

CLINTON LIBRARY PHOTOCOPY



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*The mission of the Easter Seal Society
is to help people with disabilities
achieve independence.*



Creating solutions, changing lives.

*Helping people with disabilities
gain greater independence*

EASTER SEALS EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT FOR THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA REGION

FUNDING HISTORY, BACKGROUND & BENEFITS

The Delta Project was targeted to receive funds in fiscal years 1998 and 1999. A funding history and proposed funding level for FY 2000 follows:

	<u>Amount of Request</u>	<u>Approved by Congress</u>	<u>Allocated by Education Dept.</u>
FY 1998	\$1,800,000	\$1,800,000*	\$600,000
FY 1999	\$1,200,000	\$ 600,000**	pending
FY 2000	\$1,800,000	pending	pending

* Project support included in appropriations report language in FY 1998 House Report, Senate Report, and Statement of Managers Conference Committee Report, and in the FY 1998 Supplemental funding bill.

** Project support included in appropriations statutory language in FY 1999 in Statement of Managers Conference Committee legislation.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Federal and non-federal funding would be required for an additional two years to fully implement the Delta Project, which would field two teams of pediatric specialists per state, collectively serving approximately 45 Delta counties and parishes, and other project staff and activities mentioned above. The project would close having improved early intervention and education results for children with disabilities and having built lasting local capacity in this region to better assist such children, their families, and education and health personnel. Easter Seals expects to use strategies developed under the Delta Project to improve early intervention and education services for children with disabilities in other underserved rural areas of the country.

Easter Seals is not alone in its view that there is considerable unmet need in the Delta. In recent months, the project has been endorsed by the Arkansas Department of Human Services - Division of Medical Services, Arkansas Department of Education - Special Education, University of Arkansas Division of Developmental and Physical Medicine Sections, Mississippi Institute for Disability Studies, North Mississippi Regional Center Project RUN - Early Intervention Program, and, the G.B. Cooley Children's Services Family Coordination Agency of Monroe, Louisiana.

BACKGROUND

Easter Seals' mission and expertise provide the basis for the Early Childhood Development Project. As a premiere provider of services to children with disabilities and families nationally and in the Delta region, and as a nonprofit private organization committed to collaborative problem-solving, Easter Seals is ideally suited to carry out this nationally-significant, local service and capacity-building project.

Easter Seals recognizes that much of the programmatic and financial framework needed to support basic service delivery is in place, but gaps in local capacity in the Delta region have prevented resources from being fully accessed and utilized. The project strengthens the local network of early intervention, education, developmental, and human service personnel serving low-income children with disabilities throughout the Delta. Building capacity, expertise, and communication among personnel and their respective agencies at the state and local levels will enhance direct services to children with disabilities that would not otherwise be available. These activities also support parents, and lead to more efficient and effective use of existing resources available from federal, state, and local government and other sources.

Project activities assist Delta counties and parishes to implement priorities set by the IDEA Amendments of 1997, including ensuring that children with disabilities receive a quality education, encouraging exemplary practices that lead to improved teaching and learning experiences, and promoting appropriate early intervention services and the smooth transition to preschool. The IDEA amendments strengthen the role for parents, through parent-directed information and training activities aimed at enhancing child development and education outcomes.

PROJECT BUDGET

The federal share of the project budget is \$1.8 million per year, totaling \$5.4 million for the three-year period. The actual budget to carry out the full scope of local, regional, and national activities exceeds this amount in each of the three years. Easter Seals national office and collaborating Easter Seal organizations in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi will secure non-federal resources to complement OSEP funding, and identify resources to sustain essential project activities beyond the federally-funded demonstration period.

The majority of project funds are dedicated to staff salaries and expenses related to staff activities in the Delta, such as local travel and occasional lodging. Budget allocations reflect the priority placed on staff and staff activities. This project aims to close longstanding gaps in Delta region personnel preparation, parental support, and service delivery through on-site intervention of highly-qualified professionals with pediatric expertise. Such professionals command sizable salaries, and costs associated with making such staff available to local families and service providers in the rural Delta region are considerable. Yet, these professionals and their presence in the Delta represent the essence and value of the project.

Equipment costs, including therapy equipment, adaptive toys, vehicles, and information management systems, represent the next largest share of the budget. Project administration, staff training, project evaluation, overhead, and miscellaneous expenses comprise the remainder of the budget. A preliminary budget is attached.

IMPACT

The Early Childhood Development Project for the Mississippi Delta Region is having a dramatic, positive, and long-lasting impact in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Project activities will generate immediate and tangible benefits for Delta region children with disabilities and their families, and local agencies. It will build lasting capacity within local education and human service systems that supports full and appropriate IDEA implementation. Strategies developed and refined by Easter Seals will yield a nationally-significant model for use by Easter Seals and others to improve services for children with disabilities and strengthen local education and human service systems in rural areas across the country.

**For additional information, contact: Randall Rutta,
Easter Seals national headquarters, at 202/347-3066.**

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

WASHINGTON OFFICE
745 DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 374-2353

July 20, 1999

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education
184 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As the Subcommittee prepares to address fiscal 2000 funding for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and related agencies, we ask for your consideration of a request for \$1.8 million in assistance through the Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs to continue a worthwhile project for children with disabilities in the Mississippi River Delta region. The Subcommittee initiated this project in fiscal year 1998 to promote implementation of IDEA, primarily by demonstrating the effectiveness of building local capacity among education and human service personnel, agencies, and families to maximize opportunities for children with disabilities to develop and learn.

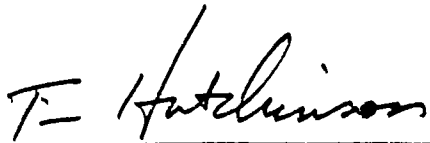
Easter Seals is successfully implementing this multi-year demonstration project to improve early intervention and education services in Delta counties and parishes in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. This region, as you may be aware, is very poor and very rural. It is chronically disadvantaged in accessing needed services, expertise, training, and service coordination to appropriately serve children with disabilities. Funds allocated in fiscal year 1998 and 1999 support the beginning phase of addressing these significant problems.

The project's focus is to equip and direct two mobile, multi-disciplinary teams in each state to serve in rural areas, enhancing ties with and developing new training and technical supports for providers of early intervention, child development, and education services. Strategies developed and refined under the Early Childhood Development Project for the Mississippi Delta Region will serve as a model of national significance that Easter Seals would use to improve local service capacity, as well as services to children with disabilities, in rural areas across the country.

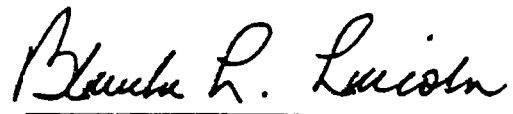
Suggested bill and report language is attached. We urge the Subcommittee to direct \$1.8 million in fiscal year 2000 to this initiative. Thank you for your consideration.

July 20, 1999
Page 2

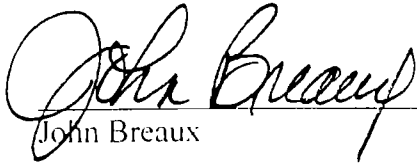
Sincerely,

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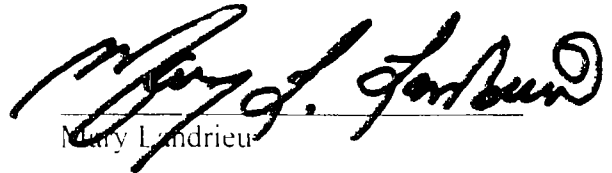
Tim Hutchinson

Handwritten signature of Blanche Lincoln in cursive script.

Blanche Lincoln

Handwritten signature of John Breau in cursive script.

John Breau

Handwritten signature of Mary Lindrieu in cursive script.

Mary Lindrieu

June 21, 1999

**RECOMMENDATION FOR LANGUAGE FOR THE
FISCAL 2000 APPROPRIATIONS BILL FOR LABOR-HHS-EDUCATION**

**"Early Childhood Development Project for the Mississippi Delta Region"
(Easter Seals Delta Project)**

FISCAL 2000 APPROPRIATIONS STATUTORY LANGUAGE:

Suggested language for fiscal 2000 Appropriations for the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Special Education Programs IDEA Research and Innovation

Insert at the appropriate place in the Bill:

"Of the funds provided, \$1.8 million shall be available in the first quarter of the fiscal year for Easter Seals "Early Childhood Development Project of the Mississippi Delta Project."

REPORT TO ACCOMPANY FISCAL 2000 APPROPRIATIONS BILL:

Suggested language, insert at the appropriate in the Report:

The Committee continues to be concerned about unmet needs among children with disabilities in rural areas, particularly the Mississippi River Delta, and the lack of adequate support in these areas for parents, school personnel, child care staff, and health providers to make effective use of and expand local resources. The bill addresses these concerns by providing \$1.8 million to continue the Early Childhood Development Project for the Mississippi River Delta Region to be carried out by Easter Seals. The Committee encourages the Department to award these funds no later than December 31, 1999 to expedite placement of pediatric specialist teams across the three-state Delta region. The Committee recognizes that this multi-year project will provide unduplicated early intervention and early childhood services to children with disabilities ages birth through twelve years, assist parents, and build lasting local capacity to better provide and coordinate such services.

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

WASHINGTON OFFICE
245 DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-2353

July 20, 1999

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Ranking Member
Senate Committee On Appropriations
Subcommittee On Labor, HHS, and Education
123 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

As the Subcommittee prepares to address fiscal 2000 funding for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and related agencies, we ask for your consideration of a request for \$1.8 million in assistance through the Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs to continue a worthwhile project for children with disabilities in the Mississippi River Delta region. The Subcommittee initiated this project in fiscal year 1998 to promote implementation of IDEA, primarily by demonstrating the effectiveness of building local capacity among education and human service personnel, agencies, and families to maximize opportunities for children with disabilities to develop and learn.

Easter Seals is successfully implementing this multi-year demonstration project to improve early intervention and education services in Delta counties and parishes in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. This region, as you may be aware, is very poor and very rural. It is chronically disadvantaged in accessing needed services, expertise, training, and service coordination to appropriately serve children with disabilities. Funds allocated in fiscal year 1998 and 1999 support the beginning phase of addressing these significant problems.

The project's focus is to equip and direct two mobile, multi-disciplinary teams in each state to serve in rural areas, enhancing ties with and developing new training and technical supports for providers of early intervention, child development, and education services. Strategies developed and refined under the Early Childhood Development Project for the Mississippi Delta Region will serve as a model of national significance that Easter Seals would use to improve local service capacity, as well as services to children with disabilities, in rural areas across the country.

Suggested bill and report language is attached. We urge the Subcommittee to direct \$1.8 million in fiscal year 2000 to this initiative. Thank you for your consideration.

July 20, 1999
Page 2

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Tim Hutchinson in black ink, featuring a stylized 'T' and 'H'.

Tim Hutchinson

Handwritten signature of Blanche Lincoln in black ink, written in a cursive style.

Blanche Lincoln

Handwritten signature of John Breau in black ink, with a large, flowing 'J'.

John Breau

Handwritten signature of Mary Landrieu in black ink, written in a cursive style.

Mary Landrieu

JOHN COOKSEY, M.D.
STAFF DIRECTOR

JEFF CANNON BUILDING
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FAX (202) 225-5639

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FAX (318) 330-9950

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1505

July 1, 1999

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS, OVERSIGHT,
NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL
ECONOMIC POLICY AND TRADE
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC BUILDINGS
VICE CHAIRMAN
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION

The Honorable John Porter, Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As the Subcommittee prepares to address fiscal 2000 funding for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and related agencies, we ask for your consideration of a request for \$1.8 million in assistance through the Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs to continue a worthwhile project for children with disabilities in the Mississippi River Delta region. The Subcommittee initiated this project in fiscal year 1998 to promote implementation of IDEA primarily by demonstrating the effectiveness of building local capacity among education and human service personnel, agencies, and families to maximize opportunities for children with disabilities to develop and learn.

Easter Seals is successfully implementing this multi-year demonstration project to improve early intervention and education services in Delta counties and parishes in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. This region, as you may be aware, is very poor and very rural. It is chronically disadvantaged. It is disadvantaged in accessing needed services, expertise, training, and service coordination to appropriately serve children with disabilities. Funds allocated in fiscal year 1998 and 1999 support the beginning phase of addressing these significant problems.

The project's focus is to equip and direct two mobile, multi-disciplinary teams in each state to serve in rural areas, enhancing ties with and developing new training and technical supports for providers of early intervention, child development, and education services. Strategies developed and refined under the Early Childhood Development Project for the Mississippi Delta Region will serve as a model of national significance that Easter Seals would use to improve local service capacity, as well as services to children with disabilities, in rural areas across the country.

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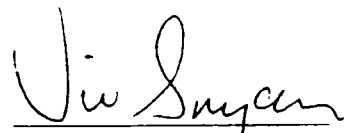
Arkansas
Vic Snyder

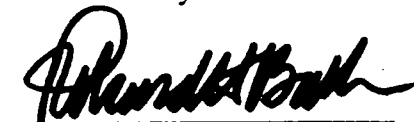
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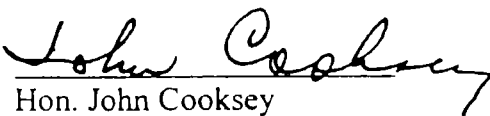
Honorable Richard Baker
Honorable John Cooksey
Honorable William Jefferson
Honorable Christopher John
Honorable Billy Tauzin
Honorable David Vitter

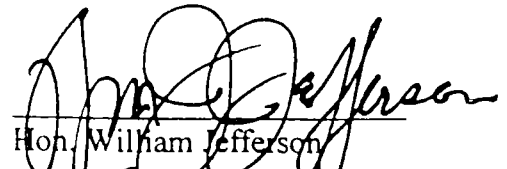
Mississippi

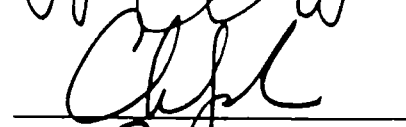
Honorable Ronnie Shows
Honorable Bennie Thompson

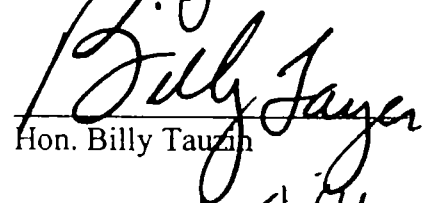

Hon. Vic Snyder

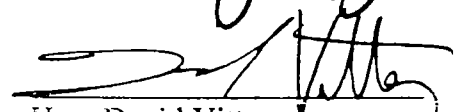

Hon. Richard Baker

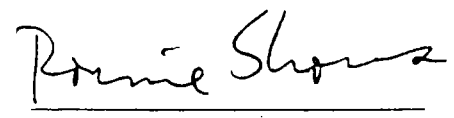

Hon. John Cooksey

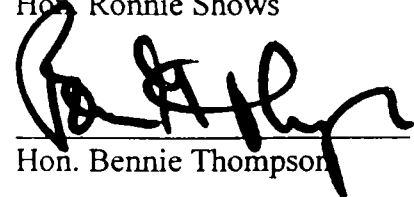

Hon. William Jefferson


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Hon. Bennie Thompson



Creating solutions, changing lives.

*Helping people with disabilities
gain greater independence*

Easter Seals

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EASTER SEALS

statement regarding the

Status of and Fiscal 2000 Appropriation

for the

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**"EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
FOR THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA REGION"**

(Easter Seals Delta Project)

to the

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES,
EDUCATION AND RELATED AGENCIES**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

by

EASTER SEALS

April 15, 1999
June 20, 1999 (revised)

Contact: Randall L. Rutta, Easter Seals, 202-347-3066

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT FOR THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA REGION

Fiscal 2000 Funding Recommendation

Easter Seals appreciates the opportunity to share information regarding the successful start-up of Easter Seals "Early Childhood Development Project for the Mississippi Delta Region," and to respectfully recommend that \$1.8 million be allocated to expedite full implementation of the project in fiscal 2000.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The "Early Childhood Development Project for the Mississippi Delta Region" was proposed by Easter Seals in 1998, and initiated last fall to address serious unmet service needs among children with disabilities and their families in the Delta areas of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Easter Seals Delta Project aims to build lasting capacity to better serve children with disabilities by collaborating with and providing training and support to families, and local education and health personnel. A total of \$1.2 million has been invested in the project to date to begin to implement such assistance across the three-state region.

So far this year, Delta Project staff have been instrumental in linking with a broad range of state and local developmental, health and education resources to identify harmful gaps in services to children with disabilities and to create strategies for solving such problems locally. In Arkansas, a team of pediatric specialists has begun providing services and training in six Delta counties. The team's experience with the following families illustrates the need for and benefit of this project:

A 20-year old unmarried mother of four children ages 18 months to 5 years, sought out Easter Seals Delta Project because she felt that her 18 month old son was not developing typically. This young woman lives in the Delta, is unemployed, lacks a high school diploma, and, together with her children, shares a house with seven other relatives. Her local physician had told her that her son was o.k., but she suspected otherwise. The Easter Seals team evaluated her son, and found that his developmental scores were extremely low for his age. Team members referred the child to a developmental center and are attempting to schedule a complete physical and evaluation for him at Children's Hospital.

The Easter Seals team was recently asked to assist a Delta-area school in handling a request to waive kindergarten from the grandparents of a five-year old boy who, as the result of shaken baby syndrome, was blind and unable to walk. Unaware that early intervention or special education services were available, the grandparents never took the child for testing or treatment. An evaluation performed by the team indicated that the boy is functioning at a seven-month old level. The team is collaborating with school personnel to identify and secure needed services for the boy, facilitate his enrollment, and implement related teacher supports. They are locating a wheelchair for his use. The Team will provide training and support to his grandparents to give them the skills to facilitate their grandson's development.

Easter Seals recommends that \$1.8 million be allocated in fiscal 2000 to fully implement the project in Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Without this funding, no new teams of pediatric specialists will be recruited to serve in Mississippi, Louisiana, or six unserved Delta counties in Arkansas. The Delta Project is a valuable, unduplicated, nationally-significant effort that will generate lasting, positive results in the Delta region for children with disabilities, their

families, and local education and health personnel. It will also yield practical strategies for improving local services for children with disabilities across rural America. Easter Seals expects that funding for the project will be required through fiscal 2002. Continuation of project activities, in whole or in part, beyond that time can be supported by existing public and private funds that become available because of project outcomes and proven value.

STATEMENT OF NEED

Children with disabilities in the Mississippi Delta are not receiving the appropriate early intervention and education services that they need to maximize development and learning. Proportionately lower family incomes, fewer public resources, shortages of pediatric personnel and specialized services, and inadequate support systems for families and staff are among the factors contributing to this situation. Geographic isolation, caused by wide dispersal of residents and community resources, poor roads, and lack of transportation, make it difficult for families to access services locally and out-of-region, and impede the ability of service providers to be available as needed. As a result, increased attention and supports are needed to promote more effective implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in Delta communities, as well as other rural areas across the country.

For example, the national goal for providing early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities is 3% of total population, yet in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi the percentage of children ages birth to three years that are identified and served fall short of this mark. The percentage of infants birth to one year of age that receive early intervention services in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, for instance, is disconcertingly low at 1.05%, .38%, and .3% respectively. The Easter Seals project supports state child find efforts and offers evaluation and service assistance to assure timely and appropriate assessments and interventions.

OVERALL PROJECT DESIGN

The Delta Project is designed to bring needed expertise, technical assistance, and support to local families, educators and service providers, and community decision-makers that are currently lacking in the Delta. Specifically, it will enhance the delivery of services for children with disabilities, ages birth through five years, and address weaknesses in local delivery systems to maximize capacity among local personnel for provision of service and use of current resources for children ages birth through twelve years.

The Delta Project uses mobile, multi-disciplinary teams of pediatric specialists to regularly work in rural areas to enhance and expand developmental, educational, health, and social services to children with disabilities and their families, and assist local personnel responsible for these children's education and development. Six mobile teams, each comprised of a physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech-language pathologist, social worker, and other key staff will eventually serve six areas or clusters of about 7-10 Delta counties/parishes in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Some 45 counties and parishes will eventually benefit.

Two Delta region service areas have been identified in each of the three states. Case coordinators will operate in each of the six service areas, while project coordinators with regional responsibilities are already present in Little Rock,

Monroe, and Jackson. National oversight, training and technical assistance, information dissemination, and evaluation is being provided by the University of Arkansas-Little Rock and Easter Seals national headquarters.

In the Delta, project staff provide or facilitate access to services for infants, toddlers, and young children, ages birth to five years, including evaluation, therapy services, and referral. Project staff assist local service providers and educators to identify gaps in local systems, plan capacity-building interventions, and identify children with disabilities and families in need of assistance. Teachers, therapists, Head Start and Early Head Start staff, rural health professionals, and child care providers have regular interaction with project staff and receive individual and group training, technical assistance, and hands-on guidance in appropriate techniques and best practices. Family members receive information, counseling, parenting skills training, and assistance to help them promote healthy child development and therapy outcomes.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

Easter Seals Delta Project offers a nationally-significant, replicable model for addressing parental and personnel preparation needs, as demonstrated and refined by a multi-year regional initiative to improve early intervention and education services and results for children with disabilities, ages birth through twelve years, in the Mississippi Delta region. Major project goals are:

- Improve the quality and availability of appropriate early intervention and childhood development services for Delta region children with disabilities.
- Increase parent information and skills to better promote child development and learning.
- Increase the capacity of local educators and service providers to better serve children with disabilities and their families.
- Increase the ability of community decision-makers to create solutions to improve access to appropriate services for children with disabilities.

The project achieves these goals through an array of strategic interventions, including consultation, training, education, and networking between resources.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the Delta Project has been shaped by the availability and timing of funds provided by Congress and the Department of Education. The project was originally conceived as a three-year initiative. However, due to incremental funding in the first two years, the projected timeframe has lengthened to five years. Easter Seals is eager to fully implement the project in FY 2000 and believes that full funding through fiscal year 2002 will be sufficient to achieve intended outcomes and refine a model for replication in underserved rural areas nationwide.

The Department of Education authorized the use of \$600,000 of a \$1.8 million fiscal 1998 appropriation to initiate the Delta Project. Since October 1998, Easter Seals has been using these funds to support project coordinators in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Project coordinators are collaborating with state and local education, early intervention and health agencies, and others to clarify urgent needs and develop solutions within the Delta region concerning children with disabilities, their families, and local personnel.

The lion's share of fiscal 1998 funds support a six member team of pediatric specialists, who are providing otherwise unavailable services in six counties in eastern Arkansas to children with disabilities, training families, and providing technical assistance to school personnel, health care providers, and others positioned to help disabled children. Project accomplishments include: staff have:

- Conducted dozens of meetings, presentations, and in-service training sessions with state and local personnel, including early intervention coordinators, educators, parent trainers, public health nurses, physicians, therapists, Head Start staff, and child care workers.
- Provided consultation and evaluation services for infants and toddlers with disabilities at outreach clinics in Helena and Warren in conjunction with the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences Department of Pediatrics. Future clinics are planned in other Delta communities.
- Provided project brochures to 350 physicians in Delta counties, Little Rock and Pine Bluff to increase awareness of project goals and activities.

In addition to these activities, Arkansas Delta Project staff provided orientation and guidance to project coordinators in Mississippi and Louisiana, and have spearheaded the development of evaluation tools to assess project impact.

In Mississippi and Louisiana, project coordinators have formed strong bonds with key state and local agencies, organizations, and individuals that are responsible for developmental and educational services for children with disabilities and their families. Numerous meetings were held to gather information, determine common priorities, and develop collaborative relationships that fully utilize project expertise to build local capacity to better serve children with disabilities. The resulting dialogue identified an array of gaps in current service systems, personnel shortages, and inadequate education and training of parents and school personnel. These issues will be addressed as the project is fully implemented.

APPLICATION OF FISCAL 1999 FUNDS

In fiscal year 1999, Congress appropriated \$600,000 for the Delta Project. This amount will support continuation of current project activities. It is insufficient for expanding project implementation to include the addition of two new teams of pediatric specialists to serve northeast Louisiana and western Mississippi. Easter Seals expects to negotiate with the Education Department to receive these funds in October 1999. Easter Seals will add to these funds with non-federal resources.

FUNDING RECOMMENDATION FOR FISCAL 2000

Easter Seals recommends that the Subcommittee direct the Department of Education to provide \$1.8 million to accelerate implementation of the Delta Project in fiscal 2000. At a minimum, this amount would enable additional teams of pediatric specialists to begin providing hands-on assistance in northeast Louisiana and northern Mississippi, and enable the team currently operating in eastern Arkansas to continue. It would also support the work of three project coordinators in each state, and ongoing project evaluation and training activities. Easter Seals will seek release of at least a portion of fiscal 2000 funds early in the fiscal year to expedite access to project services and assistance across the Delta. Easter Seals will supplement these funds with non-federal resources.

The Department of Education indicated in its fiscal 2000 budget justification for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that the IDEA research and innovation account supporting the Easter Seals project has \$47.6 million to cover continuation costs and \$15.9 million for new activities. In meetings with Department of Education officials Easter Seals has learned that funds in this account are wholly committed to priorities established collaboratively by parents, state and local education personnel, and Department staff. For this reason, Easter Seals requests that the \$1.8 million provided to conduct the Delta Project next year be allocated above the level requested by the president for fiscal 2000. Notably, a \$1.8 million appropriation will not meet total project costs, but Easter Seals is committed to obtaining non-federal funds to conduct the full range of project activities.

Easter Seals proposes that the following suggested statutory and report language be used in the fiscal 2000 Appropriations Bill for Labor-HHS-Education for the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Special Education programs IDEA Research and Innovation.

Fiscal 2000 Appropriations Statutory Language:

"Of the funds provided, \$1.8 million shall be available in the first quarter of this fiscal year for Easter Seals "Early Childhood Development Project for the Mississippi Delta Region."

Report Language to Accompany Fiscal 2000 Appropriations Bill:

"The Committee continues to be concerned about unmet needs among children with disabilities in rural areas, particularly the Mississippi River Delta, and the lack of adequate support in these areas for parents, school personnel, child care staff, and health providers to make effective use of and expand local resources. The bill addresses these concerns by providing \$1.8 million to continue the Early Childhood Development Project for the Mississippi River Delta Region to be carried out by Easter Seals. The Committee directs the Department to award these funds no later than December 31, 1999 to expedite placement of pediatric specialist teams across the three-state Delta region. The Committee recognizes that this multi-year project will provide unduplicated early intervention and early childhood services to children with disabilities ages birth through twelve years, assist parents, and build lasting local capacity to better provide and coordinate such services."

CONCLUSION

Easter Seals greatly appreciates the Subcommittee's strong support for initiating and continuing the "Early Childhood Development Project for the Mississippi Delta Region. It is beginning to have a dramatic, positive, and lasting impact in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. An investment of \$1.8 million in fiscal 2000 will expedite the full implementation and benefit of the Delta Project across the three-state region. Thank you for your consideration and support of our fiscal 2000 recommendation.

For information: Randall L. Rutta, Easter Seals, at 202-347-3066.



Creating solutions. changing lives.

Easter Seals

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*Assistant Vice President,
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Paul —
I keep
trying —
6-15

CLINTON LIBRARY PHOTOCOPY

About Easter Seals

Easter Seals is a non-profit health agency dedicated to helping children and adults with disabilities achieve independence. For over 50 years, Easter Seals has provided the state's most comprehensive rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities of all ages. Our services include inpatient and outpatient physical, occupational and speech therapies for children birth through school age; preschool instruction and child care; after school programs and assistance for school age children; vocational and independent living programs for adults; and the latest in augmentative communication and technology resources for children and adults with a variety of disabilities.

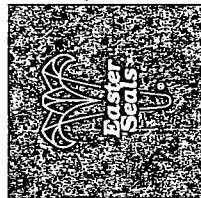
For More Information

Easter Seals Delta Project
Sara Zeno, Director

For questions about your child's development or to schedule an evaluation, please call Easter Seals toll free at 1-877-533-3600 or (501) 227-3680; fax: (501) 227-3677.

Creating solutions. changing lives.

Easter Seals Delta Project
3920 Woodland Heights Road
Little Rock, Arkansas 72212-2495



Easter Seals Delta Project



Life. Liberty. The Pursuit of Happiness.

*Caring For Children
With Special Needs*

*The Easter Seals Delta Project is
funded through a grant from the
U.S. Department of Education.*

The Easter Seals Delta Project is an early childhood development program for infants and children ages birth to 12 years who are diagnosed with or at risk for developmental delays. This program is provided at no cost to families living in the following counties: Drew, Desha, Lincoln, Lee, Phillips and Monroe.

The Easter Seals Delta Project staff includes a speech-language pathologist, physical and occupational therapists, a social worker and case coordinator. This mobile team will travel to any of the six counties listed above to evaluate a child who may have developmental delays. The team will then assist families in finding needed health and/or therapy services.

Services for Children Ages 0 - 5

- Developmental assessments
- Physical, occupational and speech therapy evaluations
- Case coordination
- Individual or classroom consultations
- Inservice training for professionals
- Assistive technology consultations

On the cover: Tonda, Matthew, and Jacquelin



*The goal of the
Easter Seals Delta Project
is to help young children
reach their maximum
potential by enhancing
their health, growth
and education.*

Services for Children Ages 6 - 12

- Individual or classroom consultations
- Parent training
- Inservice training for professionals
- Assistive technology consultations

Counties Served

Families with children living in the following counties qualify for assistance through the Easter Seals Delta Project:

- Drew
- Desha
- Lincoln
- Lee
- Phillips
- Monroe

Qualifications

- Children must be 12 years of age or younger.
- Children must live in one of the six counties listed above.
- Children must be at risk for a developmental delay or be diagnosed with conditions such as low birth weight, prematurity, chronic illness, failure to thrive, or other conditions limiting their development.
- Services are provided at no cost to families. Children will not be denied service due to their family's income.

Easter Seals does not discriminate in race, sex, national origin, age, disability or religious creed in the services it offers or in the employment of personnel.

Easter Seals

“Early Childhood Development Project for the Mississippi River Delta Region”

(Easter Seals Delta Project)

6-Month Report: October 1, 1998 – March 31, 1999

Award Number H324E980001

Submitted To:

Department of Education
MaryAnn McDermott, Project Officer
Washington, DC

Submitted From:

Nancy Carlson, Principal Investigator
Marilyn Daugherty, Project Director
Easter Seals national headquarters
Chicago, IL

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Easter Seals is pleased to report that the "Early Childhood Development Project for the Mississippi Delta Region" or "Delta Project" is successfully underway in accomplishing planned goals. The project was proposed in 1998 to address serious unmet service needs among children with disabilities and their families in the Delta areas of Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi. Statistics for this region indicate significant and persistent gaps in local services for children with disabilities, shortages of appropriately trained personnel, and inadequate supports for parents and personnel to maximize child development and learning. Collaborative methodologies developed by the Delta Project will provide a model for replication in rural and underserved areas across the country.

Easter Seals Delta Project aims to build lasting capacity to better serve children with disabilities by collaborating with and providing training and support to families, local education and health personnel. So far this year, Delta Project staff have been instrumental in linking with a broad range of state and local developmental, health and education resources to identify harmful gaps in services to children with disabilities and to create strategies for solving such problems locally. In Arkansas, a team of pediatric specialists has begun providing services and training in six Delta counties. The team's experience with the following families illustrates the need for and benefit of this project:

A 20-year old unmarried mother of four children, ages 18 months to 5 years, sought out Easter Seals Delta Project because she felt that her 18 month old son was not developing typically. This young woman lives in the Delta, is unemployed, lacks a high school diploma, and, together with her children, shares a house with seven other relatives. Her local physician had told her that her son was o.k., but she suspected otherwise. The Easter Seals team evaluated her son, and found that his developmental scores were extremely low for his age. Team members referred the child to a developmental center, the local point of contact for the early intervention system, and are assisting with scheduling a complete physical and evaluation for him at Children's Hospital.

The Easter Seals team was recently asked to assist a Delta-area school in handling a request to waive kindergarten from the grandparents of a five-year old boy who, as the result of shaken baby syndrome, was blind and unable to walk. Unaware that early intervention or special education services were available, the grandparents never took the child for testing or treatment. An evaluation performed by the team indicated that the boy is functioning at a seven-month old level. The team is collaborating with school personnel to identify and secure needed services for the boy, facilitate his enrollment, and implement related teacher supports. They are locating a wheelchair for his use. The Team will provide training and support to his grandparents to give them the skills to facilitate their grandson's development.

In the first six months, the Delta Project has generated important immediate and long-term outcomes. Easter Seals is pleased to report concrete accomplishments and results. Specifically the project is:

- Assisting and expanding child find activities in all three states.
- Improving the quality and availability of early intervention and child development services by identifying previously untapped community resources, including agencies and personnel, and linking these resources into the early intervention and special education system in all three states
- Facilitating a first-time meeting between the Early Intervention Coordinators of all three states to discuss and address Delta-specific issues

- Increasing parent and family information skills through focus groups and other information providing mechanisms. These activities have identified un-served and under-served children as well as children who are the victims of violations of IDEA
- Increasing capacity of local personnel and providers including educating local pediatricians on the benefits of early intervention and child development services.

Operationally, the Delta Project has conducted an inventory of Delta needs and resources. These findings have been reported to each of the states for inclusion in their service directories. The inventory will be ongoing throughout the project. The project is fully staffed in all three states and there has been effective coordination of activities among the three states.

Easter Seals Delta Project staff communicated with hundreds of individuals involved with children with disabilities in the Delta to clarify pressing needs and initiate solutions. Collectively, the staff findings are:

- School districts are consistently reporting shortages of funds. They do not seem to be aware of the 85 percent increase in Part B funds since Fiscal 1997. Families are not seeing changes in the special education programs as a result from the increased funding.
- School personnel and early intervention personnel who have worked on behalf of children with disabilities are reluctant or unable to write Individualized Family Services Plans and Individual Education Plans that are appropriate to the child and family because the necessary resources or expertise to appropriately serve children are unavailable.
- The links need to be strengthened between many local providers and the early intervention and special education systems.
- In Louisiana and Mississippi, Medicaid policies directing where services may be provided are in direct conflict of Part C policies on natural environments.
- In Louisiana, Medicaid reimbursement rates are limiting the already low number of providers who will see children in the Delta.
- In Louisiana, local pediatricians need additional education about the benefits of early intervention. Given the dire straits of many Delta children, many of these pediatricians can only address primary health needs and have low expectations about the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities.

This report highlights project accomplishments, including activities and findings, for a six-month period beginning October 1, 1998 and ending March 31, 1999.

STATEMENT OF NEED

Children with disabilities in the Mississippi Delta are not receiving the appropriate early intervention and education services that they need to maximize development and learning. Proportionately lower family incomes, fewer public resources, shortages of pediatric personnel and specialized services, and inadequate support systems for families and staff are among the factors contributing to this situation. Geographic isolation, caused by wide dispersal of residents and community resources, poor roads, and lack of transportation, make it difficult for families to access services locally and out-of-region, and impede the ability of service providers to be available as needed. As a result, increased attention and supports are needed to promote more effective implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in Delta communities, as well as other rural areas across the country.

For example, the national goal for providing early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities is 3% of the total population, yet in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi the percentage of children ages birth to three years that are identified and served fall short of this mark. The percentage of infants birth to one year of age that receive early intervention services in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, for instance, is disconcertingly low at 1.05%, .38%, and .3% respectively. The Delta Project supports state child find efforts and offers evaluation and service assistance to assure timely and appropriate assessments and interventions. Other project activities address similarly compelling needs among children with disabilities, families, and personnel.

BACKGROUND

Easter Seals is dedicated to assisting children and adults achieve independence. For eighty years, Easter Seals has provided home and community-based services and advocated for and with people with disabilities and their families to maximize opportunities for full participation in society. Easter Seals mission promotes proactive identification of unmet need among persons with disabilities and their families, and the pursuit of community solutions that address such needs. Most often, Easter Seals partners with other organizations, agencies and corporations to achieve solutions that change lives and society for the better.

Easter Seals pioneered early intervention and developmental services that promote health, development and learning for children with disabilities. As an original advocate for the right of children with disabilities to a free and appropriate education, Easter Seals has partnered with parents, schools and public agencies for nearly thirty years to help implement and expand special education, preschool and early intervention programs. Easter Seals is fully committed to the success of these programs.

Public investment and community initiative in responding to the education and development needs of children with disabilities has been truly impressive. Yet, not every child with a disability has adequate access to needed services, and parents and personnel often lack the training and supports to best meet the needs of children with disabilities. Despite much good faith effort and considerable investment of public and private funds, these shortcomings exist across the country. An area of particular concern to Easter Seals, the Mississippi River Delta region, emerged as a possible testing ground for effective methods to build local capacity among rural education, health personnel and parents to better meet the developmental and educational needs of children with disabilities. Health care and education statistics in this region are among the worst in the nation.

Coincidentally, the Easter Seals organizations serving the Delta region have strong ties to state education and human service agencies, good relationships with local education, health personnel and families of children with disabilities, and experience in providing services in remote rural areas. The combination of a mission-driven interest in improving service capacity to benefit rural children with disabilities, families, and personnel and expertise in serving rural communities caused Easter Seals to propose the Delta Project. The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 established priorities for improving results for children with disabilities, increasing parent training and enhancing personnel support that shaped the purpose and design of the Easter Seals project. Congress endorsed the initiative, and Easter Seals collaborated with the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs to implement the "Early Childhood Development Project for the Mississippi Delta Region" or "Delta Project", effective October 1, 1998.

Easter Seals national headquarters received a \$600,000 for the period beginning October 1, 1998 through September 30, 1999 to begin a multi-year effort to enhance the capabilities of health, social services and educational professionals and families who serve and assist children with disabilities from birth to twelve years. The project involves three Easter Seals state

organizations serving Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi. The Center for Research on Teaching and Learning at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock has been contracted to conduct a comprehensive evaluation to assess the benefits/impacts of project activities, particularly outreach activities carried out by Easter Seals Arkansas in six targeted Delta counties. (see Attachment A)

This report provides information on the first six months of project activity, for the period beginning October 1, 1998 and ending March 31, 1999.

PROJECT GOALS

The Delta Project is designed to build capacity in local areas to assist parents and personnel to better meet the developmental and educational needs of children with disabilities ages birth to twelve years. Project activities are intended to increase developmental and educational results for children with disabilities through capacity building efforts and through provision of short-term, otherwise unavailable services. Project goals are wholly consistent with IDEA requirements and priorities, and in no way interfere with or alleviate public agency responsibilities. Similarly, project activities are designed to enhance, but not duplicate, current services for children with disabilities, parents and personnel.

The Mississippi Delta Project goals are:

1. Assist with and expand child find efforts;
2. Improve the quality and availability of appropriate early intervention and childhood development services for Delta region children with disabilities;
3. Increase parent knowledge and skills to better promote child development and learning;
4. Increase the capacity of local service providers to better serve children with disabilities and their families; and
5. Increase the commitment and ability of community decision-makers to solve problems that impede access to appropriate services for children with disabilities.

These goals and related activities were described in detail in the project workplan that was submitted by Easter Seals and approved by OSEP.

PROJECT DESIGN

The Delta Project is designed to build capacity in local communities for better assisting children with disabilities to learn and grow. Easter Seals services and supports are directed towards at-risk children and those with disabilities, their families, education and health care personnel, and private and public decision-makers with responsibility for these children at the state and local levels. Project activities do not duplicate available services, but instead address otherwise unmet needs through direct, short-term expert service delivery, training, technical assistance, information, and the linking of resources.

The basic framework for the project is simple. Project coordinators in the three Delta region states, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, assess current service and infrastructure needs in targeted counties and develop a multi-year plan for improving local capacity for serving children with disabilities. These activities are carried out in full collaboration with state and local agency officials, education and health care personnel, social service staff, and parents. The project coordinator for Arkansas was in place on October 1, 1998, enabling her to coordinate and support project implementation in Louisiana and Mississippi. Project coordinators in those two states joined the project in January 1999.

The project coordinators rely on the on-site presence of teams of pediatric specialists to provide immediate, short-term service support to local agencies and families and, more importantly, to affect change that builds lasting capacity to better serve children with disabilities. Ultimately, the project's design calls for two teams of pediatric specialists to serve two Delta regions in each of the three states. Teams will be comprised of approximately five specialists who are appropriate to the unique needs of each region. Team members may include physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, and social workers. A case coordinator will be based in each region to coordinate activities and provide assistance, primarily to parents and families. Available first year funds dictated that only one team could be implemented, which was formed in early 1999 to serve eastern Arkansas.

As designed, the project involves Easter Seals national headquarters in overseeing all project activities and fiscal management, and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock in carrying out comprehensive project evaluation. A detailed presentation of project design was included in Easter Seals application to the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) for fiscal 1998 funds.

**Early Childhood Development Project
for the Mississippi Delta Region
(Easter Seals' Delta Project)**

Delta Project Stories

Arkansas

1. The Great Rivers Educational Coop in Helena recently referred a child to the Delta Project. The referral was mainly triggered because the child was 32 months old, but still not speaking. Cooperating with the local lead agency serving this age group, Delta Project staff met with the child's family to conduct a developmental assessment. The child exhibited severe delays in speech and other areas. The child's mother was unaware that services would help her child and simply did not know what to do. The child was not covered by Medicaid, which made it even harder to find services. In collaboration with the child's mother, project staff made a referral to the local Day Developmental Treatment Center Services for therapy and daycare services. After a series of telephone calls and home visits, the child was accepted by the Center and efforts are underway to enroll the boy in Medicaid.
2. While visiting various agencies in the Arkansas Delta to explain the purpose of the project, an elderly lady became very interested and approached staff. She expressed concern that her grandson was two years old and not talking. She said that he was not currently getting services, but had received services in the past until he lost his Medicaid. The Delta Project's pediatric team obtained permission from the lead agency to see this child to conduct a developmental assessment. The team found that he had a significant delay in communication and needed speech therapy. His family lacked resources to pay for these services. Team members worked with the Early Intervention Service Coordinator to establish the child's eligibility for Early Intervention Funds due to his communication-related developmental delay. Delta Project staff are presently assisting this family and the local Early Intervention Coordinator to find a way for this child to receive the therapy services that he needs.
3. A young boy from the Delta was referred to the Delta Project by the local lead agency. He had been born very premature and was losing skills in speech. The Delta Project team conducted a developmental assessment and found profound delays in many areas. His family, which had lost Medicaid coverage, did not have a payer source for the services he needs. The child lived with grandmother and she was very concerned about him, but had no idea what to do. The child had no contact with other children and mostly stayed home with his aunt or grandmother. Project staff called the local Day Developmental Treatment Center Services and discussed this child's situation. The Center Director agreed to accept the child so that he could receive services there that he desperately needed and would otherwise not have been able to obtain.

LOUISIANA

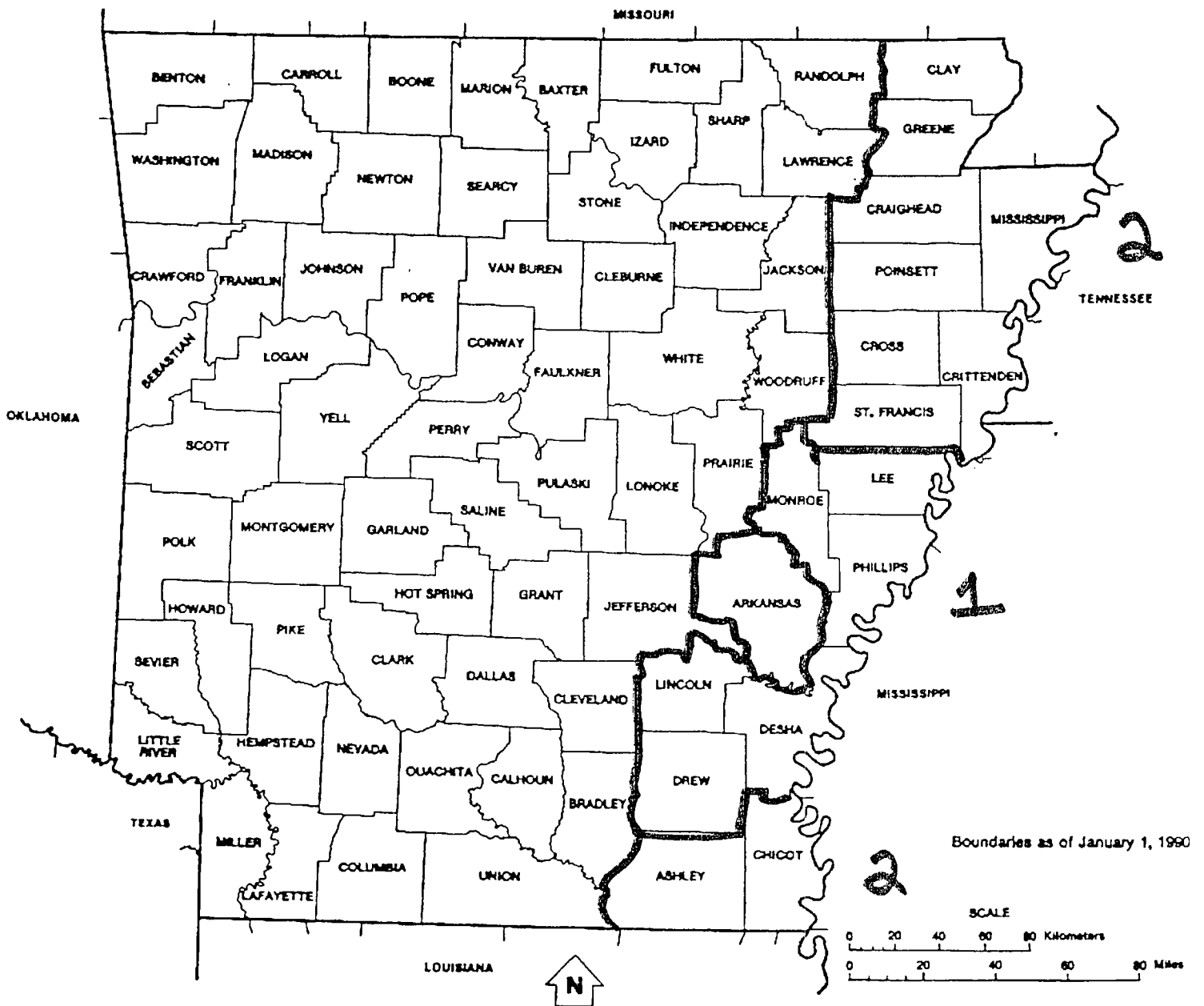
1. Families with autistic children appear to be having a hard time finding appropriate evaluation and service. An 11-year-old boy with what appeared to be typical autistic characteristics and behaviors was given a diagnostic category of selective mutism. The parent was told he could talk if he wanted to. The parent did not feel he was receiving appropriate intervention and services at school. She was unaware that her child was entitled to another evaluation and that other resources were available. Delta Project staff referred her to Families Helping Families and Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities.
2. In the same parish, there are at least three other autistic children who have not been placed in appropriate programs. One child was sent home due to the school's inability to manage her behavior. Another child was taken out of school by the parent because she was being spanked for soiling her clothes. Delta Project staff identified a need for appropriate evaluation and instruction in proper intervention techniques. Education about autism would increase understanding of some of the reasons behind a child's behavioral characteristics and offer strategies to minimize and compensate for underlying factors and consequent behaviors.
3. A mental health worker described the following situation. A grandparent has legal custody of a ten-year old boy, who is classified mental retarded and is enrolled in a special education program, made an appointment at the clinic. The grandmother came for the purpose of finding out why her grandson was unable to care for himself and read like the other children at school. It appeared that parent education and communication between schools and parents is inadequate. This situation may not be due to negligence on the part of local schools, but rather reflect insufficient resources to provide appropriate parent education. It is possible that the child may be capable of performing self-care, but has not received the training necessary for him to develop such skills. Delta Project staff offered to help solve these problems by assessing the child's abilities, educating the grandparents, and by serving as a liaison between school and home. Project staff will explore mobilizing other resources in the community that might provide ongoing support and assistance to this family.

MISSISSIPPI

1. Beloni (Humphreys County) has the only public school in the county. Children with disabilities are bused to the school from as far away as 30 miles to attend class and to receive speech and physical therapy. Bus and transportation aides are provided by the school district. The special education teacher is a regular education teacher who took the certification examination for special education (without having any fieldwork in the area) under the emergency needs bill. She passed, thus providing Humphreys County with a certified special education teacher to comply with IDEA. This teacher, and the county's program developer for children with special needs, are strong advocates for children. They provide, in a

limited fashion, an exemplary program for the children of Humphreys County. Delta Project staff are partnering with them to continue to improve services for children with disabilities and special needs.

2. In Greenwood (Leflore County), the mother of a 3 year old son telephoned to ask for help in getting speech therapy for her son, who has been evaluated and identified as developmentally delayed. She feels that with proper intervention her son could better prepare for school and avoid placement in a special classroom. She said that local school officials have advised her to wait to start therapy until he can talk. However, she feels that would be too late, and wants help as soon as possible. Delta Project staff identified two speech therapy providers (one in Leflore County and one in Grenada County) as potential resources. After meeting with them to establish their interest and availability, she provided contact information to the mother for follow-up and scheduling of services.
3. The mother of a 4 year old boy with speech difficulties and developmental delays recently tried transitioning her son from the Delta House (early intervention) program to Head Start. Unfortunately the teachers and staff (volunteers in the classroom) lacked skills training for handling children with disabilities who are included in the classroom with children without disabilities. They used inappropriate and unnecessary discipline with the boy, which created a negative environment and experience for him. He has refused to return to the Head Start program and is demanding to return to Delta House, where he is flourishing and eager to learn. Delta Project staff see an opportunity to provide, directly or indirectly through networking with other professionals, training to teachers and staff in inclusionary techniques and appropriate behavioral intervention strategies.
4. School district buildings are minimally or non-compliant with accessibility mandates from IDEA. Many schools are not accessible to individuals in wheelchairs. In one instance, children who are severely and/or profoundly involved are grouped in ground floor classrooms, while other children with less severe disabilities attend class at another school. Delta Project staff are equipped to assess building accessibility and make recommendations for environmental modifications to eliminate barriers.



boundaries as of January 1, 1990



ARKANSAS

LOUISIANA

LOUISIANA

TENNESSEE

ALABAMA

PASCAGOULA

SCALE

0 20 40 60 80 100 Kilometers

0 20 40 60 80 100 Miles

