

Division of Early Childhood Updates

Thursday, February 20, 2025

Licensing Branch

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated their [Respiratory Virus Guidance for Schools and Child Care](#).
- The Outdoor Nature Based Child Care Pilot regulations have been approved and the application will be released soon.
- The public comment period for the Educational Programs in Nonpublic Nursery School (Family) and the Maryland Infant and Toddler Program (MITP) amendments have closed. The comments are currently being reviewed.

Child Care Scholarship Branch

- There continues to be an increase in the number of child care programs participating in the Child Care Scholarship (CCS) Program.
 - The number of children enrolled as of January 18, 2023, was 23,164, and the number of families served was 15,138. Yet, as of February 3, 2025, the number of children served is 41,611, and the number of families served is 28,319.
 - The number increased from 2,815 on January 18, 2023 to 3,571 as of February 3, 2025.
- The CCS program continues to update information on the Division of Early Childhood's (DEC) website: [Money4ChildCare.com](https://www.money4childcare.com).

Quality Improvement Initiatives

- More than 800 Maryland EXCELS Bonuses have been distributed since July 2024. Maryland EXCELS is on track to nearly double the bonus distribution from FY24.
- Maryland EXCELS Standard's revisions are nearly complete and will be available for public comment this spring.
- The Maryland EXCELS Find a Program directory will be updated in the next six months to include more ways for providers to customize their program's listing.

- Maryland EXCELS is offering a series of free training sessions in Spanish. This training is being recorded and will be made available to the public. The first session, held in December, had 72 providers registered and 44 in attendance.
- The Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund (CCCPDF) will be accepting applications for FY26 students this spring.

Office of Early Learning & Instruction

- **Career Ladder** - In accordance with [Md. Code Ann., Educ. § 7-1A-08](#), and in collaboration with Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) leadership, a workgroup has been selected, and those chosen will be notified by email when the first meeting date is confirmed in the first week in March. The delay in the first meeting is due to the transitions at DEC.
- **High-Quality Instructional Materials** - Early Learning & Instruction is reviewing MSDE high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) content-specific rubrics and frameworks to determine if developing aligned Prekindergarten 4s Evidence of Quality points for Math and ELA curriculum is appropriate.
- **Pre-K Expansion and Mixed Delivery** - The FY26 Pre-K Expansion Grant application is currently going through the MSDE approval process, and it should be released later this month. There will be several technical assistance sessions and office hours offered to support potential applicants.
- **The Early Childhood E-Community** - Nearly 400 early learning (EL) directors, teachers, assistant teachers, and instructional oversight staff have joined the e-community. New content, including discussions, activities, and resources, is shared monthly to support high quality instruction in both public and private settings.
- **Professional Learning/Learning Modules** - Early Learning & Instruction is in the process of finalizing 25 learning modules to support educators with unpacking the NEW Early Learning Standards and to support them with implementation of those standards.
- **ECE Content Collaborative Meetings** - Early Learning & Instruction just led a Combined Content Collaborative meeting for both EL directors and private providers (Pre-K Expansion grantees) on Wednesday, January 15, 2025. The goal of the combined meetings is to provide a collaborative space for questions, sharing of ideas,

problem-solving, and action planning to support Local Educational Agency (LEAs) with strengthening partnerships between public and private early childhood educators. Upcoming scheduled Content Collaborative Meetings are as follows:

- EL Directors ONLY – February 26th, March 26th, May 28th, and June 25th
- Private Providers ONLY – May 8th and August 14th
- Combined (EL Directors and Private Providers) – April 30th and July 30th
- **Training Approval Reminders for Child Care Professionals**
 - When taking training, be sure that it is from an approved trainer/training organization. An approved trainer/training organization list can be found on the DEC website.
 - Keep copies of your certificates in a safe place. MSDE does not receive or maintain copies. If you lose your certificate, reach out to the trainer/training organization that you completed the training with to request a duplicate.

Office of Family Support Services & Head Start Collaboration

- **Judy Center Early Learning Hubs:** In 2025, the Office of Family Support Services & Head Start Collaboration (FSS&HSC) will celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the 13 original Judy Centers. Plans to commemorate this special occasion are underway and will be shared throughout the year.
- **Patty Center Family Support Services:** The Goodwill Industries Adult High School in Baltimore City is our newest Patty Center Family Support Services program. Located in Baltimore City, it is providing adults with the opportunity and support to earn a high school diploma and begin post-secondary education or access to training and other programs that lead to career pathways. The addition of Patty Center Family Support Services will assist with critical non-academic barriers such as child development services, referrals to other family support, and family self-sufficiency. Maryland Family Network (MFN) continues its efforts to partner with community organizations and government agencies throughout the state to provide Patty Center Family Support Services. The rolling Request for Proposal (RFP) is located on MFN's website.
- **The Promise Resource Center:** In November 2024, the Promise Resource Center terminated services to Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties. They provided Patty

Center Family Support Services, Child Care Resource Center, and Infant Early Childhood Mental Health (IECHMH) Support Services. MFN provides services to families enrolled in Patty Center Support Services and has contracted with Prince George's Child Resource Center to provide Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) services. DEC is currently reviewing how IECMH services can continue in these jurisdictions.

Communications and Engagement

- DEC will release and distribute the 18-month Healthy Beginnings calendar later this month to hospitals, birthing centers, and community organizations. The calendar will be available in English and Spanish.
- DEC has resumed publication of "Maryland Messenger," a free monthly bilingual digital newsletter for families that offers tips on supporting children's healthy development at home and in child care. It is emailed to families, and both English and Spanish versions are available at marylandchild.org.