first close its "Middle Skills Gap" by adding roughly 155,000 middle skill people to the workforce over the next 4 years.[33]

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31 "The SWIB Workforce Development Needs Study," *Mississippi State Workforce Investment Board*, (2015), See pg. 5, https://swib.ms.gov/WIOA/documents/SWIB%20Workforce%20Development%20Needs%20Study.pdf.

32 See, State of Mississippi, Pgs. 27-28, http://www.mississippiworks.org/downloads/WIOA_MS_03_21_2016.pdf.

33 Ibid.

Many of these workers will be single moms and many will have dependent children. Existing sources of federal and state funding, like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E & T) state grants can go a long way in meeting the needs of moms in workforce training that will lead to higher paying wages.

The CCDBG reauthorization requires Mississippi to implement new child care policies, including additional training requirements, monitoring requirements and extended minimum 12-month eligibility periods for parents, all of which will result in significant costs. Similarly, the new WIOA is imposing costly system alignments. All of these changes threaten to erode services to women and children, so how the state decides to use federal workforce and child care funds in the current climate is vitally important for the future of the state's workforce.

The Model

MCH WinC's current nontraditional job training pre-apprenticeship program will be viewed by many workforce trainers, employers and policymakers as a rare anomaly. The program has managed to leverage its federal and private funding to fully fund wraparound services for all participants, including child care, for a targeted underserved group of low-income women. The training intentionally disrupts the current pattern of perpetuating low-wage, "traditional" female-dominated jobs by providing single moms with credentials and certifications they can put to immediate use in the labor force or use to transition into nontraditional occupation apprenticeship programs.

MCH WinC prepares women to enter the high growth advanced manufacturing industry, with a focus on the construction skill craft and shipbuilding trades, through providing career and technical training in careers such as welding, pipefitting, shipfitting and electrical. Moms going through MCH WinC's program will receive industry recognized credentials that include the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) Core Curriculum Certification and necessary OSHA Safety Certifications along with industry required trades-specific certifications. This curriculum was formed through consolidating the needs of local employers and shipyards and is designed to give trainees the greatest amount of hands-on learning and theory of advanced manufacturing techniques. MCH WinC also maintains partnerships with other local workforce agencies to infuse its model and emphasis on getting women into jobs that are difficult to access. MCH WinC serves as a resource for employers to find and employ qualified applicants to meet diversity, minority and female hiring targets. MCH WinC successfully places about 70% of women trainees into jobs that pay up to three times more than they previously earned.

Child care as a work support is provided through TANF and is available to the participant throughout training, a period of job-search and throughout the initial period of employment.

MCH WinC's model serves as a best practice for private or state training programs because of the special combination of 1. child care, which supports success in training and transitioning into an apprenticeship or job, and 2. specifically training that leads to higher-paying work than low-income, low-skilled women earn on average without having to get advanced degrees.

MCH WinC approaches each student's unique circumstances with comprehensive case management. Acting both as a provider of direct workforce training services as well as a navigator for child care and employment systems, MCH WinC's model takes full ownership of each participant's case.

From a public policy perspective, MCH WinC also provides an example of how TANF funds could be used to help lift families out of poverty through providing a work support for careers that provide a living wage.

Mississippi already uses a significant portion of its TANF block grant on work supports, which is a broad category that can include child care assistance, transportation assistance, direct purchases of needed uniforms, tools and licenses, and beyond.

The difference in Mississippi's investment of TANF into MCH WinC's training model, compared to other training programs or jobs that women typically seek or are referred to, is that it targets a group of persistently underserved low-income single moms for job training that they would not have traditionally pursued but that will command a higher wage than other jobs that require a comparable skill level.

Who are MCH WinC's students?[34]

Women served by MCH WinC are in different kinds of family and work situations. Currently, a little more than half of students are unemployed. Of those students who work while participating in nontraditional training for work in the construction field, three-fourths work less than full-time. Some students are not able to find full-time work. Hourly wages range from $9 to $20, but the number of hours varies from 10 to 35, keeping a "living wage" out of reach for most students. Single moms served by WinC often work mid-shift (afternoon to late night) and night-shift (late night to early morning) to work around child care responsibilities.

The average weekly wage for moms who are employed while participating in MCH WinC is about $242. For the few working parents who receive supplemental assistance income in the form of nutrition or housing assistance, the average monthly amount is about $285. Working parents currently participating in MCH WinC face an average monthly living cost of about $912. None of the working parents receive child care assistance outside of MCH WinC.

[34] Data used in this section was obtained via MLICCI's standing online survey of MCH WinC participants.

Child care expenses alone would account for nearly 40% of these working parents' yearly earnings.

For those women not working while participating in WinC, more than 80% are actively seeking work. On average, they've been without work for a little more than 6 months. Some unemployed students have been without work for a year or more.

Safety net assistance reaches very few students, despite the fact that many meet income eligibility requirements. The most common form of assistance received by WinC's students is food assistance, or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). About three-fourths of students receive SNAP.

Only 10% of MCH WinC students receive TANF assistance, and only 16% receive housing vouchers, child support and Medicaid.

About 72% of employed and unemployed students with kids did not receive any child care assistance before enrolling in MCH WinC job training. Two-thirds of students are the sole breadwinners for their families, but even students who share some household expenses with a partner, spouse or roommate end up bearing all of the child care responsibility. More than 90% of parents are the primary caretakers for their dependent children. Only 18% of parents indicated that they received Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) assistance at some point in the past; meanwhile, 80% of students with children indicated that the high cost of child care has prevented them from enrolling their children in a child care center. Nearly half of students have been unable to work in the past because of child care responsibilities and the lack of available care. Students with children have turned down jobs because the wages were insufficient to afford child care, they've lost wages because they lacked child care or could only afford limited services, and they've been prevented from pursuing lines of work that would require additional training because of child care responsibilities.

Only 41% of students overall, including parents and women without dependent children, have received workforce training in the past. While about 70% of those students indicate that they completed the training program, the training has not led to higher paying work. About 1 in 4 students said they have been unable to participate in workforce training because of child care responsibilities, a lack of options for private care and the cost of private care.

Only 29% of students have received Unemployment Insurance (UI) and of these, 40% were working mid- and night-shift.

MCH WinC students who have received job services from a Workforce Investment Network (WIN) Job Center indicate that no child care was offered to support them while attending orientations, meetings or job interviews. Just over half of MCH WinC students have received services at a WIN Job Center, and of this group, only 1 in 3 were referred because they were receiving UI, SNAP or TANF.

For those WinC students who've been able to obtain job services at a WIN Job Center, the service or training either did not lead to higher wages or nontraditional work, or it lacked the supports required to transition into a full-time career. For instance, some students have already undergone Certified Nursing Assistant programs but were not able to attain a living wage in the field afterward.

Recommendations

Explore replicating MCH WinC's model in other areas of the state

State agencies should combine efforts and work with a range of employers and job training providers to explore how federal and state workforce and safety net funds, in addition to private funds, can be used to couple child care, intensive case management and wraparound support services unique to individual needs with nontraditional job training that targets women with child care needs who are currently unemployed or working in a low-wage job. While MCH WinC serves Mississippi's southern region and primarily women in coastal counties, the model can help women in all areas of the state.

Incorporate child care and nontraditional job training for women into "Gen+" 2-generation efforts

The state is making strides in aligning public systems that currently serve parents and children separately, dubbing these efforts the "gen+ Approach."[35] Combining child care and workforce training for moms that leads to higher paying wages simultaneously allows a mom to achieve economic security and allows a young child to benefit from an early learning environment. Better job outcomes for a mom, including higher earnings and better benefits, will help to stabilize and support the whole household. Currently, too many moms are cycled through a workforce and welfare system that reinforces patterns of poverty. To ensure a positive impact for each generation, the state must implement approaches that disrupt the pattern of gender wage disparity and occupational segregation by incorporating meaningful supports with training that is proven to lead to better outcomes for women with child care responsibilities.

In addition to federal WIOA funds, utilize federal safety net funds to target low-income unemployed and working poor moms with dependent children to provide both child care and nontraditional workforce training leading to higher paying work

TANF Block Grant

Through its support services grant to MCH WinC and other similar efforts, MDHS is making strides in using its TANF block grant to promote real efforts to help single moms achieve self-sufficiency. While MCH WinC's work support funding, which includes funding to pay child care costs for

[35] See, Mississippi Department of Human Services, http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/genplus-approach/.

parent participants who need it, is funded through Mississippi's TANF Block Grant, the support is not limited to TANF clients who have an active TANF case. Because Mississippi's TANF cash assistance caseload is very small relative to the number of low-income single moms who need workforce training, the state's use of TANF for MCH WinC work supports allows a larger group of women to be served—even those who are not a TANF cash assistance recipient—but who are low-income and considered at-risk of going on TANF. The state should explore additional public and private training programs that target women with child care needs for nontraditional job training, or explore how to leverage TANF to incentivize workforce training providers to provide nontraditional training and work supports including child care to participants with child care needs.

SNAP Employment & Training Grant Funds

The state's SNAP program serves 20% of the state's total population and most adult recipients in Mississippi are women. Mississippi receives SNAP E & T grants to engage recipients who are able to work, providing a pathway to employment strategies and training programs.

In 2015, Mississippi was awarded a SNAP E & T pilot project grant to test a range of supportive strategies, serving several thousand recipients at the state's community colleges for several years. SNAP E & T funds (or "100%" funds) can be used to target single mom SNAP recipients with childcare needs, including those who are already receiving child care assistance through the state and those who are not, for job training in a nontraditional field that promises higher wages.

In addition to using SNAP E & T grant funds to provide nontraditional training for women, the state can also provide supports, including child care, by taking advantage of SNAP E & T "50/50" funds, which allow states to receive a federal reimbursement for up to 50% of the costs of providing supports participants need for training and transitioning to employment. Very few states regularly use "50/50" funds to provide child care to education or training participants, in spite of the fact that the United States Department of Agriculture Food Nutrition Service (USDA FNS) considers it a best practice for training providers, citing studies showing child care subsidies increase earnings outcomes for single moms, increase a single mom's likelihood of enrolling in school or training, and significantly decreases the probability that a single mom will end employment.[36]

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[36] See, *National Skills Coalition*, http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/news/blog/ten-states-receive-snap-et-pilot-grants. Also see, Kogan, Deborah, Anne Paprocki, and Hannah Diaz. *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training (E & T) Best Practices Study: Final Report.* Prepared by Social Policy Research Associates for the *U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service*, (2016), https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/ops/SNAPEandTBestPractices.pdf.

Conclusion

Ultimately, Mississippi's women, and particularly single moms, need a pathway into higher-paying work. Providing child care, intensive case management and wraparound supports is a critical part of building that pathway. Disrupting the pattern of occupational segregation and gender pay inequity by providing training for nontraditional jobs to moms will ensure that more low-income moms can access middle-skill jobs that promise higher wages than current low- and middle-skill jobs provide women.

The pathway that brings Mississippi's underserved moms to higher wages and to greater economic security also serves the state's focus in WIOA implementation, which is to increase the workforce participation rate by closing the skills gap. For women, closing the skills gap will require a public investment in child care and in training in middle-skill work, specifically nontraditional work, that provides higher-than-average wages.

Investing in this pathway will diversify and improve the state's economy, and increase overall workforce participation. Increasing the economic security of single-moms will also lead to immeasurable positive benefits for the hundreds of thousands of Mississippi children living with single moms. Current best practices such as MCH WinC show that creating such a pathway is possible and very much within reach of the state's workforce system.

MCH WinC found it a natural fit to address the crucial need for women to gain fair and equitable employment and meet industry demands by researching, planning and implementing the only non-traditional training program for women on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and one of few in the Southeast. The innovative program serves the dual purpose of creating self-sufficiency among low-income women and increasing the skilled workforce available to meet industry demands.

MCH WinC impacts the lives of female students not only through job training but the program also empowers women to improve their overall wellbeing and personal growth. Participants create cross-cultural bonds, get out of abusive relationships, gain their GEDs, improve upon health and general wellness and make huge strides that improve their lives. The current workforce landscape provides an opportunity for Mississippi policymakers to rethink job training for women and to close the wage and skills gap by investing in child care and nontraditional job training for low-income moms.

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