

The Mississippi Head Start Association, whose membership is comprised of 21 Head Start and Early Head Start grantees that serve over 26,000 children and families, is requesting modification in the current e-rate eligibility to specifically include Head Start in the language and the law. Family support and involvement is one of the cornerstones of Head Start. Assisting families in employment opportunities, increasing literacy (including financial literacy), accessing and researching quality of life issues, etc.. is an important and needed service. The modification to include Head Start in e-rate would help to provide access to resources which promote learning, specifically literacy, for our enrollees; provide increased staff development opportunities; and support families in workforce and quality of life issues as well as access to a wide range of information and opportunities. Many families, particularly in the more rural areas of the state, do not have access to computers, to the internet, or other technology. The hard facts are:

*Mississippi ranks 50th in the percentage of households with computers.

*Mississippi ranks 50th in the percentage of households with internet access.

*Mississippi ranks 1st in the number of children and families living in poverty.

*Mississippi ranks 48th in the percentage of the population with a high school diploma.

These facts are clear indicators of the dire need for our families, staff, and children to have access to internet. A modification to include Head Start in e-rate would facilitate this effort and help to maximize the currently strained resources of local programs. Thank you very much for your consideration on this matter.