

## **Article on hold until Week of June 9**

### **First Unofficial Draft of MDHS Accomplishments for Submittal to the Office of the Governor**

The Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) is making great strides in its services and programs for the families, children, and seniors it serves across the state. Through the dedication and hard work of staff around the state, the Department's divisions continue to provide essential services for thousands of needy Mississippians.

Efforts to maintain the stability and effectiveness of MDHS were successful during the 2002 legislative session. Issues of state funding have presented major challenges for the agency, yet there are still a number of successes to tout.

#### *Economic Assistance, Recent Birmingham Awards* **(what are Birmingham Awards? And why haven't we been told about it and made this into a press story?)**

This division recently received recognition and a monetary award in excess of \$4 million related to accomplishments with the issuance of food stamps.

#### *EBT in Rankin County*

The implementation of the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) was launched May 1 in Rankin County and is going very well. Both clients and participating retailers are making a smooth transition to the new system that replaces food stamps and TANF benefits with a debit card.

A total of \$490,032.26 in food stamps and TANF payments (\$449,603.26 in food stamps; \$40,429.00 in TANF benefits) have been made available to MDHS clients. This equates to approximately 6,000 transactions since the pilot date.

What's Next? Phase II, which begins July 1 consists of 17 counties in the central part of the state, including Hinds County. Training of clients and retailers will start early June, beginning with Hinds County.

#### *Successes in Child Support Collections*

The Department has made some milestones in child support collections. These milestones will be referenced here.

#### *MDHS Executive Director's County Visits*

MDHS Executive Director Janice Broome Brooks has visited over 30 of the agency's 82 county offices to speak with local officials, county office directors and staff. Brooks made the commitment to visit each county after becoming executive director of the agency in the winter of 2000. She truly believes in staying attuned to the needs of her staff, regardless of the distance. Additionally, she is able to gain first-hand knowledge of the specific issues that affect each county, since demographics, potential, and needs vary.