

## **Division of Early Childhood Updates**

**Thursday, August 15, 2024**

### **Licensing Branch**

- Outdoor Nature-Based Child Care License Pilot Program:
  - The proposed regulations were approved by the MD State Board of Education in June 2024.
  - Next Steps: The regulations will soon be posted in the MD Register for a 30-day public comment period.

### **Child Care Scholarship Branch**

- The Child Care Scholarship (CCS) Branch continues to support the Child Care Scholarship specific training needs through Open Office Hours and the Office of Child Care Listening Sessions.
  - Refer to Tuesday Tidbits for upcoming dates.
  - Enrollment continues to increase – The CCS Program is serving 33,592 children as of April 22, 2024.
- The Child Care Scholarship Family Portal is being updated to include the Special Needs Form. CCS anticipates the enhancement to be completed within the 1st quarter of 2025. Once we get closer to the implementation date, MSDE will launch a communication plan.

### **Quality Improvement and Initiatives**

- Maryland EXCELS currently has 5,118 participating programs. This is an increase of 338 programs from July 2023.
- 35% of all Maryland EXCELS programs are published at a quality rating 3, 4, and 5 which is an increase from 32% from July 2023.
- The number of programs who received Maryland EXCELS bonuses was 53 in July 2023 compared to 156 programs in June 2024.
- In June of 2024 more than half a million dollars was awarded to programs for publishing first time quality ratings and maintained quality ratings of 4 and 5.
- 532 programs who have achieved Maryland Accreditation.

- 1,050 number of programs participating in Maryland Accreditation.
- 86 programs have been awarded Maryland Accreditation since May 1, 2024.
- Focused outreach including surveys to identify barriers and resources, provider networking, and enhanced tutorials are supporting regions with lower participation rates to increase participation and the number of programs with quality ratings higher than 1.

### **Office of Early Learning & Instruction**

- Prekindergarten (Pre-K) Expansion Grants have been issued and Notice of Grant Awards (NOGAs) are being distributed.
- Blueprint Conversion Funding guidance will be distributed to all programs with converted Pre-K slots.
- Professional Learning is being planned and developed to address Birth – Kindergarten. These opportunities will be announced far and wide once they become available.
- There is an eCommunity being developed to serve as a hub for resources and information for early learning. The eCommunity will also be a place where participants can ask questions and share information. More information on how to join the eCommunity is forthcoming.
- Guidance to address Pre-K Teacher Assistant exemption from the Child Development Associate (CDA) is forthcoming.
- MSDE has identified the vendor that will develop the new Early Learning Assessment (ELA) and the contract is being finalized. MSDE will meet to discuss the professional learning needs and the requirements for training and implementation of the new ELA.

### **Office of Family Support Services and Head Start Collaboration**

- Judy Center Early Learning Hubs – there are 86 sites throughout the state serving families and their children age birth through five. Seven additional sites will be added in FY25. Each site is allocated \$330,000 to operate.
- Patty Center – Family Support Services – there are 25 sites throughout the state serving families and their children age birth through three. MFN, the Intermediary Services Agent, is working to identify sub-recipients interested in implementing Patty Center services. Each site is allocated \$330,000.

- Infant Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) – the state budget of \$3 million is distributed between 10 programs located throughout the state. Each program provides social emotional and behavioral health services to child care providers, children, and family members.
  - The Office met with all IECMH recipients and provided a technical assistance session focused on project goals, fiscal expectations, and the scope of work expectations for FY 25.
- Therapeutic Child Care – the state budget of \$3.7 million is distributed between 8 programs located throughout the state. Each program provides therapeutic health support services for children with medical and/or therapeutic needs.
- MSDE Home Visiting Program - The partnership with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) continues in support of the effective implementation of the Home Visiting Grant. We met with the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) team on 08/13 to discuss data sharing and coordination approaches and are participating in the Home Visiting Consortium meeting on 08/15 organized by MDH.
- Head Start and Early Head Start – the Ulysses Currie State Supplemental funding of \$3 million is distributed between 24 programs throughout the state. Funding is used to provide summer programming, extended day, and professional learning for staff.
- The Office is embarking on a data drive approach to capture profile, impact, and outcomes data of all grants that the office is responsible for. With the aim of identifying gaps, and duplicated services while being able to easily identify where models of excellence exist.
- Our goal is to ensure that children and families are receiving the support services needed to enhance family well-being and school readiness and academic success.