



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI**  
**OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR**  
**PHIL BRYANT**  
AUDITOR

TO: Governmental Entities  
FROM: Rodney D. Zeagler, Deputy State Auditor  
SUBJECT: Financial Accounting Manuals  
DATE: May 13, 2005

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Sections 7-7-211 and 37-37-1, Mississippi Code Annotated (1972), require the Office of the State Auditor to prescribe systems of accounting, budgeting and reporting financial facts in conformity with legal requirements and with generally accepted accounting principles for county governments and public school districts of the state. In an effort to meet this responsibility, the Office of the State Auditor has issued financial accounting manuals. The last completely revised manuals were issued in July 2002, with various parts of the public school district manual being revised annually since July 2002.

Sections of the manuals identify various generally accepted accounting principles applicable to the entities. Other sections identify legal requirements applicable to the entities. The manuals also include sections on internal controls related to the entities' operations.

For audit periods beginning on or after January 1, 2003, new *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by Comptroller General of the United States, on auditor independence are effective. One aspect of the new independence standards deals with audit organizations providing nonaudit services to clients. Audit organizations should not provide nonaudit services that involve performing management functions or making management decisions. The new independence standards do allow auditors to advise entity management on issues related to the knowledge and skills of the auditor without impairing the auditor's independence. Auditors may also provide tools and methodologies, such as best practice guides, and internal control assessment methodologies that can be used by management without impairing the auditor's independence. **However, auditors should not make management decisions or perform management functions.**

For audit periods beginning after January 1, 2003, and until revised manuals can be issued, the Office of the State Auditor considers the prescribed financial accounting manuals for county governments and public school districts as providing information based on our technical skills and knowledge about accounting principles, best practices related to internal controls, and state laws that apply to each entity. The decision on how to implement these practices is the decision of the entity's management. While some sections of the manuals are phrased as requirements, the Office of the State Auditor considers these to be tools and best practices to assist the entity's management in developing policies and procedures appropriate for their entity since management is responsible for their adoption and implementation. **Reportable conditions and instances of noncompliance will not be reported for instances in which an entity demonstrates that it has implemented adequate alternative internal controls or acceptable generally accepted accounting principles other than those described in the manuals but, which produce similar acceptable levels of safeguards and reporting accuracy as those identified in the manuals.**