



Preschool Development Renewal Grant (PDG B-5) for Local Early Childhood Advisory Council (LECAC's)



Quality Improvement Grant Project Summaries

With the support of PDG B-5 Renewal Grant funds, LOCAL ECACs had the opportunity to apply for Renewal Quality Improvement Grants that will support service delivery coordination at the local level.

August, 2020



Allegany County

According to the 2019 - 2020 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) data, only 50% of Allegany County's children are entering kindergarten ready to learn. The data further highlights the achievement gap for children living in poverty and children with special needs. The Allegany County Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC) will work to address the achievement gap for children of these two targeted subgroups. The goal of this grant is to increase family engagement with community agencies and to raise awareness that school readiness begins at birth.

Focusing on Social and Emotional Development, a domain of learning that impacts all learning, the ECAC proposes to connect Allegany County families and child care providers of children birth to three with resources and information to assist them with preparing children to enter school ready to learn.

Through the use of social and traditional media, website engagement, Infant and Toddler Expos, and enhancement of established partner programs, the ECAC will highlight the important role that parents play as their child's first teacher and the necessity to engage with children during this rapid period of brain development. Child Care providers will be supported through the re-opening phase of the COVID-19 crisis, professional development activities and quality enhancement resources as they pursue accreditation. Additionally, data collection will occur via family surveys to strengthen the needs assessment. Members of ECAC will participate in Results-Based Accountability training and technical assistance to examine biases and improve coordination across agencies thus allowing the use of resources in ways that promote equity and streamline funding, ultimately resulting in better outcomes for all children. Activities will be evaluated to determine efficacy and the outcomes of the project will be reported and disseminated to the Maryland Department of Education, the members of the ECAC and interested community members.



Anne Arundel County

The Anne Arundel County Partnership for Children, Youth Camp; Families (Local Management Board) is the applicant for this grant. The Partnership coordinates and administers the Anne Arundel County Early Childhood Coalition (ECC), and prepares the County's bi-annual needs assessment. The goal of the Early Childhood Coalition is to reduce the gap in school readiness for African American, Hispanic and Low Income children by 5% by June 2023. Anne Arundel County Public Schools are core members of the ECC and fund two core early childhood programs: Infants & Toddlers Program and Child Find, and manages our County's Judy Center at Belle Grove Elementary. AACPS also provides necessary data for the needs assessment and is a partner on our county-wide race equity work. Kindergarten Readiness in Anne Arundel County is trending in the wrong direction with only 46% of children entering kindergarten with full readiness in 2019. When the data is disaggregated by race and ethnicity, English proficiency, socio-economic status, and disability, the disparities are even greater. In 2019, African American children were at 34 percent, Hispanic children at 28 percent, and English Language learners only 17 percent ready.

From 2020-2023, the Early Childhood Coalition (ECC) of Anne Arundel County will focus on: increasing county residents' understanding of the importance of readiness for kindergarten for children in low-income households; increase understanding of the role of racial and ethnic disparities play in readiness and how those disparities manifest as institutional and systemic racism in our agencies and service organizations; and ensure the collection and dissemination of accurate qualitative and quantitative data related to our County's birth to five population as a key section of our bi-annual county-wide comprehensive needs assessment. The geographic areas that will be the focus of this work are zip codes 21061, 21060, 21225, 21403 and 21401. Key partners in the project include: Anne Arundel County Public Schools, all early childhood providers, the Community Foundation of Anne Arundel County, both Judy Centers, the Annapolis Family Support Center, Centro de Ayuda and both public housing agencies.



Baltimore City

In school year (SY) 2018-2019, 39% of Baltimore City public school kindergarteners were assessed as demonstrating school readiness (compared to 47% statewide); 36% were assessed as “approaching” readiness (compared to 33% statewide); and 26% were assessed as “emerging” (compared to 20% statewide). Over the past several years, Baltimore City has not seen consistent change in its Kindergarten Readiness results, up or down. Additionally, disparities in Kindergarten Readiness for children with disabilities, English Language Learners, and children from low-income households also persist. To improve school readiness on a population level, the Baltimore City Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) seeks to build its capacity as a backbone by strengthening relationships and data sharing among partners, aligning with city-wide strategies, and developing a common framework to advance Baltimore City’s school readiness landscape that considers stakeholder input, is grounded in community assets, and promotes equity.

The Baltimore City ECAC leadership team is composed of the superintendent’s designee, a childcare representative, and the Local Management Board’s designee. Additionally, the Maryland Family Network, Baltimore City Child Care Resource Center, and the Baltimore City Early Childhood Data Collaborative will all partner on this project. All partners and members of Baltimore City ECAC will help finalize the scope of work; solicit proposals; participate in the consultant selection process; work to generate buy-in with their home institutions and other community stakeholders; and actively participate in the Baltimore City ECAC’s systems building work.



Baltimore County

The Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five for Local Early Childhood Advisory Councils Project ACT (All Children Together), a program of Abilities Network, Inc., will act as the lead agency for the Preschool Development Grant. The Baltimore County Early Childhood Advisory Council, a group of collaborative and highly-skilled professionals, aims to provide resources and supports to Early Childhood Educators throughout Baltimore County with a focus on the Family Child Care Provider Community.

Children in Baltimore County have low kindergarten readiness scores. High quality early childhood experiences prior to kindergarten entry support kindergarten readiness, however there are many barriers to child care providers' access to resources and professional development that lead towards high quality care.

The goals of this project include strengthening Family Child Care Providers' relationships with local community resources by providing memberships to the Family Child Care Association of Baltimore County, the Maryland State Child Care Association, and the Baltimore County Child Resource Center. These community organizations provide ongoing opportunities to access high quality training as well as resources and supports such as technical assistance and advocacy supports. Additionally, this project will establish connections to national resources by providing memberships to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

This project will fund training opportunities for all Early Childhood Educators by providing training sessions throughout the grant period in geographically diverse areas of Baltimore County. Access to ongoing training will also be provided to Family Child Care Providers through Unlimited Training Passes for the Baltimore County Child Resource Center, and membership to the Family Child Care Association.

Grant funds will also be used to purchase curricula and educational materials which will be given to Family Child Care Providers who participate in the above mentioned activities. This will be done with the goal of focusing these resources on a cohort of providers who will gain significant benefit from the project.

Community organizations included in the ECAC who are committed to making this initiative successful include, but are not limited to, Baltimore County Public Schools, the Judy Centers, the Baltimore County Department of Social Services, and local child care programs.



Calvert County

Data collected from Calvert County Community Health Needs Assessment indicates that there is an increasing number of children with behavioral health issues at younger ages. To address these findings, efforts should be focused on increasing the behavioral health services for children and improving education for parents and other adults on ways to identify and service these important health needs. The proposed project will establish cohesiveness and consistency amongst all service providers and stakeholders in an effort to promote a uniform plan of action based on a common philosophy.

Project Goal: The overall goal of this project is to strengthen the social emotional learning foundation for our youngest learners by establishing a professional learning community comprised of teachers, service providers, care givers, families and child-care providers. Training will be provided throughout Calvert County giving access to evidence-based practices, skills development and access to resources focused on strengthening mental health and behavioral supports for children. Direct resources to families will be provided by an Early Childhood Family Peer Support Specialist and parent trainings.

Objective: (1) Create opportunities for teachers, service providers, care givers, families and child-care providers to develop stronger behavior management strategies and have effective social interactions with children. (2) To increase children's levels and range of expression of attention, emotion and behavior in the home, community and classroom settings and show connections and responsiveness to adults' feedback and support.

The project will focus on designing strategies to enhance access to evidence-based programs and resources for providers and families through the following activities:

- Collaborate with community partners to provide training, coaching, family training and events for increase education on social and emotional foundations.
- Communicate via newsletters, social media and websites, and community partner's meetings.



Caroline County

Utilizing a data driven planning approach, the Caroline Early Learning Advisory Council (CELAC) identified that 55% of Caroline County Kindergartners enter school demonstrating readiness as measured by the Fall 2019 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), a significant 10% increase from the previous year. However, there are elementary catchment areas, subgroups and domain areas that are not performing as well as other subgroups. These include: Children with Disabilities (22% gap), English Learners (37% gap), children who are directly certified (6% gap, but suspect data for low income), and Hispanic/Latino children (23% gap). Also, the domain areas of Language and Literacy and Mathematics scored lower on average scale scores than Social Foundations and Physical Well-being. Caroline's KRA results had been flat over the last several years prior to 2019 so the overall increase this year is hopeful. Of concern, when measuring long-term outcomes, throughout the last three years using third grade assessments, many children are struggling to maintain or make measurable progress and additional subgroup differences emerge.

The goal of CELAC plan's is to ensure school readiness at kindergarten and to support Family Engagement and higher quality Early Care and Education (ECE) programs to address the needs of children who face many challenges before they enter kindergarten. Essential partners engaged with our targeted age population include, Early Head Start, Head Start, Pre3, Pre-K, Kindergarten, Y Early Learning Program, family day care providers and child care centers, Healthy Families, PAT Home Visiting, and Caroline Judy Centers. Via its PDG B-5 Grant three key strategies will be employed:

- Parent Outreach, Education and Support utilizing the Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework to deepen family engagement;
- Program Quality Supports embedded within a Conscious Discipline approach with Trauma Informed Practices to enhance program equity.
- Professional Development for Early Care and Education to Enhance Workforce

CELAC will support the implementation of these strategies and the related activities including: Parent CAFÉ's, Raising A Reader, My Family Needs, virtual story-time and parent education resources in multiple languages and Early Childhood Professional Development opportunities and resources in the areas of Language and Literacy, Mathematics, Social Emotional Foundation of Early Learning (SEFEL), Conscious Discipline, Trauma Informed Practices and quality improvement strategies. A website will be developed that will be designed to integrate the early childhood mixed delivery system and will provide current information to parents to support access. Outcomes will be measured utilizing the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), Early Learning Assessment (ELA), parent engagement outcomes/satisfaction and ECE Professional Development outcomes.



Carroll County

The Carroll County Early Childhood Advisory Council (CCECAC) is a collaborative group of representatives from various child-serving agencies supporting the needs of families and children birth - age eight who reside in Carroll County. Our collective focus allows the CCECAC to align our goals with the Maryland ECAC initiatives. The CCECAC will focus on Parent Engagement and Training opportunities to help parents of young children who currently have or are at risk for developing significant behavioral challenges. This project will provide increased flexibility and capacity to offer training sessions at varied times of the day, throughout the calendar year and in multiple locations around the county. Trainings will be implemented with an equity lens in order to ensure that parents with children from economically disadvantaged households, children with disabilities and/or those who are English Language Learners have access to fully participate. As a result of implementing parent trainings opportunities within the Carroll early childhood community, we will address the statewide development goals of strengthening availability and access, improving and supporting program quality, and deepening family engagement.

Goals and objectives of the project:	
	To engage Carroll County families in programs to assist their children in developing positive social behaviors and emotional development.
	To improve availability and access to strategies, techniques, and supports for the early childhood community.
	To expand the opportunities for family involvement in their child's education recognizing that parent(s) are a child's first teacher.
Strategies to address the problem:	
	Provide materials and training to support families with children birth through age 8.
	Host opportunities for parents to attend Chicago Parent Program and Parenting Toolkit sessions.
	Develop networks for parents to access support systems locally.

CCECAC membership will provide input into the process for completion. Several members will be responsible for management of the grant and implementation of strategies as outlined in the proposal. These members may include, but are not limited to: Katie Mack, E-SMART Project Director-Carroll County Health Department; Kaymi Plank, Community Specialist of the Judy Center Early Learning Hub; Lauren Wieprecht, Program Consultant for the Birth to Kindergarten of Carroll County Public Schools; Pamela Meyers, Early Childhood Supervisor of Carroll County Public Schools; and Amanda Beacham, Director of Littlest Learners Child Development Center at Carroll Community College.



Cecil County

Cecil County's young children and families are in crisis. The County's 2017 Community Health Surveyⁱ results ranked substance abuse and mental health as the first and second health issue of concern for Cecil County residents. Poverty, child abuse and neglect, and childhood trauma fell within the top fifteen concerning health issues. 9.4% of the population lives below the poverty level, while 30% of households meet the criteria for ALICE. In Cecil County one in three children are born into poverty and greater than 18% of the yearly births are substance-exposed newborns. 10% of Cecil County's children under the age of 18 are abused or neglected. All of the percentages presented above exceed state and national averages. 2018 – 2019 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment results indicate that 32% of five-year olds enter Kindergarten ready to learn, placing Cecil County's children twenty-fourth out of twenty-four jurisdictions in school readiness status.ⁱⁱ

Young children in Cecil County are living in poverty stricken communities affected by the opioid crisis leading to chronic stress and trauma during the early childhood years. Children are entering school with significant mental health issues, lacking in social emotional development skills and have limited to no access to resources within the community at large. The Early Childhood Advisory Council in collaboration with the Local Management Board is focused on the issue of ensuring access to mental health services, health and wellness services, resources for basic needs and resources for developing school readiness skills to all Cecil County children birth through age 5 including their families, parents or caretakers. The ECAC, with braided funding support from the Cecil County Judy Center, will be contracting the services of Dr. Ira Chasnoff through NTI Upstream to lead Cecil County agencies and service providers through a three-day leadership institute that will result in the formation of an early childhood focused local care team. The local care team will ensure the collaboration of county agencies and services in order to provide communities, as well as, targeted children and families with access to resources and supports.



Charles County

While we saw a 4% increase of students demonstrating readiness on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) during the fall of 2019, our KRA scores have been below the State average for the last few years. As a result, the goal of this project is to provide resources for school readiness to the birth through five population of Charles County. We want to continue to change the culture of our community so that all stakeholders see the value in early childhood education. Based on the current KRA data, 44% of our students entered Kindergarten demonstrating readiness, 3% below the state average. The number continues to be significantly lower for our students who were cared for in an informal setting, exclusively at home or with a family member. Our aim is to reach the entire population of the county; however, we would like to pay particular attention to areas of the county that are lacking access to resources to help make access more equitable such as Western Charles County, including Indian Head and Bryans Road. Through family engagement events we will model skills and strategies that can help increase school readiness, making families more aware of the expectations as a child enters Kindergarten. We want to make families aware of programs and activities that support school readiness well before the children are school-aged. Another area of concern from our KRA data continues to be students who attended Head Start. This is still our lowest performing subgroup, however, they saw significant gains for demonstrating readiness. While this subgroup only represents 2% of the students assessed, 32% of students in this sub group were demonstrating readiness, which is an increase from 17% last school year.

Our plan to address these concerns includes family engagement events and professional development opportunities for early childhood providers, including staff from Head Start. We will offer ACEs training for parents and providers to increase awareness of the impact trauma and adverse childhood experiences can have on school readiness. We will also offer a class for children 6 months-3 years old geared toward informal child care providers titled Playing: Babies Brain Builder. Increasing awareness of the resources available in our county and making access to those resources more equitable is another major focus. We will utilize our new website as a tool that helps families navigate the available resources through links to activities in our community as well as articles, videos, and strategies families can utilize to increase school readiness. Updates will be made to our early childhood community resource guide for distribution at community events the Charles County ECAC attends. In speaking with our colleagues in our neighboring counties, Calvert and St, Mary's, we realized that our councils have many of the same goals. We will collaborate with the other Southern Maryland councils on a few projects including placemats for local restaurants with information based on the Boston Basics. The funding for the Southern Maryland Bridge Project through the Maryland Coalition of Families will be coming to an end in September. All three councils agree that this will be a huge loss to our community and will work together to support funding for the warm line so that our communities can continue to benefit from this valuable resource.

We will continue to partner with Charles County Public Schools, The Judy Center, Infants and Toddlers, The Promise Resource Center, Pure Play Every Day, Inc., the Department of Health, the public library, Charles County Advocacy Council for Children, Youth, and Families, The Playful Parent, the Office of Child Care, as well as churches, community centers, and food pantries.



Dorchester County

The Dorchester County Early Childhood Advisory Council (DECAC) is committed to improving school readiness for children in the district. Beginning in 2015, when early childhood councils were first conceived, DECAC has met regularly to discuss factors impacting school readiness. DECAC has annually examined Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) results, discussed challenges in the local school system, examined socio-economic factors including the impact of inter-generational poverty, and conferred about the lack of family engagement. Not only do families struggle engaging with the school system and government agencies, many parents struggle to connect with their young children.

From the beginning, DECAC identified three areas to impact school readiness, language and literacy skills, family engagement, and public awareness regarding the importance of the first five years of life. The initial funding was committed to the purchase of books to be distributed to the community and public awareness regarding the importance of talking to children and engaging with books.

With renewed funding last year, a needs assessment identified the disruptive behavior of young children as an additional need. Initiatives like Conscious Discipline training, funded by the 2019 grant, helped to address some of those needs. Funding from this grant will focus on continued engagement of the early childhood community beyond public school. In keeping with the original focus of DECAC, family engagement activities will be a priority. Each elementary school will provide either a Learning Party series or four family engagement events. Teachers will also be expected to visit local “feeder” childcare programs in their district. Two projects from last year's grant will be continued, Dr. Mike will return with a focus on engaging our growing Spanish speaking population and we would like to renew our site license for the Conscious Discipline online professional development. Pre-K classrooms would also receive a basket of social emotional books and supplies to replenish their "calm down" corners.

Community Outreach activities will also include "Welcome Baskets" for families of newborns to make a first connection with the school system and DECAC, the provision of books for ongoing community literacy efforts, "Social Emotional Baskets" for childcare providers that have registered with EXCELS, and “Learning Boxes” for community locations including laundromats and barbers.



Frederick County

Frederick County is at the forefront of identifying and addressing the impacts of toxic stress on the young child's brain (age 0-5). This toxic stress has such an impact as denoted in Adverse Childhood Experience studies (ACEs). These adverse experiences can be mitigated by trauma informed community who recognize the signs of trauma in the youngest of children.

These two goals for the project. The first is to increase childcare quality, affordability and accessibility for all families and to increase awareness, collaboration and outreach. The second goal focuses on family engagement and community awareness to promote the healthy development and wellbeing of young children.

The Frederick County Early Childhood Advisory (FCECAC) will utilize grant funding to hire a consulting firm to complete a comprehensive childcare market analysis. The analysis is key to targeting communication and services. The analysis will also provide (FCECAC) with a baseline with which to measure the needs of childcare providers. Simultaneously, the FCECAC will look to develop a communication strategy that will reach the bulk of these providers in order to hopefully saturate provider's resources, supports and learning opportunities.

Fund will also be used to provide childcare providers and the local community with training opportunities about trauma informed care including webinars, conference and learning materials distributed via email, and articles in the Frederick News Post. Many of these training session have been held previously and have had very positive responses. Another learning opportunity is a three-part certificate to learn YOGA with a focus on Mindfulness. The email distribution and communication list will be maintained by staff person hired with grant funding. The FCECAC will be responsible for developing the communication that will go out to the community. Partners include: Child Advocacy Center, Child Care Choices/MHA, Children's Center Walkersville, Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership, Family Partnership, Frederick County Department of Social Services, Frederick County Health department, Frederick County Judy Center Early Learning Hub, Frederick County Office for Children and Families, Frederick County Public Library, Frederick County Public Schools, United Way of Frederick County, YMCA of Frederick Head Start, and Zero to Three.



Harford County

In February 2013, the Maryland State Department of Education's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant charged jurisdictions to establish a Local Early Childhood Council initiative through the County Executive and Superintendent. The Harford County Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) was established under the authority of the Local Management Board.

The council was given the responsibilities to analyze county data regarding young children, assessing services available and investigating gaps. Based on this assessment, the council was charged with developing an action plan to support young children entering school ready to learn. The Harford County ECAC, with oversight of Harford County Public Schools and support from the Local Management Board, will continue the work started in 2013, building on the progress made in expanding the access and quality of early learning opportunities for low-income disadvantaged families in Harford County. The goal of Harford County's ECAC is to work together to implement "Thrive by Five – Learning Starts Now" campaign, rapidly increasing the number of five-year olds in Harford County entering school ready to learn. The data and indicators point to an urgent need to focus on key areas over the course of the PDGB-5 ECAC grant through partnerships and improvement of coordination between local childcare providers of vulnerable young children and HCPS. To that end, Harford County's ECAC will continue the Thrive by Five Campaign with a focus on low-income and disadvantaged children and families living in high poverty communities of Aberdeen and Edgewood. The following strategies will be implemented:

Thrive by Five Childcare Workshops: The workshops will be offered annually to include a variety of essential practices including articulation planning sessions; new kindergarten standards and ESSA requirements; training on social and emotional foundations; and planning for increased coordination and collaboration on delivery of services.

Thrive by Five Parent Outreach: Parents of four-year olds in all partnering Thrive by Five Childcare Centers will participate in annual Chicago Parenting Series to support parenting skills and increase confidence and reduce behavior problems in young children 2-5 years old. Families will also receive materials to support school readiness.

Thrive by Five Wellness Outreach: Childcare providers will work with ECAC members to identify the pediatricians and nurses working to support their families' wellness. Annually, these doctors will be given books and engaged in offering early learning literacy instruction to parents of babies–four-year olds, emphasizing with families the importance of reading at an early age.



Howard County

Problem - Many children of color, dual-language learners, children with special needs and children from low-income backgrounds do not have access to high-quality early learning opportunities. They are more likely to enter kindergarten behind their peers social-emotionally and academically resulting in an achievement gap that persists throughout their school years (Weyer, 2018). In Howard County, while assessment data show a slight increase in school readiness, there is still a significant achievement gap for dual language learners, children with identified disabilities and children of color (Readiness Matters , 2020).

Since 80% of a child's brain develops in their first three years of life, achievement gaps are already noticeable by the age of two and they increase significantly by the time a child enters kindergarten (Boston Basics, 2020).

A lack of equal access to school readiness information and knowledge of available resources prevents families from making progress in closing the achievement gap.

Population Served – Parents and families with children and infants through age five with a focus on vulnerable populations will be served by efforts of this proposal

Goal – Create and expand family engagement opportunities to all families and especially to vulnerable families that experience access and resource barriers with the goal of helping all Howard County children learn, grow and thrive.

Strategies–

1. Integrate research-based learning platforms into the current Howard County Launch into Learning school readiness initiative. This will improve children's trajectories by making sure that all families have access to science-based strategies.
2. Continue the distribution of readiness materials and relevant literature to families by enhancing and developing relationships with key community partners. The results will be to increase awareness of current school readiness data and collaborate to create meaningful family engagement opportunities that prioritize closing the achievement gap.

Partners - Partners include, the Howard County Department of Community Resources and Services' Office of Children and Families, Howard County Public School System, Howard County Community Action Council/Head Start, and The Judy Center Partnership.



Kent County

As our needs assessment shows, children ages birth to five years old in Kent County are experiencing significant poverty. While families are working to meet their immediate needs such as food and housing, they may not have the resources to foster their child's academic growth and development. Throughout this grant period, we are proposing activities and training for both families and child care providers to increase the accessibility of language and literacy tools and math materials in an effort to promote oral language development at home.

The Kent County Early Childhood Advisory Council (KECAC) needs to expand our network to reach all children in Kent County age's birth to five and their families. We need to create a network including our daycare providers to help them receive professional development credits and quality training. We also need to educate our parents about what school readiness means and how they are their child's first teacher. Throughout this work, the KECAC needs to continue to reach all ethnic groups, as well as, children with disabilities.

Specifically, our goals are to increase the number of prior care providers utilizing the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) in our local daycares and Head Start. Our initial strategy is to have a professional development day with Head Start teachers and daycare providers to train them how to accurately use this screening tool. Following the training, the KECAC will network and provide additional resources for providers based on their individual children's results. Along with the screening we will help identify those children with the most adversity and provide them with resources from the Judy Center and Infants and Toddlers prior to entering school.

Another goal is to see an increase in Kent County's Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) scores in ELA and Math. We are planning Parent Engagement Nights for both Math and Reading for all children ages birth to five. All families participating in PreK, Kindergarten, local daycares and Head Start will be invited to attend. We also plan to design a virtual platform with our partners that is a "one stop shopping" for resources for children ages birth to five. We will advertise upcoming events, share resources for all families, Judy Center partner resources, and county resources on this virtual platform.



Montgomery County

Partnering with the Judy Center program and Early Childhood Education (ECE) advocacy groups will help coordinate ECE priorities and will increase access to child development activities for under-resourced families in Montgomery County. Montgomery County is home to over 76,000 children under the age of 6, accounting for 7% of the total County population. Four out of ten of Montgomery County's youngest children (approximately 30,000 children) are economically vulnerable, living below 300% of the federal poverty level (or below \$71,550 for a family of four). Nearly half of these children are non-white, and an estimated 28% have at least one parent or guardian who speaks a language other than English at home. The latest kindergarten readiness data show that 53% of kindergarteners demonstrate readiness. The County's rate is higher than the State average; however, 7 Maryland counties have higher readiness rates than the County. In Montgomery County, young children who were direct certified (33% ready for school), children who are English language learners (24% ready for school), and children with disabilities (12% ready for school) are significantly less likely to start school ready to learn. Many of these children arrive at Kindergarten without strong school readiness skills because they have not had many opportunities for developmentally appropriate activities with family or in a structured setting.

The Montgomery County Early Childhood Coordinating Council (ECCC) serves as the Local Early Childhood Advisory Council (LECAC); it respectfully requests funds from the LECAC Quality Improvement Grant for two projects from July 2020 through December 2022. The first will be replicate Judy Center at-home school readiness and family engagement activities in school communities without Judy Center services during extended closings or time away from regular program services. The second will be to contract with a facilitator to conduct discussions and provide analysis and recommendations for coordination of priorities and annual activities with members of the ECCC, leadership of the Montgomery County Early Care and Education Initiative (ECEI), and other key local early care and education (ECE) advocacy groups. Coordinating programming with the Judy Centers and multiple ECCC partners will help to bring more opportunities for developmentally appropriate ECE activities to children in multiple communities within Montgomery County. Annual planning will help to ensure the highest need communities are identified and reached first, each year.



Prince George's County

The Prince George's Early Childhood Advisory Committee (PGEAC) requests \$75,000 through December 2022 to continue to build on successes from FY2020. The ultimate goal is to impact school readiness for children. The Maryland State Board of Education 2019-20 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) Report states that only 35% Prince George's County entered school ready to learn this ranks the county the lowest in the State of Maryland amongst all the other counties and 12% below the State of Maryland students demonstrating readiness. The KRA data for Prince George's County kindergarten students shows significant lags for almost all subgroups including children in poverty, special needs, and speakers of a second language.

To ensure that PGEAC activities to address school readiness are coordinated and effective, a modified strategic planning process will be conducted, engaging all members, and aligning with MSDE's strategic plan. This will not be a large scale strategic planning process, as it can use the state plan as its basis. However, given the unique needs of Prince George's County, and the need for PGEAC to work together more efficiently, it is a necessary step. It will sharpen the focus of PGEAC order to develop the right goals and targets, and ensure an equity lens is utilize. Most importantly, individual member organizations will see the importance of the role they play in our joint efforts to support school readiness for all children.

Especially as we recover from COVID-19 closures, it is critical that all stakeholders work together. Maryland has made dramatic strides in supporting quality early child care access and affordability through long overdue expansions of child care subsidy rates and program eligibility. With a threat of recession weighing on fiscal leaders, and improvements still in the implementation stage, quality programs may well be vulnerable to retrenchment. Coming together to support systems change is the best way to achieve success with limited resources available.

By January 2021, PGEAC's plan will be completed, and implementation will begin. A coordinator will be hired to ensure all activities are completed and performance measures tracked. Upon completion of the plan, PGEAC will submit revised goals and outcomes to be achieved through December 2022.

PGEAC will also work closely with the Office of the County Executive as they form their Children's Cabinet, which will initially focus on Early Childhood systems and improvement of outcomes for children and their families.



Queen Anne's County

According to the (2019-2020) Kindergarten Readiness Assessment data, forty-seven percent (47%) of Queen Anne's County Kindergarten students were prepared for school success. The mission of the Queen Anne's County Early Childhood Advisory Council (QAECAC) is all children in Queen Anne's County will be prepared for "school success" therefore the problem for QAECAC is that fifty-three percent (53%) of entering Kindergarten students are not entering school prepared for school success.

The QAECAC Early Literacy and Technology Outreach project will focus on the following statewide system development goals: 1) strengthening availability and access 2) improve and support program quality, and 3) deepen family engagement via outreach opportunities 4) expand and enhance workforce development. The projects objective is to provide equitable access to early literacy opportunities, technology, and continued professional development in collaboration with QAECAC partners. The members will specifically focus on assisting caregivers of young children living in rural settings, caregivers of young children living in poverty, caregivers of young children who are English language acquisition (ELA) learners and caregivers of young children experiencing developmental delays. The goal is to assist caregivers of young children in navigating the challenges of accessing early literacy services, specifically those residing in a rural areas. The QAECAC plan to hire a Bilingual Outreach Coordinator to assist caregivers of young children (prenatal to age eight) in accessing early literacy materials, accessing technology and the necessary early literacy services and supports to thrive. A Bilingual Outreach Coordinator, hired specific to this project, will develop opportunities for families, who are unable to access services due to transportation, and/or language and technology barriers. As a result, an increasing number of caregivers of young children will have equitable access to early literacy services and technology. Ultimately, the hope of the QAECAC is to help caregivers of young children gain access to a wider array of services, once solutions to navigate barriers, are developed collaboratively with the Bilingual Outreach Coordinator.

The project's outcome is to attain an increased number of caregivers of young children with access to early literacy materials, services and technology tools to assist them in preparing the children in their care for school success. The primary goal is that an increased percentage of Kindergarten students, from the targeted subgroups, will enter school prepared for school success, as evidenced by the KRA results for Queen Anne's County.

The partners involved in facilitating the project's success include:

- 1) Queen Anne's County Board of Education will identify families from targeted subgroups, and
- 2) The QAECAC will hire a Bilingual Outreach Coordinator to provide outreach to families of young children (prenatal to age eight) via a two-generational approach, with specific focus on the targeted subgroups, and
- 3) The Family Center, Judy Center Early Learning Hub of QAC, Infants and Toddlers Program, Child Find, Shore Up! Inc., Queen Anne's County Dept. of Social Services, Queen Anne's County Dept. of Health/Healthy Families, Chesapeake College Childcare



Resource Center, and MSDE/EXCELS will collaborate with families from targeted subgroups to ensure ease of facilitating project objectives.



St. Mary's County

According to the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) in the fall of 2019, 45 % of children in St. Mary's County entered kindergarten demonstrating readiness, in line with Maryland's overall 47%. These children are entering school, coming from local Head Start programs, private non-public pre-kindergarten/nursery programs, family childcare settings as well as informal levels of care. While many programs follow a set curriculum, there are still outliers who do not and as a result, students who come from these settings may be at a deficit to learning upon entrance into school. Additionally, many families in the community face instability by having one or both parents incarcerated resulting in kinship care, being homeless, or being impacted by the opioid epidemic.

Through this funding opportunity, children coming from all levels of care from all reaches of the county can benefit from these opportunities. Family child-care providers in our region will be afforded free training opportunities on social-emotional curriculum and additional Core of Knowledge training, with follow-up technical assistance and coaching, which could be incorporated into their daily activities and lessons for this particular age group. Parents will also have opportunities to attend the training as they too will be able to incorporate the techniques into their home settings in an effort to provide continuity of care. Core of Knowledge training will be offered to childcare providers. A subscription to GoToWebinar will be purchased to allow for virtual training, if needed. Two Early Childhood professionals from the regional ECAC will attend train-the-trainer for social-emotional learning curriculum, which will allow the regional ECAC to provide ongoing low-cost training to parents and caregivers. We will continue to support the Warm Line of Southern Maryland, a phone line for parents and caregivers to access information and referrals to community resources. The purchase of viewing licenses for Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs)-related movies *Resilience* and *Paper Tigers* will allow the St. Mary's County Early Childhood Advisory Council (SMCECAC) to host community viewings to educate the public on the life-long effect that childhood trauma can have. Finally, printed materials, in the forms of placemats and flyers using a redesigned ECAC logo, will be distributed to restaurants and other community channels to share positive early learning messaging and to advertise and promote events hosted by the ECAC and the services of ECAC partners.



Somerset County

The Somerset County Early Learning Advisory Council's (SELAC) proposal works to help the county, ranked highest in poverty in the state of Maryland, cope with the many challenges associated with poverty. Ultimately, poverty affects all aspects of life in the county and has an impact on the school readiness skills of children (ages 0-5).

This funding will work to build a stronger community of early childhood teachers, parents and stakeholders. Last year's funding provided a two-day workshop, *Bridges out of Poverty*, which worked to address the core issues associated with poverty in our county. Though local community stakeholders were present, teachers and representatives from the school system were not. This project will provide a one-day accompanying workshop, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* to teachers and administrators in the county. This workshop will help our school system build key instructional strategies to better reach students living in poverty. Teachers and administrators from Princess Anne Elementary, Woodson Elementary and Deal Island Elementary will be invited to participate in this workshop. In addition, teachers from SHORE UP Head Start and local childcare programs will also be invited to attend. Child Care providers will also receive an additional workshop based on the Framework training, in partnership with the Lower Shore Child Care Resource Center.

In addition, in order for teachers to build relationships with families of students entering Pre-K 3, Pre-K 4 or Kindergarten, teachers will be given the opportunity to conduct home visits before the school year starts. School readiness materials will be provided at those visits. As SELAC is dealing with the impact of COVID-19 on families, it has become clear that building relationships with families, even before school starts, is key to a child's success in school. Getting these materials into the homes is not enough; teachers must spend time with parents and explain how to use the materials with their children. In addition, teachers will gain a greater understanding of their students by being able to see where their students live and building relationships within the local neighborhoods. SELAC will also continue to provide Getting Ahead in a Just Getting By World, a 16-session parent training, to families in the county with children zero through age five. This part of the project is designed to help families learn ways to bring stability into their homes and addresses the main issues of poverty. Referrals for Getting Ahead will come from DSS, SHORE UP, and the Judy Center. Additionally, this project will work to increase the number of tablets available to the county's youngest students and will work to increase an online presence of the advisory council through the support of the newly created SELAC website and billboard.



Talbot County

Talbot County is a small district on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The public schools serve 4,704 children P3-to grade 12. We have five elementary schools serving 38 three year olds, 237 four year olds, and 319 five year olds.

This year the Talbot Early Childhood Advisory Council started the year's work by participating in a session with the RBA trainers from Annie E. Casey. During this training reboot, our core team revisiting the mission and purpose statements, and drafted some proposed changes. At our local meetings, we led the group through discussion and group consensus, settling on the refined mission and purpose statements below:

TECAC MISSION: All families with children aged birth through 8 in Talbot County will have the support needed for the healthy development of the whole child and family.

The purpose of the TECAC is to coordinate efforts among early care and education programs in Talbot County, to collaborate as an early childhood community, and to conduct local, ongoing needs assessments concerning early childhood education and development. TECAC will develop local strategies aligned with actions based on identified needs that support the recommendations of the State and Local ECACs.

Although we are considered a wealthy county, we still have families that are struggling with poverty, family mental health issues, food insecurity, and now the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and school and business closures. This has created a great fear of the unknown in our small community. As a community advisory council, we continue to focus on the social emotional needs for children and families and school readiness, particularly with increased concerns due to the closures of child care centers, private providers, and schools. In addition, equity and ensuring access continues to be an area of high priority in our community.



Washington County

Although Washington County continues to make progress in school readiness, significant achievement gaps exist across subgroups. In Washington County 44% of children enter Kindergarten demonstrating the skills necessary to access the curriculum according to the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). Of children entering Kindergarten, 37% are direct certified. Currently, 34% of the children who are direct certified demonstrate readiness, compared to 50% of children not direct certified. Focusing efforts on the population of children who are direct certified will impact the largest number of Washington County students entering Kindergarten. To increase school readiness for all children, particularly children of economic need, Washington County Early Childhood Advisory Council will execute strategies in a holistic approach including family engagement, increased quality of care and service coordination to reduce barriers and strengthen availability and access of care.

Goal 1: By December 30, 2022, 44% of children of direct certified households will demonstrate readiness as measured by the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment.

Objectives:

Family Engagement: Provide educational and informative programs to foster parent engagement, promote developmentally appropriate skills, school readiness, and parenting, differentiated to accommodate specific needs. Identify families with young children not connected to programs, offer Service Coordination connecting families to services as appropriate.

Increase Quality of Care: Provide professional development, tools and resources particularly for home and informal care providers.

Strategies to Address Objectives			
	Family Engagement	Service Coordination	Increase Quality of Care
Strategy	Parent Cafes	Develop Service Coordination Team	Childcare Conference
	School Readiness Workshops	Crisis to Thrive Survey	Childcare Trainings
	Parenting Classes	EcoMap	Mobile Lessons Resource
	Community Family Events	Connect families to appropriate services	Cohort to increase EXCELS level
Partners	Head Start, Family Center, Healthy Families, Potomac Case Management, Birth to Kindergarten, Hub at USMH,	Head Start, Family Center, Healthy Families, Potomac Case Management, Birth to Kindergarten, Hub at USMH, Bester Community of Hope, WCPS, Judy Center,	WCPS, APPLES, Judy Center, Birth to Kindergarten, Childcare Providers,



	Bester Community of Hope, WCPS, Judy Center, Local Lib		Washington County Free Library
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Wicomico County

Our Wicomico Early Childhood Council (WECC), has identified several “problems”/purpose areas, over the past year via the help of Due East Partners LLC, facilitating our Strategic Planning, focus group sessions, and community surveys. The Council agreed, priority area number one should be educating parents and community members about the importance of early childhood (brain science, ages, and stages). Priority two is increasing funding for and access to, affordable and quality early childhood education, care, and resources. Lastly, the Council believes seamless transitions from early years to early grades is a key priority.

To address these local needs in comparison to the purpose areas outlined in the Local Early Childhood Advisory Councils Quality Improvement Grant FY21, we will be: (1) Strengthen availability and access, (2) Improve and support program quality, (3) Expand and enhance workforce development, and (4) Improve systems for infrastructure, data and resource management. In addressing these local needs, we will be able to serve the children and families within Wicomico County; this includes all schools, all children, and all zip codes.

Strategies we will use to address these purposes areas include creating a website parents/student, early childcare providers, and educators can navigate to find resources. Another strategy includes creating a Parent Information Center at our local library branches, building the Wicomico County educator workforce via specialized trainings (including trauma-informed care) and focusing on our child-care providers. We will also battle the unique challenges living in a rural community provide, for example: addressing transportation issues (via building the cloud infrastructure), providing specific performance measures to better track data to foresee gaps in the future.

To succeed, we will need to align these strategies with the appropriate partners to gain a full-spectrum empowerment outcome. Via our well-established Council, all necessary public and private partners are already members of the council. To continue bringing the right parties on board as we continue moving forward, we believe launching a website or app even would be the best way to recruit (especially during this period of social distancing). Our Local Management Board is in a unique position to now run administrative support for the newly created Youth Advisory Board/Parent-to-Parent Champions. As we just did with our Juvenile Justice Reform grant, we have a unique opportunity to link WECC with this Board as well by adding representation from the education sector.



Worcester County

Worcester County Public Schools has two Judy Centers — one at Snow Hill Elementary School and one at Pocomoke Elementary School. Currently no prekindergarten classrooms in the school district are all day but WCPS has just submitted a Prekindergarten Expansion grant to increase the programs at Pocomoke Elementary School and Showell Elementary School to full day program. Many early childhood teachers in Worcester County Public Schools have been raising concern about the behavioral and mental health of some of their students. This concern is a nationwide problem and its impact on school readiness and school success is a concern for school districts across the country. Articles are being published and research is being done to determine the impact and suggest solutions to this persistent and complex problem.

Although overall the kindergarteners in Worcester County Public Schools score better across domains on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA, scores by school noted above), many students in the school system face poverty, parental drug use, violence, and other risk factors that can lead to behavioral and mental health disorders among students, even our youngest students. Through this ECAC initiative, Worcester County Public Schools intends to contract with a part-time Behavioral Health Consultant in order to prevent or remediate social emotional, and behavioral challenges as they relate to educational problems.

Reliable data to promote young children's social and emotional development can be measured through the use of the Devereaux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA). The DECA is used to elicit feedback from parents and caregivers and provides reliable and valid data to promote young children's social and emotional development. The DECA measures attachment, self-regulation, initiative and behaviors of concern, and is focused on resilience factors. This will be one of two measures for gauging progress of this initiative.

The use of the Early Learning Assessment (ELA) is based on research supported Learning Progressions that are aligned to early learning standards and based on seven domains of school readiness: Social Foundations; Language and Literacy; Mathematics; Science; Social Studies; Physical Well-Being and Motor Development; and Fine arts.

The Learning Progressions define the pathway of skills, knowledge, and behaviors that children develop between the ages of 36 months and 72 months, including children who may be at earlier developmental levels than their typically developing peers. The Social Foundations domain focuses on children's personal and social development, including their engagement in learning and interactions with others.


