

Division of Early Childhood Updates

Thursday, August 21, 2025

Licensing Branch

- Outdoor Nature Based Child Care Pilot Program Update
 - Program selection will occur by August 22, 2025.
- Due to staff shortages in some regional offices, cases (child care programs) may be distributed across regions to ensure appropriate customer service.
 - Child care programs will be notified of upcoming changes.
- The Licensing Branch currently oversees 6,683 child care facilities.
 - 2025 Licensing Branch Statistics:
 - A total of 5,983 Inspections were conducted
 - A total of 1106 complaint Inspections were conducted
 - A total of 286 new providers were approved for care

Child Care Scholarship (CCS) Branch

- CCS Program Enrollment Update
 - As of 8/11/2025:
 - 42,294 children were enrolled in the CCS Program
 - 28,465 families were enrolled in the CCS Program
- Frozen List Update
 - As of 8/11/2025:
 - 2,226 children were placed on the frozen list
 - 1,427 families were placed on the frozen list
- Upcoming Parent and Provider Trainings (Every Session runs from 6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.)
 - Wednesday, August 20, 2025:
 - Parent Training on Everything You Need to Know About the Child Care Scholarship Family Portal (**English Translation ONLY**)
 - Wednesday, September 10, 2025:
 - Parent Training on Everything You Need to Know About the Child Care Scholarship Family Portal (**Spanish Translation ONLY**)
 - Thursday, August 21, 2025:

- Provider Training on Everything You Need to Know About the Child Care Provider Portal (**English Translation ONLY**)
- Monday, September 8, 2025:
- Provider Training on Everything You Need to Know About the Child Care Provider Portal (**Spanish Translation ONLY**)

Quality Improvement Initiatives

- Maryland EXCELS
 - As of June 15, Maryland EXCELS has seen a 26% increase over the last year in programs achieving a Quality Rating 3, 4, or 5.
 - In FY25, Maryland EXCELS distributed \$5,906,300 in bonuses, a 46% increase over FY24.
 - In March 2025, a mentoring pilot launched with the goal of helping new providers improve quality through peer support. As of July 1, this small pilot has four mentors and seven mentees in Prince George's County and the Eastern Shore. Research will be conducted throughout the year to measure the pilot's success.
- Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund (CCCPDF)
 - For FY26, CCCPDF accepted a record-high 161 students into the program.
 - In the 2024-2025 school year, 27 students graduated with an associate's degree and 16 students graduated with a bachelor's degree.
- Maryland Accreditation
 - Currently, 1,018 programs are participating in Maryland Accreditation with Public Pre-K participation growing by 48% in FY25.
 - The expansion to a five-year accreditation status continues to be successful. As of June 2025, 372 annual updates have been submitted and approved.

Office of Early Learning & Instruction

- Combined ECE Content Collaborative Meeting Dates
 - New Dates: The 2nd Wednesday of every other month (1:00 p.m.-2:30 p.m.)
 - Wednesday, September 10, 2025
 - Wednesday, November 12, 2025

- Wednesday, January 12, 2026
 - Wednesday, March 11, 2026
 - Wednesday, May 13, 2026
 - Wednesday, July 8, 2026
- Training Approval
 - FY25 Training Data:
 - Reviewed and approved:
 - 482 new training submitted by MSDE approved trainers
 - 26 early childhood conferences
 - 89 Professional Development Institutes
 - July 2024-June 2025:
 - 6,087 trainings were conducted (face-to-face, virtually and online)
 - 74,387 early childhood professionals trained (face-to-face, virtually and online)
- High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)
 - The HQIM workgroup received the Math Prekindergarten 4s Evidence of Quality template to support the companion guide to the Math curriculum review rubric. Work will begin in August.
 - A Prekindergarten Curriculum Survey was distributed to all Pre-K Grant and Blueprint funded programs, accredited programs, and all EXCELS participating programs in Maryland. 153 programs responded and data showed curricula with the highest use and satisfaction factors.
 - Based on survey results, a Curriculum Selection Resource document has been drafted by the workgroup and is currently under review by Division of Early Childhood leadership for publication.
- Pre-K Expansion
 - The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) recently granted **50 awardees** providing **1,858 public Pre-K slots** for Maryland's children through Maryland's publicly funded Prekindergarten (Pre-K) Expansion Grant Program.
 - **Ten Local Education Agency (LEA) grantees** and **40 private provider grantees** were awarded. This includes

- **270 slots** in Family Child Care Homes (FCCH),
- **638 slots** in LEAs, and
- **950 slots** in Child Care Centers, including 98 slots in Head Start programs.
- The Pre-K Expansion Grant year began on July 1, 2025.
- Notice of Grant Awards (NOGAs) are currently being processed and issued.
- NOGAs will be issued for Pre-K Expansion Grants and Blueprint (Pre-K) Formula Grants.
- All grantees have been assigned to a Pre-K Support Specialist, and there will be an upcoming technical assistance (TA) webinar for all grantees in addition to office hours for new grantees.

Office of Family Support Services & Head Start Collaboration

- Program staff are finalizing the draft logic model for both the Judy Center Early Learning Hubs and Patty Center – Family Support Program. The logic model development is the first step in the process towards implementing the impact and effectiveness study mandated by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The logic models will be shared with the MSDE Leadership, Blueprint Accountability Implementation Board, and ECE interest holders.
- The State Coordinating Entity for the Maryland Child Care Resource Network (MCCRN) continuation grant application has been submitted by Maryland Family Network (MFN). Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) funding is used to provide the following services:
 - Consumer education for parents, families and child care educators;
 - Professional development services for child care educators and technical assistance to improve the quality of child care services; and
 - Capacity building to improve the quality of programs.
- The Growing Opportunities for Family Child Care (GOFCC) continuation grant has been submitted by MFN. This program is designed to increase the supply and ensure the sustainability of family child care providers in areas with above average rates of poverty and unemployment or areas with a lack of available child care providers and to stabilize the family child care field.

- The MSDE Home Visiting/Healthy Families grant applications are being reviewed. Grant recipients will be notified after the review is completed and recommended grant recipients are approved.
- Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Support Services (IECMHSS) grant applications were reviewed. The initial review found that 11 were incomplete or ineligible. 26 applications were reviewed, and eight organizations were awarded FY26 grants.
- Team members facilitated a professional learning opportunity for Local Education Agencies (LEAs), community-based programs, private providers, and Head Start staff members.
 - The online session titled, “The Impact of Building Strong Partnerships and Reciprocal Relationships with Families and Communities” was advertised in Tuesday Tidbits and was offered three times over the summer.
 - Over 100 people attended the three sessions.
 - The session is designed to empower community partners, community-based early childhood programs, and local education agency staff to understand the importance of creating and maintaining strong reciprocal partnerships within the early childhood sector.

Research Policy and Partnership Branch

- Pre-Kindergarten Systems Analysis Workgroup (HB 1475)
 - The Pre-Kindergarten Systems Analysis Workgroup was established by House Bill 1475 during the 2025 Maryland General Assembly Session. The legislation directs the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to conduct an analysis of the state’s current mixed delivery publicly funded prekindergarten (Pre-K) system established under the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future (Blueprint).
 - Topics for analysis include:
 - Applications and Administration
 - Family and Child Experiences
 - Program Standards

- Partnerships, Financial, and Payments
- An open search for members is underway, with an application process that aims to attract new voices and feedback from interest holders who may not typically attend other state advisory groups but play a key role in the publicly funded mixed delivery prekindergarten system.
- If you are interested in serving as a member of the workgroup, or know someone who is interested, please follow this [link](#) to complete the interest form.

Communications and Engagement

- MSDE is working with the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE) to expand access to affordable health insurance for child care professionals. Child care program owners and early childhood professionals can expect to receive a short survey by email this fall to share their coverage needs and experiences.