



## **OVERVIEW OF REQUIREMENTS**

### **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

**The community involvement focus area is designed to engage the broader community (i.e. businesses, churches, civic organizations, etc.) and make them aware of the importance of early child development. Raising children in the best developmental environment enhances a community's vitality.**

**Improving the environment for a community's children to achieve their potential helps the community grow and prosper. Failure to pay attention to early child development contributes to increased drop out rates, crime, poverty, health issues, etc. An engaged community working toward the best early child development environment will produce productive workers that attract business development.**

**Some specific Excel By 5 requirements under this focus area include:**

**Establishing a community coalition willing and able to move the community toward certification.**

**Identifying community resources available for young children and families.**

**Hosting community wide events focusing on young children and their needs.**

### **FAMILY AND PARENT SUPPORT**

**This focus area is designed to strengthen and support families and parents of children from birth to 5 years of age. Level 3 and 4 Communities are required to establish a Parent Resource Center where parents and families of young children can receive assistance in various aspects of parenting young children.**

## **EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION**

**This area focuses on both licensed and unlicensed early care facilities and staff. The thrust is to improve the education of early care staff and coordinate services that parallel the efforts of community schools. Local early care providers are identified, and the educational needs of the staff are met through a confidential system of customized technical support. Additionally, quarterly meetings of Head Start, child care providers and school district personnel are designed to share information and curriculum.**

## **HEALTH**

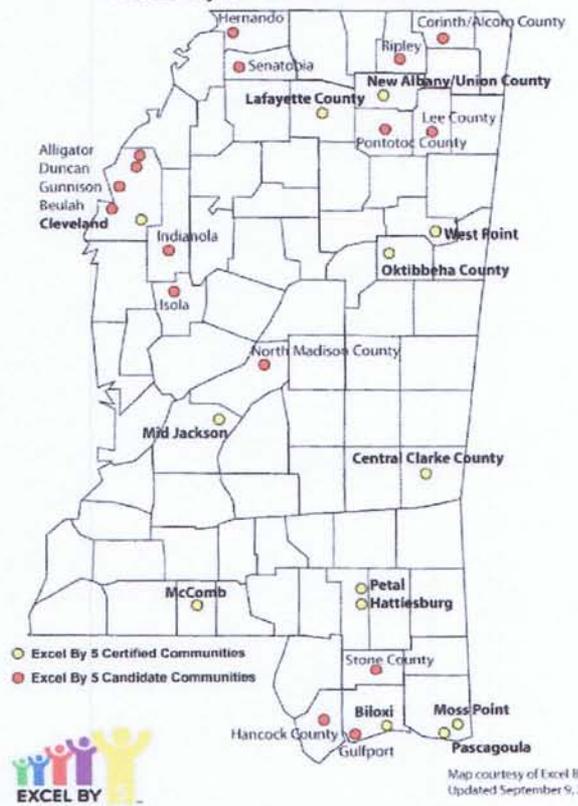
**The health area focuses on early detection and intervention for locally defined health issues. Each community identifies the health issues most prevalent in their area, locates available health resources and establishes a referral system. Each community is responsible for hosting a health fair for young children and their families.**



Excel By 5 is an innovative certification process that is designed to encourage and assist communities that choose to become actively involved in supporting their young children. The first of its kind, this certification process emphasizes the important roles parents and primary caregivers play in the lives of children during their most formative years – birth to age 5.

- Excel By 5 is a standard certification process whereby communities can be formally recognized for their efforts to support young children and their families
- Excel By 5 was founded in 2004, incorporated 2008, and became a 501(c)3 in 2010
- Excel By 5 is a privately funded Mississippi only initiative in partnership with the Early Childhood Institute at Mississippi State University
- Currently includes twenty nine participating communities: 14 Certified, 15 Candidate
- Certification helps communities:
  - Identify gaps in community resources
  - Promote community collaboration
  - Encourage volunteerism
  - Promote economic development
- Begins by forming a local leadership team made up of representatives from key community groups, including schools, churches, businesses, parents, hospitals, early care and education centers and government organizations.
- Focuses on four areas:
  - Community Involvement
  - Family & Parent Support
  - Early Care & Education
  - Health
- Typically takes two years to meet certification and three years for recertification.

Excel By 5 - 2013 Communities



For more information visit [www.excelby5.com](http://www.excelby5.com) or contact the state Excel By 5 office at 601-707-7726.



## COALITION MEMBERS CHECKLIST

**The following is a suggested list of stakeholders, organizations, and agencies to be represented on your Community EXCEL BY 5 Coalition.**

- Business Representatives
- Chamber of Commerce
- Child care/Preschool Directors & Teachers
- Churches/Faith-based Organizations
- Community College/University
- Community Organizations
- Early Intervention Providers (First Steps)
- Government Agencies (Dept. of Human Services, WIC, Health Dept.)
- Head Start & Early Head Start Directors & Teachers
- Health Care Providers (Doctors, Nurses, Pharmacists, etc.)
- Hospital Representatives
- Industry Representatives
- Library
- Local Government Officials (Mayor, Council Members, Judge, District Attorney, Law Enforcement)
- Media
- Non-profit Organizations
- Parents
- Private School (Representative)
- School District (Representative, Administrator, Teacher, Principal)
- Special Educator
- \_\_\_\_\_
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## CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

### *Community Populations over 15,000 (PL4)*

#### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

<b>C4.1</b>	<p><b>Establish a community coalition of at least 15 members comprised of parents, early childhood educators, health care providers, and other community representatives. A roster of coalition members must be maintained in the community.</b></p> <p>Roster of current and past members must be maintained. All disciplines must be represented.</p>
<b>C4.2</b>	<p><b>Adopt a Coalition Charter that defines the coalition membership process, purpose, and expectations.</b></p> <p>A Sample Charter and By-Laws document can be found at <a href="http://www.excelby5.com/how-to-join/requirements">http://www.excelby5.com/how-to-join/requirements</a> Coalition meeting minutes should reflect acceptance.</p>
<b>C4.3</b>	<p><b>Designate a certification manager for the community.</b></p> <p>The certification manager is selected by the coalition steering committee. In addition there is a sample agreement of understanding between the lead agency, coalition chair, and the certification manager. The roles &amp; responsibilities and the sample agreement of understanding can be found under the Community Involvement section at <a href="http://www.excelby5.com/how-to-join/requirements">http://www.excelby5.com/how-to-join/requirements</a>. Coalition minutes should reflect selection of Certification Manager.</p>
<b>C4.4</b>	<p><b>Conduct a community needs assessment of child care, health, family and community resources.</b></p> <p>This assessment is used to identify the existing resources in the community and, through the focus area surveys, identifies the needs of the community. Assessment form can be found at <a href="http://www.excelby5.com/how-to-join/requirements">http://www.excelby5.com/how-to-join/requirements</a>.</p>
<b>C4.5</b>	<p><b>Conduct quarterly coalition meetings and maintain meeting minutes. Coalition meetings require a fifty percent (50%) participation of coalition members.</b></p> <p>Record attendees and meeting minutes. Sample attendance spreadsheet and minutes can be found at <a href="http://www.excelby5.com/how-to-join/requirements">http://www.excelby5.com/how-to-join/requirements</a>.</p>
<b>C4.6</b>	<p><b>Conduct an annual communitywide early childhood update meeting to present the community needs assessment results, action plan for attaining certification, and progress towards attaining certification. Solicit feedback from the community to be used to revise the community action plan.</b></p> <p>This communitywide early childhood update meeting publicizes the results of the Community Needs Assessment and the action plan to meet the Excel By 5 requirements. Document how this event is publicized, attendance evidence, agenda, materials distributed and evidence of feedback. Sample agenda can be found at <a href="http://www.excelby5.com/how-to-join/requirements">http://www.excelby5.com/how-to-join/requirements</a></p>
<b>C4.7</b>	<p><b>Create an annually updated resource guide of services in the community that assist children 0-5 and/or their families.</b></p> <p>Sample Resource Guide and resource data collection form can be found at <a href="http://www.excelby5.com/how-to-join/requirements">http://www.excelby5.com/how-to-join/requirements</a>. In addition the resource guide can be posted on the community's Excel By 5 Website. This document must be updated annually. In addition information should be included to document how this guide is publicized to the community.</p>



**C4.8 Send a representative to the quarterly state Excel By 5 Sites Collaboration meetings to report on the community's efforts to attain certification. Disseminate information from these meetings to the community coalition.**

These meetings are typically held in Jackson and provide each community an opportunity to share activities/challenges with other communities. All coalition members are encouraged to attend. Each community's coalition minutes should reflect in at least one of its quarterly meetings that information from a Sites Collaboration meeting was presented to the coalition.

**C4.9 Coalition members will assist with three (3) community-wide events per year with an early childhood focus.**

These events are those identified in items H4.2, F4.6 and E4.7. Document events, date, description of activities and roster of participating coalition members.

**C4.10 Create and maintain an action plan for the promotion of community events, activities, and resources.**

This is the roadmap for meeting the certification requirements. A sample plan can be found at <http://www.excelby5.com/how-to-join/requirements>. Include the events, purpose, target audience, person responsible, actions required and frequency.

**C4.11 Demonstrate additional or extended community services to address identified community needs.**

These are additional services put in place or identified after the initial community needs assessment. These will be reviewed prior to final certification.

**C4.12 Recruit and train community volunteers to assist in community events and activities and maintain a current list of volunteers in your documentation.**

This might include training community volunteers to conduct health and parent surveys.

**C4.13 The community budget reflects either an in-kind or cash commitment for some program that will benefit the lives of children prior to school entry.**

Communities should identify support and funding for early childhood events and other activities associated with the community's efforts to become certified. Include records of solicitations, donors, in-kind services and use of donations.

**C4.14 Recruit representatives from surrounding communities who are interested in applying for Excel By 5 certification.**

Support the efforts of representatives from surrounding communities who are interested in applying for Excel By 5 certification. Document invitation to coalition meeting and records of meetings with community.



## FAMILY AND PARENT SUPPORT

**F4.1 Designate and publicize a local agency that provides information to parents of children ages 0-5 about community resources and services including early care and education providers, health care services, social services, family education services, and family support services.**

This can be a local agency, group or the existing resource center that provides the information listed above. Document commitment of agency and provide evidence of publicity for the agency. A sample Memorandum of Understanding may be found on the website.

**F4.2 Create and distribute information packets to parents of newborns or parents of children 0-5 relocating to the community. The packets will include materials about promoting positive early childhood development, community resources, and bounce-back cards pertaining to local family services.**

This should be an ongoing community effort. A sample of the information packet, numbers distributed, and how they are being distributed should be kept on record.

**F4.3 Coordinate family education sessions/workshops, at least quarterly, to address family needs identified in the community. Topics are to include but are not limited to the following: ages and stages of development and early learning guidelines.**

This education is targeted to parents of children 0-5 and must include the above topics. Document agendas, schedules, attendance, handouts and publicity.

**F4.4 Develop a family resource center, a toy lending library, and a community workroom for creating educational materials. The center, toy library and workroom may be centrally housed or in separate locations within the community.**

A Family Resource Center Evaluation form may be found on the Excel By 5 website.

**F4.5 Develop a family support referral system and/or process to link families to community resources. The referral system must be available during day, evening, and weekend hours.**

This system/process should provide a contact to provide information to families about local resources. This might be through the family resource center, other agencies, etc. Resources should be current. Include a description of the referral system and sample promotional materials

**F4.6 Coordinate an annual family community-wide event to address family needs as determined by the community needs assessment.**

This should be a family event to address the needs, other than the health issues identified in the community needs assessment. Include records of events, planning notes etc



## EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

- E4.1 Hold at least three (3) Educational Partners meetings annually. Attendees must include representatives from the community school system(s), Head Start centers, and early care centers or home providers. These meetings must include trainings on the MS Early Learning Guidelines.**  
Each meeting must have all attendees as listed above. At least one (1) meeting must include training on the MS Early Learning Guidelines/Standards. Maintain roster, affiliation, topics and dates of meetings.  
Early Learning Guidelines/Early Learning Standards can be found at:  
<http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/curriculum-and-instruction/early-childhood>  
<http://www.earlychildhood.msstate.edu/resources/infantsandtoddlers/index.php>
- E4.2 Identify an agency/program to provide information about state licensure requirements, community resources and services (health care services, social services, family education services, and family support services), and local professional development opportunities to early care centers and home providers quarterly.**  
This should be a resource to provide the information to early care centers and identified home providers on a quarterly basis.
- E4.3 Demonstrate that forty percent (40%) or more of licensed early care centers have forty percent (40%) or more educational staff who have 20 or more professional development hours (as defined by the Mississippi Department of Health) per licensure year.**  
The focus area liaisons will collect this information, without names, from the center directors. Forms for collecting this information can be found at <http://www.excelby5.com/how-to-join/requirements>.  
During the review process the state Excel By 5 office will obtain employee consent forms to examine the professional development hours in the personnel files of each center's employees. This data will be evaluated for the current license year or previous 12 month period.
- E4.4 Collaborate with the MS State Extension Service/Nurturing Homes Initiative to identify non-licensed home early care providers in the community and provide information about community resources available to them.**  
In order to provide this community resource information to them, you should contact Tonya Adkins, Project Manager, Nurturing Homes Initiative at 662-325-1802, [tadkins@humansci.msstate.edu](mailto:tadkins@humansci.msstate.edu) or [http://www.msstate.edu/school/humansciences/research\\_extension/nurturing\\_homes.html](http://www.msstate.edu/school/humansciences/research_extension/nurturing_homes.html)  
If none are identified, this requirement will be N/A.
- E4.5 Demonstrate that forty percent (40%) or more of licensed early care centers have forty percent (40%) or more "highly trained" educational staff. A staff member is considered "highly trained" if s/he currently holds a Child Development Associate (CDA) or college degree (Associate, Bachelors, or Masters) in early childhood, education, or related field.**  
The focus area liaisons will collect this information, without names, from the center directors. Forms for collecting this information can be found at <http://www.excelby5.com/how-to-join/requirements>.  
During the review process the state Excel By 5 office will obtain employee consent forms to examine credentials in the personnel files of each center's employees.



**E4.6 Demonstrate that sixty percent (60%) or more of licensed early care centers participated in an environmental evaluation using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-R (ECERS-R) and/or the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-R (ITERS-R) within the certification timeline.**

These evaluations will be provided to those centers enrolled in the Mississippi Quality Step System (MQSS) free of charge. If centers do not participate in MQSS, these evaluations can be done through the MS State University Child Care Resource & Referral Network. Additional information on the MQSS can be found at <http://www.qualitystep.msstate.edu>.

**E4.7 Coordinate an annual early care and education community-wide event to address early education and school readiness.**

Document date, planning notes, topics etc.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

**H4.1 Identify two (2) or more health and safety issues that pose concerns for children ages 0-5 in the community. These should be identified in the community needs assessment. Provide community education about three (3) or more health and safety issues from the following list: immunization, health checkups, common symptom recognition, first aid, dental hygiene, transportation safety, home safety, poison prevention, food safety, and nutrition education.**

Document how the issues are addressed/publicized.

**H4.2 Coordinate an annual Children's Health Fair where children ages 0-5 have access to developmental and health screenings and families have access to health and safety information.**

Document the event, date, resources available, the number of screenings and how this event is publicized.

**H4.3 Provide information to the community about early intervention services including First Steps (ages 0-3 through the MS Department of Health) and Child Find (ages 3-5 through the local school district). These services include speech therapy, cognitive, physical and mental health.**

Document how this information is presented to parents and other caregivers and the number of referrals. Include sample materials about local intervention services and documentation to support the community's education efforts to publicize including handouts, etc.