

A
PUBLICATION
OF THE
COALITION
FOR
CITIZENS
WITH
DISABILITIES'
MISSISSIPPI
PARENT
TRAINING
AND
INFORMATION
CENTER
PROJECT

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Mississippi Alliance for Progressive Special Education

By Pam Dollar, Director, MS PTI

The recent release of the draft state policies regarding children with disabilities under IDEA 2004 prompted the formation of a new group, the Mississippi Alliance for Progressive Special Education (MAPSE).

Who is MAPSE? It is a group of parents of children with disabilities, advocacy organizations and professionals from across the state of Mississippi with all types of disabilities who are dedicated to improving outcomes for children with disabilities. The Alliance is committed to advancing special education policies in Mississippi.

Due to the complexity of the policy document, advocates decided to work together to review it and comment publicly on any recommended changes. At the first meeting the MAPSE members reviewed Parts A and B and drafted recommendations for changes. A second meeting was held to review the entire document and draft final recommendations.

The Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Special Education held public hearings in four locations across the state to allow interested parties to give their input on the draft policies. Representatives of MAPSE were in attendance at each hearing to share the groups recommendations for changes.

The group also drafted a letter to members of the State Board of Education asking that the draft policies not be approved as they are currently written and requested that they incorporate the MAPSE recommendations into the final document.

Many MAPSE members have worked on behalf of students with disabilities in our state for many years and believe that through this alliance they will see a more progressive shift toward the ultimate goal of a quality education for students with disabilities in Mississippi.

MAPSE (listed on page 2) would like to thank them for their dedication to students with disabilities in our state; the vision of a better tomorrow for our children and the commitment to doing what it takes to make it happen!



The Mississippi Parent Training and
Information Center is here to educate you
about the rights of your child under the
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
(IDEA) and the rights you have as a parent
of a child receiving or needing Special
Education services.

1-800-721-7255

The following is a list of training topics available by presentation or as online trainings...

These trainings have been approved for Early Intervention Units:

- 3R 's: Rights, Responsibilities and Recordkeeping
- Individualized Education Programs (IEP 's)
- Transition from Early Intervention to School

Other topics include:

- Autism
- Advocacy and Communication Skills

Conflict Resolution



(Continued from page 1)

MAPSE Members

- The Arc of Mississippi
- The Arc of Lowndes County
- Autism Spectrum Disorders Mississippi (ASD-MS)
- Central Mississippi Autism Support Network
- Central Mississippi Down Syndrome Society
- Cerebral Palsy Foundation of Mississippi
- Challenger Baseball League
- Children's Autism Support Team of Mississippi
- Citizens for Quality Education, Inc.
- Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities
- Concerned Citizens for Better a Greenville
- Courtney Bowie, Attorney
- Disability Rights Mississippi (formerly Mississippi Protection & Advocacy)
- Dockery Foundation
- Families of Children with Special Needs Support Group
- Gulf Coast Autism Support Network
- Gulf Coast Down Syndrome Society
- Hope Hollow Ministries
- Living Independence for Everyone (LIFE of Mississippi)
- Mississippi Center for Justice
- Mississippi Families as Allies for Children's Mental Health
- The Mississippi Human Services Agenda
- Mississippi Parent Training and Information Center
- Mississippi Parents Of Blind Children
- Mississippi Statewide Independent Living Council
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Mississippi
- National Autism Association of Mississippi
- Northeast MS Autism Support Network
- Oxford Exceptional Children's Society
- Parents United Together
- Paul E. Rogers, PA
- Southern Echo
- Society for Total Exceptional Parent Support (STEPS) Mississippi
- Sunflower County Parents and Students Organization
- YAPS (Youth As Public Speakers)

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Changes in IDEA Involve Parents' Rights

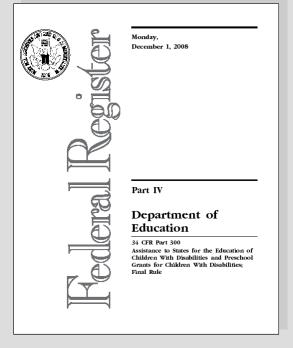
New regulations of the federal Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) became effective Dec. 31, 2008. IDEA provides a free, appropriate public education for children with disabilities.

Two changes of particular importance to parents of children with disabilities involve:

- a parent's right to revoke consent for special education and related services
- representation of parents and schools by non-attorneys in due process hearings

Since the passage of the first special education laws in 1975, parents have had the right to withdraw consent for special education services. However, school districts also had the right to contest the parent's decision.

The new regulations allow parents to revoke their consent for special education and related services and require the school district to comply with the parent's request for the student's removal from special education. Consequently, schools will not be able to challenge a parent's decision through mediation or due process hearing.



Parents, however, must provide written consent to discontinue special education and related services. Schools must provide the parents with prior written notice detailing the changes in educational placement and services before the services are actually discontinued.

Parents should be aware that once the child is removed from special education services, the school is not required to remove references to special education in a child's records. However, parents can still request amendments to anything in the records that might be inaccurate or misleading.

Parents should consider the following additional facts when revoking their consent to their child's special education services:

- When a parent withdraws consent, the student and parent no longer have rights under IDEA. The student becomes a regular education student and will be required to meet all state requirements for graduation.
- The child will be required to follow the same discipline policies as regular education students.
- Accommodations permitted to a student on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for statewide accountability and graduation-required assessments will no longer be available when a student exits special education.
- If the parent withdraws consent and the child is removed from special education, the parent at any time may request an evaluation, which will then be an initial evaluation.

The new regulations also clarify that schools and parents may utilize non-attorneys in due process hearings if a state does not already have laws prohibiting it. In Mississippi, this is not addressed in special education law or regulations.

The full text of these regulations can be viewed at http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/pdf/E8-28175.pdf.

Parents who would like to discuss withdrawing consent may call MS PTI at 800-721-7255 and speak with a parent advocate.

School Districts Receive Stimulus Funding from American Recovery Act of 2009

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) more commonly known as the Stimulus Bill appropriates significant new funding for programs under Parts B and C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Part B of the IDEA provides funds to state departments of education and local school districts to help them ensure that children with disabilities, aged three through twenty-one (twenty in Mississippi), have access to a free appropriate public education to meet each child's unique needs and prepare him or her for further education, employment, and independent living. Part C provides funding for early intervention services for children aged birth to three.

The IDEA recovery funds under ARRA will provide an unprecedented opportunity for states, school districts, and early intervention service providers to implement innovative strategies to improve outcomes for infants, toddlers, children, and youths with disabilities while stimulating the economy. Under the ARRA, the IDEA recovery funds are provided under three authorities:

\$11.3 billion is available under Part B Grants to States; \$400 million is available under Part B Preschool Grants; and \$500 million is available under Part C Grants for Infants and Families. Estimated additional IDEA funds under the ARRA Stimulus for Mississippi are \$122 million for Part B (this is in addition to the FY09 regular federal IDEA Part B funds of \$119 million) and \$3.6 million under Part C. All Recovery Act funds must be obligated by Sept. 30, 2011. The U.S. Dept. of Education released 50% of this money to states on April 1, 1009. The remaining 50% is scheduled to be released to states on October 1, 2009.

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) and the school districts are energized and eagerly planning for this large influx of funding. There are many ways these funds may be used. During the month of April MDE conducted a special education funding training which included information on ARRA. Some examples provided in this training of ways that ARRA/Stimulus funds can be utilized are:

- Positive Behavior Specialists
- Transition Coordinators
- Job Coaches
- Assistive Technology Devices and Training in their use
- Instructional Software
- Pilot Programs for Autism, Early Childhood, Pre-School, etc.
- District-wide Professional Development for teachers of students with disabilities training in and out of district, conferences, seminars
- Equipment: computers, smart boards, laptops, etc.
- After School Tutoring Programs and Extended Programs
- Handicap Accessible Upgrades to Buildings
- Drop-out Prevention Programs
- Specialized Buses
- Specialized Playground Equipment for students with disabilities

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When making decisions about the use of these funds school districts must keep in mind that these funds are a one time allocation and must be used for excess costs of providing special education and related services to students with disabilities. They must also invest ARRA funds thoughtfully to minimize the "funding cliff" as this is one time money and consideration must be given to how programs implemented will be sustained in the future.

MDE has created a page on their website to provide updates and information to the public on ARRA Stimulus Funding. You can access this page at www.mde.k12.ms.us/Stimulus. Another website recently

created to assist advocates in tracking states' use of IDEA Stimulus Funds is www.ideamoneywatch.com (select Mississippi on the left side of the page for information specific to our state).

This means that for Fiscal Year 2009 (FY09) funding to serve students with disabilities ages 6-21 in Mississippi has more than doubled! As you can see, this is an unprecedented opportunity for local school districts to improve services for students with disabilities in our state.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) is tracking the use of ARRA Stimulus funds in 16 states. Mississippi is among the states being tracked. Visit http://www.gao.gov/recovery/bimonthly to access a bi-monthly review (click Mississippi on the map).

The Recovery Act funds are considered part of the FY09 federal appropriation. All IDEA Recovery Act funds will be distributed to local school districts. However, unlike the FY09 annual appropriation, the IDEA Recovery Act funds do not increase the amount that states would otherwise be able to reserve for state administration and state level activities. All IDEA Recovery Act funds will be distributed to local school districts. The bottom line is these funds must result in improved outcomes for students with disabilities.



For Fiscal Year 2009 (FY09) funding to serve students with disabilities ages 6-21 in Mississippi has more than doubled!

If you believe you have valuable input on how your district should spend stimulus funds, you are encouraged to immediately

- contact your special education director,
- share your thoughts on how you think the money should be spent,
- find out when your special education budget hearing is being held and
- ATTEND!



"Building Partnerships...Working Together" Parent Conference A Success!

February 24th and 25th 2009 were an exciting couple of days for parents, professionals and the staff of several co-sponsoring organizations. The Mississippi Department of Education, The Mississippi Parent Training and Information Center, Disability Rights Mississippi (formerly Mississippi Protection and Advocacy), and the Mississippi Center for Education Innovation presented the Mississippi Parent Conference "Building Partnerships...Working Together" at the new Jackson Convention Complex. The objective of this year's conference was to improve collaboration between parents of students with

disabilities, teachers and other support professionals.

speakers included Keynote Art Cernosia. Attorney; Joe Olmi, PhD, Professor at the University Of Southern Mississippi; and Sarah Vazquez, a freelance speaker and writer for the World Institute on Disabilities of Oakland California. Topical presenters included staff from the Mississippi Department of Education, The Mississippi Parent Training and Information Center, REACH MS, Jackson County School District, Hattiesburg Public Schools, Mississippi Protection and Advocacy, and independent attorneys.

Parents and professionals experienced two full days of sessions that included topics on Community Collaboration Efforts, Procedural Safeguards, Evaluation and Eligibility, Parent Involvement in School Improvement, Dyslexia, Autism, Early Intervention, Transition, and other Special Education related topics.

The MS PTI staff is thankful to and profess pertinent is announce that we will be partnering disabilities. with MDE to bring another parent conference to parents in early 2010.

Stay tuned to developments by signing up for listserv updates and by website announcements at www.mspti.org!



The Building Partnerships conference provided parents and professionals with an open forum to discuss issues pertinent to improving outcomes for children with disabilities.

Coming Together,
Sharing Together,
Working Together,
Succeeding Together

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MSPTI Partners with School Districts to Provide Training for Parents

By Leslie Junkin, Community Outreach and Training Coordinator, MS PTI

Collaborating with Local Education Agencies (LEA's) and improving communication between school districts and families of children receiving Special Education services are both very

important goals of the MS PTI. The PTI staff dedicates much effort in developing new and inventive ways to reach out to communities across the state of Mississippi that are both accessible and convenient for parents and families of children with disabilities. We collectively agree that partnering with school districts is a feasible and effective means of reaching out to parents. These partnerships also foster improved communication and trust among parents and school professionals.

As a result of the Building Partnerships Conference, a recent collaboration between the PTI, MS Department of Education and Disability Rights Mississippi, several school districts have invited the PTI to provide training for parents in their districts. The following school districts have agreed to offer parent workshops:

- Carroll County Schools
- Holmes County Schools
- Lowndes County Schools
- Newton Municipal Schools



The MSPTI is Building Partnerships for Parents

Communication between parents and professionals is vital to achieving better outcomes for children and can also be the most challenging aspect of the Special Education process. These school districts have taken a much needed step in

improving these relationships by offering training for their parents.

The MS PTI staff would like to invite all school districts in Mississippi to join these trail blazers by partnering with the PTI to educate parents in their districts!





Educating families and professionals about Mississippi resources



DISABILITY RIGHTS MISSISSIPPI

Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Disabilities

By Shirley Walker, Community Services Advocate, Disability Rights MS

You may have heard about some of the exciting and inspiring changes going on at Mississippi Protection and Advocacy System, Inc (MPAS), and we want to take this opportunity to share some of the details with you! Since 1986 you have known this agency as Mississippi Protection and Advocacy System and you might have been under the impression that it primariAly advocated for cases in the education system. However, this is only one aspect of what this agency does. The agency is taking huge steps in becoming more recognizable, available, and active throughout the state. And one of the first things you may notice is a name and logo change. It is now Disability Rights Mississippi (DRMS).

Among other notable changes in the agency was the retirement of Rebecca Floyd after more than 25 years of serving as the Executive Director. Ms. Floyd led MPAS and was integral in its conception. She has been acclaimed throughout the years for her dedication and desire to bring about a more accessible world for individuals with disabilities.

The DRMS Board of Directors contracted with Ann Maclaine to serve as Interim Executive Director for six months while it searches for a permanent Director. Ms. Maclaine has served as the Director of Legal Services for Louisiana's protection and advocacy system for twenty years, and shares her time between Louisiana and Mississippi.

In Louisiana, Maclaine has overseen the legal work of the agency, and has been involved in major litigation, including class action suits to improve conditions in a crisis psychiatric facility and to insure accessibility of the public transportation system in New Orleans. She also was co-counsel in one of the first jury trials brought under the Americans with Disabilities Act, which resulted in a favorable verdict for a young deaf woman denied the opportunity to complete her preparation to become an elementary school teacher. Her primary role, however, has been to inspire, support and nurture staff by assisting in the management of the agency. Maclaine said "I am excited to have the opportunity to serve Mississippi as interim Executive Director of DRMS. I look forward to working with the dedicated staff to expand the vision and visibility of the agency throughout the state so that the rights of residents with disabilities are fully protected and advanced."

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Other exciting news regarding DRMS is the summer listening tour it is conducting throughout the state called "A TIME TO SHARE". DRMS will participate in approximately 35 different events in different communities state-wide in an effort to provide as many opportunities as possible for individuals with disabilities to share their information, gain knowledge, and provide input to DRMS regarding their needs and what issues they believe DRMS should address. There will be opportunities in a variety of ways for DRMS to gather input, such as town-hall type meetings, presentations, booths at community events, and being available at summer camps. The kick off starts on June the 16th with the first event in Tupelo, MS at the Lee County Library at 5:00pm, with another event following the next day in Corinth, MS at 1:00pm at the MSU Extension Services Office. DRMS will be providing transportation if given notice 2 days prior to the event and will have sign language interpreters on hand as well. There will be light refreshments served and some local VIP's will be acknowledged.

DRMS staff are very enthusiastic about reaching out in these different settings and about hopefully seeing some new and inspiring faces! For more details on the events and when they will be in a location convenient to you, check out their calendar of events section on the web-site at www.disabilityrightsms.com or call the office at 1-800-772-4057. If you can't make it to one of these events or get by one of their booths but would still like to fill out a survey to have your voice heard, you can link up to the survey on the web-site as well, or call and ask to have one sent to you. DRMS wants to hear from you, so take an opportunity to help shape a new direction for this important agency.

MS PTI Yahoo Group A Statewide Listserv... Get Connected!

What is the MS PTI Yahoo Group? A e-mail list from Mississippi Parent Training and Information Center through which the MS Parent Training & Information Center shares information about upcoming workshops and trainings. We will also periodically inform members of disability related news and happenings.



What's a Yahoo Group? It is a way for e-mail users to be in a group with others who have similar interests.

Who should join? Parents of children with disabilities, self-advocates, and service providers for people with disabilities in Mississippi.

How do I join? Just send an e-mail to: **info@mspti.org** or visit <u>www.groups.yahoo.com/group/mspti</u> and click "Join this group".

Does it cost anything to join? No! The Listserv is free!



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July 2009

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MS PTI WORKSHOPS

Getting Prepared for Next School Year

Learn creative ways to help new teachers and the school know your child before next year; recordkeeping tips; home/school communication strategies; how to schedule for success.

Fri, June 26, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

CCD Conference Room 2 Old River PI, Suite A, Jackson, MS

Mon, July 13, 6:00-8:00 pm

CCD Conference Room 2 Old River PI, Suite A, Jackson, MS

Win-Win! Conflict Resolution

Learn about effective communication and strategies to resolve disagreements about special education.

Sat, June 27, 11:00 am-2:00 pm

CCD Conference Room

2 Old River PI, Suite A, Jackson, MS

Tue, July 28, 6:00-8:00 pm

CCD Conference Room

2 Old River PI, Suite A, Jackson, MS

Call the MS PTI office at 1-800-721-7255 to register for the trainings above.

MS PTI ONLINE TRAINING

Early Childhood

Preparing for Change: Understanding Transition from Early Intervention to Public School

Presenter: Leslie Junkin, Comm Outreach & Training Coord, MS PTI

What happens a child with a disability turns three? This training will help parents understand the basics of transition from the Early Intervention service system to public schools. It will also provide necessary information for professionals to ensure a smooth transition for students and help them better understands what parents need to know.

To register for a session go to the corresponding web address

Mon, June 22 7:00 - 8:00 pm www2.gotomeeting.com/register/399332338 Mon, July 20 12:00 - 1:00 pm www2.gotomeeting.com/register/436882419

IDEA - Basic Rights

Getting Prepared for Next School Year Presenter: Pam Dollar, Director, Mississippi PTI

Frustrated? Tired of trying to figure special education out? Let us help! Learn creative ways to help new teachers and the school know your child before next year; recordkeeping tips; home/school communication strategies; how to schedule for success.

To register for a session go to the corresponding web address

 Mon, June 15
 7:00 - 8:30 pm
 www2.gotomeeting.com/register/642776459

 Wed, June 24
 12:00 - 1:30 pm
 www2.gotomeeting.com/register/641607138

 Tue, July 7
 7:00 - 8:30 pm
 www2.gotomeeting.com/register/236811818

 Tue, July 21
 12:00 - 1:30 pm
 www2.gotomeeting.com/register/641114298

Autism

Autism: An Overview

Presenter: Pam Dollar, Director, Mississippi PTI

This training will focus on the diagnostic criteria for autism, possible causes, sensory challenges faced by people with autism spectrum disorders and a summary of treatments and interventions.

To register for a session go to the corresponding web address

Thu, June 11 12:00 - 1:30 pm www2.gotomeeting.com/register/420775402
Thu, July 9 7:00 - 8:30 pm www2.gotomeeting.com/register/577905058

<u>NOTE</u>: Once registered you will receive an email confirming your registration with information you need to join the Webinar.

If you have difficulty registering or logging in, please contact the MS PTI office at 1-800-721-7255.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DISABILITY RIGHTS MS (FORMERLY MS P&A) - A TIME TO SHARE

Come see us at one of the locations listed to let us know your needs and fill out a survey!

Lee County Public Library

June 16, 2009, 5:00-7:30 pm Tupelo, MS

MSU Extension Services Office

June 17, 2009, 1:00-2:30 pm Corinth, MS

Lafayette/Oxford Public Library

June 24, 2009, 10:30 am-1:00 pm Oxford, MS

M.R. Davis Public Library

June 24, 2009, 5:00-7:30 pm Southaven, MS

MS BOARD OF EDUCATION MTG

June 18, 2009, 10:00 am June 19, 2009, 8:30 am Old Central High School Building 359 North West Street, 4th Floor Boardroom, Jackson. MS See agenda here: http://board.mde.k12.ms.us/

SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT (PBS) TRAINING

June 23-24, 2009 Thad Cochran Center USM Hattiesburg, MS For more info: 601-266-4693 or reachms@usm.edu

BRAILLE ADVISORY PANEL MEETING

June 25, 2009, 9:30 am Mississippi School for the Blind 1252 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS

DYSLEXIA TRAININGS

Sponsored by MS Dept. of Education

Meridian

June 16, 2009, 8:00 am-4:00 pm For more info: 601-484-0306 or dbrantley@emced.org

Laurel Site (Hattiesburg)

June 17, 2009, 8:00 am-4:00 pm For more info: 601-266-6777 or mary.walters@s-resa.org

Gulfport

June 22, 2009, 8:00 am-4:00 pm For more info: 601-528-5342 or tom.clark@gceic.org

Jackson State University

June 23, 2009, 8:00 am-4:00 pm For more info: 601-432-6234 or cmack@jsums.edu

Vicksburg (Delta State)

June 29, 2009, 8:00 am-4:00 pm For more info: 662-846-4354 or inichlsn@deltastate.edu

PAWS AND PUZZLES

therapy dog group for children with autism and their entire family June 27, 2009, 2:00 pm July 25, 2009, 2:00 pm Richland Library, Richland, MS (last Saturday of each month) For more info: contact Suzanne at therapyk9s@aol.com

MS PARENTS OF BLIND CHILDREN

June 27, 2009 July 25, 2009 Tupelo, MS (last Saturday of each month) For more info: pdsartain@dishmail.net

VISION LOSS & OVERVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

July 13-15, 2009 USM Gulf Park Campus Advanced Education Center 730 E. Beach Blvd, Long Beach, MS For more info: 228-249-9668

MISSISSIPPI AUTISM INSTITUTE

Speaker: Dr. Vincent Carbone July 14-16, 2009 Marriott Hotel, Jackson, MS For more info: 601-359-3498 or dmunday@mde.k12.ms.us

ARC OF MISSISSIPPI CONFERENCE

Alternatives for Real Choice July 23-24, 2009 Country Inn & Suites, Natchez, MS For more info: 601-982-1180

TOOLS & STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WITH SEVERE COGNITIVE DISABILITIES (SCD)

July 28-31, 2009 USM Gulf Park Campus Advanced Education Center, 730 E. Beach Blvd, Long Beach, MS For more info: 228-249-9668

MS APSE CONFERENCE

Opening the Doors to Employment...Making it Happen September 2-3, 2009 Eagle Ridge Conv. Ctr, Raymond, MS For more info: 601-982-1180

MS CCD PATHWAYS TO PARTICIPATION CONF. & 20TH ANNIVERSARY

Pathways to Participation October 14-15, 2009 Hilton Hotel, Jackson, MS For more info: 601-969-0601

Every student can learn, just not on the same day or the same way.

~George Evans

If you would like to submit an event to be included in our *CALENDAR OF EVENTS* please send an e-mail with the date, location and person and/ or website to contact for more information to:

jlee@mspti.org or contact Jason Lee at 601-969-0601 or 1-800-721-7255

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Mississippi Parent Training and Information Center

2 Old River Place, Suite A Jackson, Mississippi 39202

Phone: 601-969-0601

Toll Free: I-800-721-7255

Fax: 601-709-0250

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Please help us reduce our mailing costs. If you no longer wish to receive the MSPTI Connection newsletter, please check the appropriate statement below, attach your mailing label and return, or call us at 1-800-721-7255.

Visit our website www.mspti.org to sign up to receive our newsletter by email or check the appropriate statement below.

www.mspti.org

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

No, I do not want to receive theYes, I want to receive theYes, I would like to receive	MSPTI Connection news	sletter by mail.	ease remove my name from the	mailing list.
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Return this form to: Mississippi Parent Training and Information Center, 2 Old River Place, Suite A, Jackson, MS 39202; phone 601-969-0601 or 800-721-7255

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^{**} Professionals, please submit a \$10.00 subscription fee (payable to MS PTI)