



MARYLAND EXCELS

Choosing Quality Child Care with Maryland EXCELS



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What is Maryland EXCELS?

Maryland EXCELS is a state agency that works to improve the quality of child care across Maryland and to educate families about how to choose high-quality care.

Our Find a Program directory gives your family important information about a program's quality rating. If your family uses a Child Care Scholarship, you can use the directory to find programs that are eligible to accept scholarships.

When you see a Maryland EXCELS Quality Rating Badge or certificate, you can be confident that the program is committed to providing the best quality services for your family.



Understanding Maryland EXCELS Quality Ratings

Child care programs that participate in Maryland EXCELS are rated according to national standards for quality in five key areas:

- **Licensing and Compliance** shows that a program complies with health and safety regulations.
- **Staff Qualifications** and Professional Development shows how much education and experience providers have.
- **Accreditation and Rating Scales** display a program's commitment to improvement.
- **Developmentally Appropriate Learning and Practice** measures how well the program supports your child's education and growth.
- **Administrative Policies and Practices** indicate the quality of a program's business practices.

Highlights of Each Quality Rating



Basic Health and Safety Training



Activities support your child's individual needs



Family-provider conferences are offered



Children are redirected to positive choices



A family handbook, written agreement, or contract is provided



At least 45 hours of training



Materials are age-appropriate and supportive of all abilities



Activities are guided by and early learning curriculum



Children are provided with clear rules and expectations



Family engagement opportunities are offered



At least 90 hours of training + 1 year of work experience or college coursework



Activities reflect children's interests, home language, and culture



Program provides healthy meals and snacks



Children are encouraged to reflect and problem solve



Children are supported through transitions to home and school



At least 135 hours of training and 2 years of work experience



Activities reflect families' traditions and cultures



Curricula are aligned with the Maryland Early Learning Standards



Children have input in creating rules and expectations



Program uses community resources like libraries and parks



Program is accredited or staff are pursuing a college degree



Children's learning and developmental progress are routinely assessed



Lesson plans are culturally competent and based on children's assessments



Learning and play opportunities are expanded by rotating materials



Program demonstrates commitment to improvement through accreditation

Searching for Quality Care with Find a Program

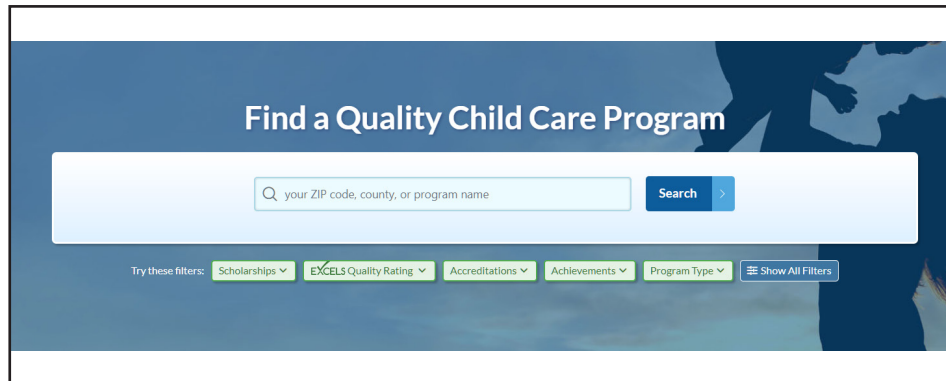
Our Find a Program directory displays details of a child care program's participation in Maryland EXCELS and its ratings.

You can search by ZIP code, county, or by the program's name.

To search for quality child care, visit findaprogram.marylandexcels.org.



Scan to search
Find a Program



Filters

Scholarships ▾

If your family uses a Child Care Scholarship, you can use the Scholarships filter to find a program that is eligible to accept it.

EXCELS Quality Rating ▾

The Quality Rating filter allows you to search for a range of quality ratings.

Accreditations ▾

Accredited programs complete a process of improving their services every three to seven years, ensuring they maintain the highest quality standards.

Achievements ▾

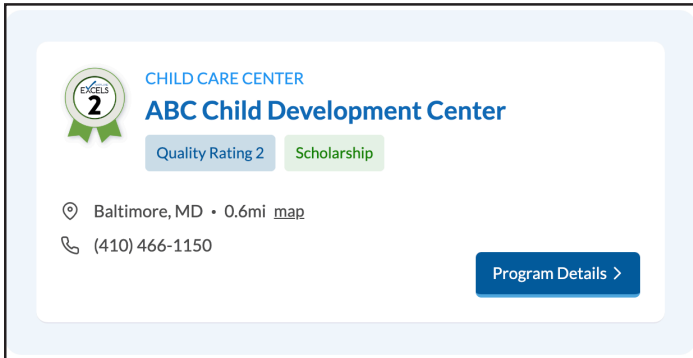
Achievements show you how a program goes above and beyond with specialized services to meet the needs of families.

Program Type ▾

You can filter by Program Type for child care centers, family child care or large family child care homes (also known as home daycares), public pre-kindergarten, school-age only, or Letter of Compliance programs.

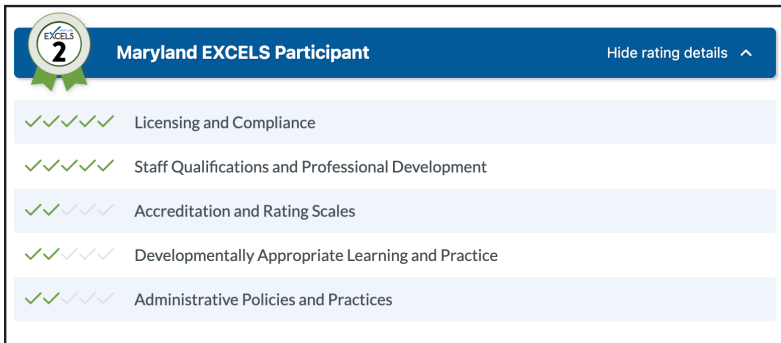
Rating Details

Your search results will display the program overviews for programs that match your search.



The program overview shows a program's overall quality rating.

For more detailed information about the quality rating, click Program Details.



Program details provide information about ratings in each area, which are sometimes higher than the overall quality rating.

Affording Quality Care with Child Care Scholarships

If your family needs financial assistance for child care, Child Care Scholarships are available to those who meet income requirements.

All programs participating in Maryland EXCELS are eligible to accept scholarships.

To find out more about eligibility requirements and how to apply, visit tinyurl.com/cc-scholarship.



Scan to learn more about Child Care Scholarships

For Additional Program Details

LOCATE: Child Care allows you to search by location, Maryland EXCELS Level (Quality Rating), ages served, special need/s, operating days and times, and more.

To find out more about LOCATE: Child Care, visit locatesearch.marylandfamilynetwork.org.



Scan to learn
more about
LOCATE:
Child Care

Interviewing and Visiting Potential Programs

After finding potential programs, your next steps are to reach out for a phone, virtual, or in-person interview and to visit the program.

An interview is an opportunity for you to find out more about the program's services, fees, staff qualifications, and philosophy or approach to care and learning.

Visiting a program allows you to observe interactions between children and providers, activities taking place, business operations, and learning materials that your child will use. You can also use this time to ask more detailed questions about how a provider will communicate with you and how they would work with your child's individual needs.

For your convenience, we have provided sample checklists for interviews and visits based on licensing requirements, Maryland EXCELS standards for quality, and advice from Child Care Aware.

For more resources and additional information about choosing child care, please visit: childcareaware.org/families.

Child Care Program Interview Checklist

Basic requirements:

- Does the program offer hours that meet my family's needs?
- What is the cost?
- Does the program offer meals and snacks?
- If it is relevant: What experience do they have with children with disabilities?

Business practices:

- How do you charge? Weekly? Monthly?
- Are your services and fees written in a contract or service agreement?
- How much notice do you require for ending enrollment?
- Do you have a schedule for when your program will be closed (holidays, staff vacations, etc.)?
- What are your policies for unexpected closures (illness, severe weather, etc.)?
- Will I be charged for those days?

Quality of learning and care:

- What is your program's philosophy or approach to learning?
- What kind of education and experience will my child's teacher or provider have?
- What kinds of daily activities will my child do?
- How will you give my child individual attention and care?
- How will you encourage and measure my child's development?

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Child Care Program Visit Checklist

Examine the space:

- Is the program's child care license or registration displayed?
- Does the program area look clean, safe, and organized?
- Is there enough space indoors and outdoors so all the children have room to play?
- Are toys and learning materials age-appropriate and in good condition?
- Are there bulletin boards or displays for program updates?
- How are the children enrolled reflected in the program's space?
- Are there art displays or photos of children and families?
- Are books easy to access and diverse in languages and character representations?

Observe the children and provider interactions:

- Are interactions warm, engaging, and respectful?
- Are children provided with choices and guidance to make safe and positive choices?
- Are they encouraged to problem solve?
- Are children's individual needs being met?
- Is there time for children to explore on their own?
- Do children seem happy and confident?
- Does their teacher or provider seem happy and engaged?

Speak with your child's teacher or provider:

- Can they describe their program's philosophy and do you agree with it?
- How do they communicate with families and how often?
- How would they communicate about any concerns?
- How would they plan to include your family's culture and home language?
- Do they describe using positive guidance to address problem behaviors? Be aware that Maryland law forbids corporal punishment and restraint.
- Does the program have written policies and procedures? If so, do families receive copies?
- If it is relevant: How would they support your child's disability?

Notes



Maryland
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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