**Early Childhood Research Advisory Group: BY LAWS**

1. **Mission Statement**

The Group will bear in mind the mission statement of the Division of Early Childhood Development:

*The Division of Early Childhood Development will provide leadership in promoting readiness for school and life for all children, including those with special needs and disabilities. The Division will develop a high quality early care and education system statewide which provides safe, healthy, nurturing, culturally sensitive, and cognitively stimulating environments for all children who receive early childhood education and school-age child care. The Division will strive toward continued improvement and accountability and promote the continuum of learning by establishing early care and education as the foundation for school success.*

The mission of the Research Advisory Group is:

*Maryland’s Early Childhood Research Advisory Group will advise the State on how to use research and research resources in the best manner possible to help achieve the DECD mission. In its advisory role, the group recognizes the importance of applied research in this process.*

1. **Function of the Advisory Group**

The Group shall serve in an advisory capacity to MSDE’s Division of Early Childhood Development (DECD) and the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) in such a manner as to help further the mission above. Responsibilities shall include:

* Receiving briefings on DECD initiatives and policies;
* Advising the Division and Council of the most important research issues concerning Division initiatives;
* Aiding the Division in developing and maintaining a research agenda that will
  + inform potential Division policies and initiatives, and
  + help evaluate existing programs and policies; and
* Formalizing its views in recommendations, approved by majority vote, while also including a summary of opposition viewpoints. The group will strive to incorporate family and practitioner perspectives in these recommendations.

1. **Membership**
2. Composition of Membership

The Council’s membership will consist of a total of no more than 30 of those individuals best qualified to advise the State on its research issues and a research agenda, as nominated by Research Advisory Group members, and approved by the majority of the Group. Membership will consist of

1. **MSDE Staff**,
2. **Researchers** (focusing on conducting research, analyzing data, and publishing results) and
3. **Practitioners** (focusing on the direct or indirect implementation of programs and services, including representatives of agencies and organizations with important influence on child care issues.)

The Group will attempt, so far as is possible, to maintain a balanced representation from all three categories of potential members, and to avoid over-representation of any one organization or institution.

As vacancies occur, any member may propose qualified individuals for membership. New members must be approved by a simple majority vote.

1. Chairs

The Group shall propose and elect, by simple majority vote, two (2) co-chairs from different organizations to serve for two year terms. These co-chairs terms will be offset by one year from each other to provide continuity of leadership. The co-chairs, assisted by support staff, will set the agenda and manage meetings of the Group.

1. Termination of Membership

In the event that a member misses more than one Group meeting during the course of the calendar year, without submitting a reason to the meeting organizers, the member may be removed from the Group.

If a member no longer wishes to be a part of the Advisory Group, he or she should inform the group organizers so that he or she can be replaced in a timely manner.

1. Proxies

In the event that the member is unable to attend a meeting, he or she can send a proxy. The member should inform the meeting organizers of his or her intent to send a proxy prior to the meeting. When representing the absent member, proxies may sit in the Group, participate in discussions, and vote in place of the absent member. Proxies have no rights or responsibilities of membership except to represent an absent member on an occasional basis.

1. Support Staff

MSDE will provide support staff to maintain email lists, take notes of meetings, communicate with members, and help organize meetings, following instructions from the co-chairs and MSDE management. Support staff will also be responsible for communicating Group recommendations to the Division and Council, and reporting back on the reception of such recommendations. They will also maintain a website where announcements, papers and discussion topics can be made available to the membership.

1. **Meetings**

The Early Childhood Research Advisory Group shall meet a minimum of two times a year and a maximum of four times a year. The meeting agenda and minutes from the previous meeting will be distributed to appointees before a regular meeting. A quorum is 10 members.

1. **By Laws**

These by laws shall be reviewed when necessary and no less often than biennially to ensure that they are consistent with the mission of the group. They can be revised by a simple majority vote of Group members.