

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

BETWEEN

Delta Health Alliance, Inc. (DHA)

AND

The MS Center for Educational Innovation (MSCEI), the Indianola Public School District, the city of Indianola, Mississippi State University (MSU), South Sunflower County Hospital (SSCH) and the Retired Education Personnel of Sunflower County (REPSC).

This MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING is hereby made and entered into by and between the Delta Health Alliance, Inc., a 501(c)3 headquartered in Stoneville, MS, hereinafter referred to as DHA and a) the MS Center for Educational Innovation (MSCEI), b) the Indianola School District, c) the city of Indianola, d) Mississippi State University, e) South Sunflower County Hospital, f) the Retired Education Personnel of Sunflower County (REPSC), and g) Children's Defense Fund Southern Region, hereinafter referred to as collectively as the Promise Neighborhood Partners (PNPs) for the purpose of planning a Promise Neighborhood project in Indianola, MS, entitled the **Delta Promise Neighborhood (DPN)** project.

The purpose of this preliminary MOU is to establish a framework of cooperation between DHA and the PNPs to improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children in Indianola, MS, by building a continuum of academic programs and family and community supports, from the cradle through college to career, with strong schools at the center. To achieve this objective, it is agreed that DHA and PNPs will work together to identify and develop mutually beneficial programs and projects to support planning activities that are in compliance with the guidelines of

the U.S. Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods grant program, with the objective to develop a plan to implement a Promise Neighborhood Program in Indianola, MS.

DHA Theory of Change: DHA's theory of change hinges upon our organization's beliefs about how its inputs, and early and intermediate outcomes, relate to accomplishing its long-term desired results. It is the belief of the DHA that a comprehensive, coordinated, and sustained effort to build strong schools and family and community support services will break the cycle of intergenerational poverty in Indianola, MS. Through a combination of local, state, and regional expertise, the DHA seeks to improve the educational and healthcare outcomes of children and families in Indianola by partnering and utilizing skilled staff, local input, federal, state, and private funding, best practices, and a receptive school district and community. These changes will be incremental over time, but each sustainable change will serve to strengthen the foundation for additional changes that can lead to significant, long-term improvements in the lives of residents of Indianola. Ultimately, we envision creating a promising neighborhood that provides early childhood, elementary, primary and secondary educational support; prenatal, primary health and dental care, and family planning services; and family and community support services to transform an entire community.

DHA Theory of Action: The DHA's strategy regarding how, considering its capacity and resources, it will take the necessary steps to accomplish the desired result academic and career success through a comprehensive array of services for families of Indianola, MS.

The DHA seeks to utilize its financial and human capital to plan and implement the Delta Promise Neighborhood project in Indianola, MS, by blanketing the community with a comprehensive continuum of cradle to college to career academic and family and community support services. By working in the Delta since 2001, the DHA has established a strong

community-based network of partners and consumers which will be brought together for targeted program planning in Indianola. DHA will utilize surveys and focus groups to identify not only the areas of greatest need but also to solicit support and ideas for solutions from the communities to be served. The DHA will convene a Steering Committee, comprised of residents of Indianola along with key stakeholders and organizations, who will be tasked with providing the direction for the program as a whole and to ensure progress continues to be made. DHA will hold frequent meetings in and around Indianola, in partnership with the PNPs to develop realistic solutions to the problems facing residents of this area. Once preliminary plans have been developed and approved by the Steering Committee, pilot programs will be developed to test solutions on a smaller scale, before rolling out to the community at large.

MSCEI Theory of Change: The Mississippi Center for Education Innovation was founded in 2007 with two broad objectives: 1) to raise the profile, priority and quality of education for MS children from infancy to young adulthood and 2) to see, nurture and develop education innovation in a particular region of the state, the MS Delta. The Center has identified five key levers to make these objectives a reality: 1) focusing on child development and early learning; 2) improving teacher quality and student achievement; 3) focusing on leadership and school achievement; 4) focusing on community, family and school engagement; and 5) focusing on public will building to improve support for public education.

MSCEI Theory of Action: To carry out the aforementioned objectives, MSCEI is focused on building partnerships between key state, local and federal stakeholders. Specific efforts (based on best practices and/or model programs) in each focal area include:

1. *Child development and early learning* – the MSCEI is focused on: shaping a statewide early education infrastructure; focusing on transition and alignment between early education and K-3; and advocacy/public will-building activities.
2. *Teacher quality and student achievement* –the Center is focused on providing comprehensive literacy training to teachers. Other key activities in this area include working interns to help teachers better incorporate technology in their instruction; implementing a mentoring effort in 10 Delta Schools which provides educational interventions from older students to younger students using technology; and providing universal screening instruments for each school participating in the Delta Promise initiative.
3. *Leadership and school achievement* – activities in this area are focused exclusively on the Delta. In this area, the Center developed the MS Leadership Academy for School Leaders to explore how district and school leaders can and should intentionally lead their schools (this incorporates early learning). Other activities include civic engagement training for youth; financial literacy training for teachers, students; and a Vulnerable Children Symposium focused on making stakeholders aware of challenges at-risk children face.
4. *Community, family and school engagement* – in this area, the Center manages two initiatives. The first of these, Parents for Public Schools (PPS) is geared to increasing family engagement in public schools through a comprehensive training approach. The other key initiative is First Impressions, a program housed at MSU designed to help Delta communities assess and improve their community and economic development potential.
5. *Public and Political Will-building* - MSCEI has chosen to focus on building public will around early education for 2009 and 2010. Activities in this area include commissioning the

Godwin Group to conduct a statewide survey on attitudes around early education and ongoing dialogue and events involving national and state business leaders.

MSCEI Financial & Programmatic Commitment: The Center is committed to the success of the Indianola Promise Neighborhood project given the strong synergy between the Center's purpose and that of this project. The Center will contribute \$100,000 in-kind support of staff time and expense to the planning activities of this project and a cash donation of \$25,000 towards the matching requirement. The activities that the Center will undertake include exploring how its aforementioned five focal areas can play a role in the Indianola Promise effort.

Indianola Public School District (IPSD) Theory of Change: The mission of the Indianola Public School District is to focus the energies of our schools, community, and parents on successfully educating all students so that they will become productive citizens in a global society. We believe that our passion, compassion, and commitment to a pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning will make the difference in the lives of our students and in the community.

IPSD Theory of Action: IPSD, though currently in State Conservatorship, is committed to improving outcomes at our schools. As such, each school will participate as requested with needs assessments, strategy sessions, teaching evaluations, focus groups and other planning activities for the Delta Promise Neighborhood project. We will work with our parents to help them become more engaged in their children's education and work with other partners to develop tutoring programs and other afterschool activities.

IPSD Financial & Programmatic Commitment: IPSD will continue to work with members of the DHA and other project partners as needed, participating in planning activities, needs assessments, and development of curricula for use in classrooms. Financial commitments are not possible at this time given our conservatorship status.

City of Indianola Theory of Change: Our mission is to enhance the business and social environments and contribute to the overall economic well-being and quality of life for everyone in Indianola. There are twenty civic clubs active in Indianola, representative of the pride the citizens of Indianola have in their community. Indianola boasts twenty-five churches, representing eleven denominations. Indianola's Theory of Change relies upon the participation of these various organizations, which will help ensure representation of its residents in solutions developed by this planning process.

City of Indianola Theory of Action: The City of Indianola has been an active partner in the preliminary work conducted to establish the Delta Promise Neighborhood project, and is committed to that ongoing effort. The City has worked with the DHA to draft preliminary plans and lend staffing support for early efforts relating to the establishment of a neighborhood association and the coordination of volunteers.

City of Indianola Financial & Programmatic Commitment: The City of Indianola will commit up to \$25,000 in the first year of planning operations to the Delta Promise Neighborhood project, in staff time, personnel and related expenses. The City will also agree to bear the cost of maintaining the public park to be built with the support of volunteers from the city, which will be coordinated by our office.

Mississippi State University (MSU) Theory of Change: MSU's Early Childhood Institute is a program of the College of Education established in 1999 to provide training, technical assistance, and applied research for improved quality and accessibility of early care and education across Mississippi. MSU assists state and local agencies and individual child care facilities in improving the quality and accessibility of learning opportunities for young children, which in turn is believed to lead to long-term improvements in the well-being of the Delta's youngest residents.

MSU Theory of Action: MSU will participate in all need assessments, strategy sessions, planning activities, and development of pilot programs as needed by the project. MSU will be activity primarily in the assessment and planning of early childhood programs, and the development of training programs for people who will be providing early childhood care.

MSU Financial & Programmatic Commitment: MSU is dedicated to the planning and establishment of a Maternal Infant Health Outreach Worker (MIHOW) program in Indianola. MSU will continue to work with the DHA and other partners to ensure that this program aligns with other efforts and fits into the overall continuum developed in this planning process.

South Sunflower County Hospital (SSCH) Theory of Change: SSCH is committed to improving the physical and mental health of its patients, which provide a variety of services to its clients. Improvements in the overall health status of our clients are possible through a combination of factors, some of which the Hospital can impact.

SSCH Theory of Action: SSCH is a 69 bed general acute care public hospital which will continue to provide healthcare care services to residents of Indianola and the surrounding area. We will participate in all needs assessments, strategy sessions, planning activities, and development of pilot programs as needed by the project.

SSCH Financial & Programmatic Commitment: SSCH will make available to the project the use of an approximately 3,000 square foot office space, located at 135 Front Street, Indianola, MS, to serve as headquarters, meeting / training facilities and possible future clinic space for the Delta Promise Neighborhood project. The fair market value for this property is calculated to be \$51,150 in potential rental revenue that would be forgone by this contribution.

Retired Education Personnel of Sunflower County (REPSC) Theory of Change: The REPSC's approach to change is similar to that employed by the school district – namely that

systematic change and individual change are closely linked. To make changes in the individual, systems must be developed and maintained to support those changes, just as system changes must involve the individuals participating in those plans.

REPSC Theory of Action: The REPSC will work with the DHA and the other partners of this initiative to participate in needs assessments and conduct planning activities that can lead to a continuum of programs developed in direct response to the needs of Indianola. We anticipate our greatest contribution will come from the resources available by our retired teacher members, who can dedicate significant time and effort to these activities.

REPSC's Financial & Programmatic Commitment: The REPSC will dedicate up to \$25,600 in volunteer time in assistance with the development of curriculums, establishment of after-school tutoring programs and assistance with plans involving improving parent-teacher relations.

Children's Defense Fund Southern Regional Office (CDF-SRO) Theory of Change: CDF-SRO's approach to change is to serve as the leading child advocate to ensure equality by enacting laws, policies, and programs, that impact the lives of children, their families, and communities.

CDF-SRO Theory of Action: The CDF-SRO seeks to work with organizations and systems to enact laws and policies designed to help children escape poverty, receive health care, child care, nurturing, proper nutrition, and education.

CDF-SRO Financial & Programmatic Commitment: CDF-SRO commits non-federal in-kind match in the amount of \$150,000. We will also provide planning and programmatic activities relating to four of our programs: SPARK Mississippi, CDF Freedom Schools®, Young Women's Leadership Institute, and Young Adult Leadership Training. Additionally, CDF-SRO's director and/or a designee will fully participate in Steering Committee meetings.

Governance Structure

The DPN project will be governed by the **Delta Promise Neighborhood Project Steering Committee (DSC)**. The DSC's membership consists of twenty-one members, the majority of which represents Indianola/Sunflower County including business leaders, parents, school personnel and other key stakeholders. Residents of Indianola will have an active role in the organization's decision-making not only through representation on this steering committee but also through community based focus groups, town hall meetings, surveys and open forums. The DSC will be co-chaired by Dr. Cassie Penning, retired superintendent, and Sunflower County businessman, Tom Gresham. Meetings will be governed according to Robert's Rules of Order.

Commitments to Develop Infrastructure

The DHA and its PNPs will continue to work with local, State, and Federal government leaders to develop support for an infrastructure of policies, practices, systems, and resources that supports the Indianola Promise Communities. At the heart of this effort will be support for the pilot programs and community-driven solutions, as those solutions are scaled up into full operation. Locally, Eligah Johnson, Project Director of the DHA will spearhead efforts to build new relationships and strengthen existing ones in Indianola, while Josh Davis, DHA's Director of Institutional Advancement, will continue to establish new partnerships with agencies outside of the Indianola area. PNPs are also expected to play a significant role in ongoing infrastructure development, as it relates to their own commitments and relations with third-party partners.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned, being duly authorized by their respective agencies, have signed this MOU as affirmation of the commitment of each organization to the implementation and sustainability of this initiative, if approved by the funding agency. Each organization intends to utilize reasonable efforts to implement this partnership and accepts this potential long-term commitment as part of their own internal strategic plans.

_____ Karen Fox, CEO, Delta Health Alliance

_____ King David Rush, Superintendent, IPSD

_____ Steve Rosenthal, Mayor, City of Indianola

_____ Rhea Williams-Bishop, Interim Director, MSCEI

_____ Richard Swan, Director of Sponsored Program, MSU

_____ H.J. Blessitt, Administrator, SSCH

_____ Charles R. Scott, President, Retired Education

Personnel of Sunflower County

_____ Oleta Garrett Fitzgerald, Southern Regional Director

Children's Defense Fund