Office of Child Care (OCC) Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 19, 2015

AGENDA ITEMS	DISCUSSION OUTCOME
Attendees	**Council Members:** Chris Peusch (for Jennifer Nizer), Edisa Padder, Crystal Barksdale, Terry Bridger, Rachel London, Faith Miller, Shannon Burroughs-Campbell, Mary Coster, Cathy Dougherty, Theresa Rivers **MSDE Staff:** Liz Kelley, Lindi Budd, Betsy Blair, Paula Johnson, Jamie Ekatomatis, Linda Zang, Audrey Smith, Roanthi Tsakalas **Guests**: Lynda Davenport, Jordon Helgason, Jessica Hargest, DJ Jenson, Debbie Moore
Welcome And Opening Remarks	The meeting was called to order by Chris Peusch.

Assistant Superintendent/ Director's Report
 	
Race to the Top/Early Learning Challenge Grant Updates
	The Discussion was led by Dr. Rolf Grafwallner, Assistant Superintendent – Division of Early Childhood Development and Liz Kelley, Director – Office of Child Care
	
	➢ The Race To The Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT-ELC) projects are progressing smoothly. The Department is in the process of submitting Year Three Annual Progress Report.
	
	➢ A new Kindergarten assessment was introduced this past fall - Ready for Kindergarten (R4K) System.
	
	    o The objective of the assessment is to determine if how ready the children are when entering kindergarten. The new assessment was developed in a partnerships between Maryland and Ohio. The findings from the assessment will be used to run a report and are expected to go to the State Board by April 2015.
	
	    o Year 2016 and going forward, the information will be shared with all the stakeholder groups and disseminated to all local jurisdictions especially the 24 Early Childhood Advisory Councils. The information will be used to provide guidance on how to improve school readiness for children in those jurisdictions.
	
	➢ The Twenty-four (24) Early Childhood Councils commenced the implementation of their plans and it is hoped they will continue past the grant period.
	
	➢ To date, there is no additional funding available for the Local Councils. A number of the Councils launched websites to share information with the early childhood community in the respective jurisdictions.
	
	Question: *Regarding KRA and reviewing the proposed legislation, there seems to be some concerns from teachers regarding the testing.*
	
	Rolf's Response: Senate Bill 699 requires a moratorium of all State Standardized Assessments Pre-kindergarten to Grade 3: there is Legislation pertaining to KRA; the future will dictate the outcome. The system is computer based so it requires all classrooms to have Wi-Fi connectivity to administer the assessment. Also the process has to be done by all teachers. Teachers felt that it was too long and therefore the matter was communicated to the teachers' union representatives who in turn voiced their concerns to the relevant personnel. As such, the items were eliminated by 20%. The Division has been in conversations with the Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) of four (4) major school systems who have approached the team to coordinate the implementation process for 2015-2016.

AGENDA ITEMS	DISCUSSION OUTCOME
	84% of the kindergarten teachers reports that they had other assessments to conduct while they were implementing the KRA which caused problems. Montgomery County was particularly critical of the process because they used the paper version and not the computer based version. The paper based version takes three (3) times longer to administer as the computer based assessment, so they spent more time completing it. A decision was made that a team would be established to work on some of the implementation issues and recommend ways to make it less burdensome for teachers. *Question*: *Next year if there is a school without WIFI and they have to use the paper version, will they be given more time to conduct the test?* Rolf's Response: The assessment window will be the same, the first day of school through to November 1. The assessment period was extended to November 8 this year because of data uploading issues. The Early Childhood Data Warehouse that is being developed under RTT-ELC - Project 10 includes the development of the Enrollment and Attendance Reporting System (EARS) which is currently in User Acceptance Testing. The EARS will allow licensed programs to document their enrollment and attendance information online. The EARS will be accessible through the Child Care Administrative Tracking System (CCATS) Public Portal later this year. The Division will be requesting assistance in testing the EARS by child care providers before rolling it out statewide. Liz explained that enrollment and attendance components were critical to child care subsidy because providers will use the online system to report attendance instead of using paper invoices. Some of the features of the enrollment and attendance system include historical data regarding where the children were before they enter school, the quality of the facility, the teacher in the classroom, and whether they were in a center or a family childcare provider. There are also some advantages from the centers' point of view because the system will generate staffing patterns and the number of children assigned to the room. Work is being done to allow providers, who may have a system to track attendance, to upload the information to EARS instead of having to manually enter the enrollment data. The goal is to make the application as user-friendly as possible. Numerous modifications to CCATS have been done under the RTT-ELC grant. Business processes that have not been supported by CCATS, such as the credentialing levels, have been improved and modified to meet the current business rules for the programs. We are also very close to having all payments processed through CCATS. *Development Screening,* a feature that was part of RTT-ELC and its function was to identify children with potential learning disabilities or learning needs early in order to establish learning strategies for them. The goal is to ensure the screening is done statewide and consistently across the board with state recommended developmental screening tools. Training has been developed and will soon be

AGENDA ITEMS	DISCUSSION OUTCOME
	available to child care providers. Regulations will be implemented to require all child care providers to to complete developmental screening on all children enrolled, birth to kindergarten entry, by 2016. Tracy Jost, Education Program Specialist, shared that Trainer of Trainers (TOTs) sessions were currently being held for the Tool Specific Trainings. Training in Ages and Stages Questionnaire 3 (ASQ3) has been completed and Pearson - Speed Dial 4 and Early Screening Inventory-Revised (ESI-R) is scheduled for March. Following these intial trainings arrangements will be made for the scheduling of Best Beginnings and the BRIGANCE Early Childhood Developmental Inventory. The TOTs are for Maryland approved trainers to deliver training to childcare providers. The developmental screening overview training will be provided to organizations such as Maryland Family Network. The training is being developed with the Maryland Public Television (MPT) and due to be completed by April. It will then be available free on-line to child care providers. Child care providers will be able to apply online by using their license number to access free tools to be used in their programs. Tracy noted that if providers experience challenges accessing the tools online, they could go through public libraries, resource centers or contact Tracy for assistance. Rolf mentioned that the grant period will expire December 31, 2015; however; a request will be made for a no cost extension into 2016.
Legislation – for more information: http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frm1st.aspx?tab=home **Discussion** SB 677 - Professional Development for Teachers and Providers of Early Childhood Education SB 487/HB 641 Family Child Care - Registration Requirements for Participants in Maryland Child Care Subsidy Budget – Hearing Dates: February 26 - House February 27 - Senate CCDF State Plan	The Discussion was led by Liz Kelley 1. **Senate Bill 677/House Bill 1069** These Bills require the State Department of Education and Maryland Higher Education Commission to develop a master plan that focuses on issues related to qualified early childhood education services. If passed an appointed group will meet to develop a master plan regarding how best to address the needs of expanding needs for qualified teachers in early childhood education. The House Bill and the Senate Bill is scheduled on March 4, 2015. Maryland Family Network has a Public Policy Meeting the second and fourth week of every month. Prior to the meeting there is a State Legislation Meeting where the various Bills that impact early childhood as well as family issues and other Bills of interest to the early childhood community are reviewed. Members are encouraged to attend these meetings as they are very informative. 2. **Senate Bill 487/House Bill 641** These Bills would require any provider receiving child care subsidy reimbursement funds to be registered or licensed. The Bill would impact informal child care providers (relative providers or care that is given in the child's home) and would require those persons to be registered to continue to be paid for providing subsidized child care. Hearings for these Bills are scheduled for February 25 & 26, 2015. The Department is supporting the Bills and as

AGENDA ITEMS	DISCUSSION OUTCOME
	such will be providing testimony at the hearings.

3. **Lawn Care Pesticides and Child Care Centers Schools and Recreational Facilities Prohibition House Bill 995**

This Bill would prohibit the use of pesticides on the lawn or grounds of any child care center, school or recreation center.

Some members stated that they had opposed the Bill because the legislation required a management system that would have been very costly to providers. Another issue was that if there was, for example, a bee hive outside on the playground, providers could not spray it themselves. Instead, they would have to receive approval from the Department of Agriculture.

Budget Hearings

Budget hearing dates are February 26 in the House and February 27 in the Senate.

Fiscal Analysis from the Department of Legislative Services is anticipated to be received by February 23, 2015. The three topics of focus will be hinged on child care subsidy.

In the allowance, there is an increase which means there is a need for higher appropriation for child care vouchers to meet the demand for families projected to be in the program for fiscal year 2016.

Other topics for discussion are the projects in RTT-ELC specifically the progress with Maryland EXCELS and its effectiveness in measuring quality. There will also be discussion about the KRA even though there is legislation on the matter and also PreK Expansion (how the Department operates PreK Expansion Programs). The Department has received one of 18 Federal Grants, awarded to states, in the amount of $15 million per year for four (4) years.

Question: In terms of the headquarters budget hearing and when there was a recommendation of a cut to MSDE's, was that in order to cover the recommended cut MSDE would have to make to child care resource centers?

Rolf's Response: There were significant cuts to the department's headquarters' budget. The Division is part of headquarters; therefore, while we have our own budget hearing, the money belongs to MSDE. The response provided is to make the legislature aware of how deep these cuts are. All agencies have been hit hard this year to meet the budget targets.

Liz noted that the criteria for the Voluntary Separation Program (early retirement) for state employees has been received. If a state employee opts to participate in the Voluntary Separation Program, the position and the function of the position will be lost. It was anticipated that in the Office of Child Care, specifically the regional offices, there will be many staff who are either very close to retirement or are planning on retiring and may take advantage of the opportunity due to the monetary benefits. If that is the case, the Division will not only lose that employee but also the position which will impact a number of processes negatively.

AGENDA ITEMS	DISCUSSION OUTCOME
	Question: Do you know if the Director has to approve retirement requests? *Liz' s Response*: It did not seem that way. The Voluntary Separation procedure has happened twice in the past several years. The first time, no approval was needed, however the second time it had to be approved at the agency level. This time no requirement for agency approval has been communicated. The main purpose of this process is to eliminate state positions. Licensing specialists are paid with CCDF Funds, however, the funding stream is not a consideration; the objective is to eliminate some of the state positions. Employees participating in the VSP will have to leave state government as of April 28, 2015, which could have a major impact on operations; therefore, the agency will have to re-strategize the business processes with regard to operations. *CCDF State Plan* The Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) process has been revamped based on the reauthorization of the Child Care Development Block Grant which was reauthorized and signed by President Obama in November 2104. The new requirements stipulates that the CCDF Plan will now be for three years instead of two and includes comprehensive changes. There were previously five (5) areas now there are eight (8). Our approach will be to establish workgroups to assist in the development of the plan. The present requirement for the new CCDF is that the State Childcare Advisory Council must be included in the planning process; therefore, the Office of Childcare Advisory Council will also be part of the process in the plan's development. Workgroups have been identified according to the components of the CCDF requirements. The components and workgroups are: 1. Leadership and Coordination (Workgroup 1) 2. Family engagement through outreach and consumer education (Workgroup 1) 3. Stable childcare financial assistance of families (Workgroup 2) 4. Equal access to high quality care in low income children (Workgroup 2) 5. Licensing standards (Workgroup 3) 6. Recruit and retain effective childcare workforce (Workgroup 4) 7. Support of quality improvement (Workgroup 4) 8. Grantee accountability It was recommended that persons who are interested in joining the workgroups should indicate their interest as soon as possible. The team was advised that the CCDF Plan had to be submitted by June 30, 2015. It will be sent out via email to everyone. It is also available on the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) website and is currently open for public comment. The document that gives the states guidance on how the components of the new law must be implemented for each of the areas is also available on the ACF website and will be sent out via email to the team. There are several areas where an implementation plan will be needed, specifically in licensing and

AGENDA ITEMS	DISCUSSION OUTCOME
	monitoring. The new requirements stipulate that any provider that receives childcare subsidy reimbursements must be monitored. They must have their inspection information posted on a public website and they must complete training in ten (10) specific areas. The training includes first aid, CPR, emergency preparedness, medication administration and SIDS. MSDE has these areas in place; however, we do not currently monitor our informal providers. However in the current plan, the State will be required to monitor these informal providers and there will be a penalty if these regulations are not followed; there is the possibility that the State could lose federal funding (5% penalty) and if it continues, could lose funding entirely. The amount for quality spending will be increased from 7% to 9% over the next several years. Infant/toddler spending is at 3%. There is no longer funds set aside for school age care or R&Rs. Posting results of monitoring inspection reports on the website is partially being done but based on the new requirements, the report will not only entail the inspections but the mandatory and full. The department will also require to post the complaint inspections. Further guidance is being sought on the matter as it should be in effect by November 2017. **State Compliance with Priority for Services** The Council was advised that the MSDE must comply with this by September of this year. However ACF was able to negotiate some extensions to facilitate states becoming compliant. This information will also be presented to the State at the Early Childhood Council on March 12, 2015 after which work groups will meet to develop recommendations for the plan. Volunteers to serve on the planning workgroup are being sought. Providers participating in the planning meetings can receive Professional Activity Units (PAUs). The workgroups will have support from a MSDE staff person to facilitate the process. The groups will be provided with the planning template. After the information has been collated, it will be taken back to the groups for review before presenting it to the Council. It is very clear in the law that it is not the responsibility of the State to write the plan but the responsibility of all the collaborative agencies to do so.
OCC Branch Updates	*The discussion was led by Betsy Bair, Branch Chief, and Child Care Subsidy.*
Child Care Subsidy Branch Updates • Child Care Subsidy Branch • Case Management/Invoice Processing TORFP - Status	A Task Order Request for Proposals (TORFP) has been issued to identify a vendor that can provide case management and payment processing services for the child care subsidy program. The proposal was issued in November 2014 and was returned in December 2014. The proposals have been received and are currently being evaluated. The chosen proposal will not need to go before the Board of Public Works because the TORFP vendors only include preapproved master contractors. It is hoped that the contract will be signed in March 2015 and the full transition of case management and payment process completed by July 2015. A Consumer Education component was also included in the contract.
Credentialing Branch ▪ Regulations	*The discussion was led by Liz* ✓ Applications are being processed within 30 days of receipt. There are applications that may be older than 30 days due to missing documentation or individual issues. Other delays are

AGENDA ITEMS	DISCUSSION OUTCOME
	related to the issuance of bonus payments, which have to go through the accounting branch, and the time consuming process that must be followed to generate the payments. ✓ Improvements to the CCATS system are being developed to generate the bonus and reimbursement payments.
Licensing Branch Updates • Regulations	*The discussion was led by Liz* ✓ The regulation updates have been disseminated throughout the council. It was anticipated that the publication of the regulations in the Maryland Register will occur on March 20, 2015 with an effective of date late May or early June 2015. ✓ There was a change in the proposed regulations for the napping arrangements for infants in consultation in family child care homes. There is a still sight and sound requirement for any child under the age of 2 (the original proposal stated 12 months). Family child care providers can maintain sight and sound with the use of a video/sound monitor. The major area of concern was for providers with multi-level homes where the bedroom or napping area is on another level. There continue to be concerns about limiting the amount of infant toddler care available in those types of settings. Additionally child care providers must keep the sight lines to the napping child unobstructed (open door). Providers are still required to physically go into the room every 15 minutes to observe a child sleeping. ✓ Licensing staff have been instructed that their responsibility is to help providers to understand the regulations and provide technical assistance.
Maryland EXCELS Branch Updates • Participation • Outreach	*The discussion was led by Lindi Budd, Branch Chief, Maryland EXCELS* ✓ Total participation as of February 12, 2014 was 3,881 of which 1,320 programs were published on the website. ✓ In collaboration with child care resource centers, the main focus has been on providers who are serving children who receive child care subsidy. The goal is to ensure that the target group is fully aware of participation requirements ahead of the June 30 deadline. ✓ Approximately 70% of providers receiving child care subsidy reimbursement payments are participating in Maryland EXCELS based on October 2014 data. ✓ The Branch was able to identify the providers that were paid subsidy reimbursement during the past 12 months. Jena Smith, Quality Assurance Supervisor, created a master document to track providers whether they have published their ratings or not. The Quality Assurance Specialists (QASs) for the past year and half have been contacting these providers. The Branch is working closely with R&Rs and QASs to ensure that providers receiving subsidy are aware of aware of the changes the deadline to enroll in Maryland EXCELS. *Question: When QASs contact providers and they indicate that they (the providers) are no longer interested in participating in Maryland EXCELS and they are no longer going to provide subsidy care is that noted in your report?*

AGENDA ITEMS	DISCUSSION OUTCOME
	Lindi's Response: Yes, it is noted in the report. In addition to that the QASs check into the CCATS system to see if the provider has been receiving substaintial reimbursement payments. The specialists need to help these providers understand that funding will stop if they choose not to participate in Maryland EXCELS by June 30, 2015.
	Jena added that the Branch was able to partner with the Resource and Referral Centers to discuss the approach in reaching the targeted providers. The goal of the partnership is to intentionally identify strategies to provide specific types of communication so that the providers understand the pros and cons about the upcoming changes. Based on feedback from the team and providers most them embraced idea and enrolled in Maryland EXCELS.
	✓ There are 50-80 information sessions every quarter all over the State. Providers that do not have access to technology can have access to a computer system and receive personal assistance from QASs to enroll in Maryland EXCELS during these sessions.
	✓ Inserts continue to be sent with the Child Care Subsidy invoice detail reports to providers.
	✓ The latest outreach was to families who are using subsidy vouchers. A mass mailing was sent to approximately 17,000 families who used a voucher within the past 12 months. They received a letter informing them about the upcoming requirements of Maryland EXCELS and how it will impact them. They were also directed to the Maryland EXCELs website to see if their provider has a published level. Parents will also be directed to LOCATE: Child Care where they can get information on programs even if they are not yet published but are participating.
	✓ In letters sent to families with a new determination/voucher there is included a brightly colored insert. The inset families of the coming requirement where they will need to choose a participating program and provides a the list of ways families can use these programs.
	✓ Regulations are currently in progress, in parallel with the Child Care Subsidy regulations, and will take effect in April 2015. The business rules that have been established for Maryland EXCLES will now be in regulation and will include criteria for meeting levels, awarding bonuses and tiered reimbursement levels. The regulations also state that programs published at level 5 will receive annual bonuses rather than one-time bonuses. However, these are all subject to funds availability.
	✓ The Branch processes bonuses as they are received. Providers receive a bonus at every level at which they publish.
	✓ The Maryland EXCELS Public Prekindergarten standards have been revised and were provided to our partners at Johns Hopkins Center for Technology and Education. They are now more aligned with the child care center, family child care and school-age only standards. The revised standards will be incorporated into the online system. They should be disseminated by the end of the month or early March 2015 so that programs can see what they are and the team can get a better uptake of our public prekindergarten programs.
	✓ General family outreach and transit ads will resume. With Kelly Martin's (New outreach

AGENDA ITEMS	DISCUSSION OUTCOME
	Specialist) assistance, the Branch is reestablishing the bus ads, the kiosks, light rail signage and expanding into PG County, Baltimore City and Montgomery and Frederick in both English and Spanish.
	✓ Betsy noted that the objective was to reach all parents and to ensure that with DHR approval, flyers are sent the Departments of Social Services outlining the roles and functions of Maryland EXCELS. Clients can get the contact information should there be any questions. Therefore, if clients are coming in for another service they would also receive child care information.
	✓ Lindi noted that the same kinds of flyers are also being disseminated to public libraries and health departments.
Updates	Announcements of various events were made by the committee members as well as guests.
Adjournment	The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:00 noon
Next Meeting	May 28, 2015- 10:00 am – 12:00 Noon @ MSDE, 8th Floor Conference Room 6/7