



Office of Child Care (OCC) Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, August 15, 2013



AGENDA ITEMS	DISCUSSION OUTCOME
Attendees	<p>Council Members: Jennifer Nizer (Chairperson), Debbie Badawi, Jennifer Arnaiz, Crystal Barksdale, Terry Bridger, Debbie Moore, Judy Kalski, John Krupinsky, Rachel London, Faith Miller, Theresa Rivers, Steve Rohde</p> <p>MSDE Staff: Liz Kelley, Lindi Budd, Betsy Blair, Paula Johnson, Gail Tucker</p> <p>Guests: Lynda Davenport, Paula Minsk, Beth Marrow, Debbie Moore, Erin Olson, Erin Penniston, Diane Mellot, Chris Peusch, Sarah Fike, Mary C. White, Jordon Helgason, Glenesa Swann and Deborah Lovett</p>
Welcome And Opening Remarks	<p>The meeting was called to order by Jennifer Nizer. Liz warmly welcomed everyone. She specifically acknowledged the child care providers who were present and thanked them for taking time out of their busy schedules to be in attendance.</p>
<p>Assistant Superintendent/Director's Report – Liz Kelley</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race to the Top (RTTT)/Early Learning Challenge Grant Update • CCDF State Plan Update – Impact of Proposed Rule Changes • Legislation – for more information: http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/web/mga/frm1st.aspx?tab=home 	<p>Liz reported that the implementation processes of the RTTT Early Learning Challenge Grant activities are on par with the established timeline. She indicated that reports on the progress of the grants are posted on the MSDE website. It was also noted that ongoing conversation is being held with the Feds around all the projects and activities.</p> <p>Modifications were done to some of the activities that are related to procurement and data system delays. Liz said there will be change to the scope. She said the team will exceed some of the objectives set out in the original plan. It was mentioned that there will be some challenges next year (2014) because decisions have to be made with regard to the systems that will be ongoing as well as the resources needed.</p> <p>It was stated by Liz that the disbursement of funds for the grants were to be used for infrastructural development and further explained that many of the activities that were implemented will need ongoing support which will be a major task in preparing the 2015 budget.</p> <p>Liz told the meeting that information for all projects is available online. She applauded Roann Tsakalas, Project Manager for doing an excellent job to keep the team up-to-date with all the activities.</p> <p>CCDF State Plan The CCDF plan was submitted on time. Liz reported that she was in the process of responding to some questions that came from the Feds with regard to the plan which are deemed minimal.</p> <p>It was cited by Liz that there are proposed rule changes to the regulations. She said on August 5, 2013 comments from the MSDE Agency were submitted. A copy of the comments submitted was handed out to the attendees of the meeting. Liz also noted the Comments Site was reopened and encouraged council members have until August 23rd to submit comment after which, the comments period will be closed.</p> <p>Liz acknowledged that all the changes were embraced, however, she noted that some of the changes that will impact Maryland, including the provision for more comprehensive criminal background and child abuse/neglect checks. The State will be required to carry out background</p>



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	<p>checks not only in Maryland but any state the individual lived in within the last ten years and will have to request information from that State. Liz mentioned that it is difficult to get this information within the State of Maryland. Hence this requirement will be an uphill task as the regulations are different across States. It was also mentioned that most of the comments focus within the child abuse and neglect category but there is a "how factor" that needed to be answered.</p> <p>Compliance for the State local health and building codes will not be required for relative providers and in home providers. Liz said the State of Maryland is taking a strategic move in this direction to ensure that children that receive State or Federal funding for child care meet the health and safety requirements which include monitoring of the facilities. Liz further mentioned that the Feds are anxious to have States issuing 12 month eligibility determinations for child care subsidy. Maryland currently determines the length of the voucher on the parents' work activities and if they are in stable work environment, 12 month eligibility may be issued. The Feds are also interested in having methods of alternate (market) rates setting as outlined in the letter.</p> <p>Liz pointed out that discussion is being held with work groups to look at policies and procedures with regard to regulations that govern School Age Child Care. It was noted that after perusing the regulations, some of them were deemed irrelevant with regard to how they applied especially to free standing School Age programs located in schools and other institutions. Hence the launch of the work group headed by Paula Johnson, Branch Chief of Licensing.</p> <p>Liz told the meeting that the team was in the process of getting the last responses for the Dispute Resolution Work Groups and as soon as these people are identified the working will begin in September. The objective to of the group is to identify a method for parents to have resources and a process to resolve issues of discrimination due to a disability.</p>
<p>Child Care Subsidy Branch Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulations Workgroup 	<p>Betsy Blair, Child Care Subsidy Branch Chief, shared with the council that a regulation review is being conducted for Child Care Subsidy. She said that changes have been made to the regulations over the past few years but an overhaul to the regulation has not been done since Welfare Reform in 1997. Therefore, it was essential for the team to convene and thoroughly look at the regulations. A group of experts (from local departments) that have expertise with the program were identified. Betsy noted that representation of the group was made up of people from all jurisdictions and represented large and small counties; management, administration; pioneers of the program and people who are familiar with other programs. The main objectives of the work group are to identify problematic, ambiguous or obsolete areas and replace them with simple and relevant information that customers can relate to.</p> <p>It was mentioned that after the regulation review document is compiled, a meeting will be convened with the MSDE Regulation Coordinator to differentiate what is policy and what is procedure. Betsy emphasized that this was essential as the public does not interpret the regulation as the team, therefore the involvement of MSDE Regulation Coordinator would create</p>

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	<p>balance as it relates to communicating the information to the public.</p> <p>Another concern Betsy raised was the many documents floating in the public such as COMAR, the Desk Guide (which is an internal document but seemed to be institutional) and Action Transmittal from DHR. It was also revealed that the Attorney General indicated all the documents must be removed from the public except COMAR and some procedures going forward.</p> <p>Betsy stated that the team is progressing smoothly and adequate time is given to the undertakings of this project to ensure the product is of high quality. She also said after the document is vetted by the relevant personnel, a pilot will be conducted within various localities at different levels to identify irregularities or ambiguities and amend same before it is rolled out to the public.</p> <p>Debbie Moore asked why providers were not included of the work group. In response to the question, Betsy said at this stage, it was about eligibility determination not payment so the inclusion of providers at this time is not necessary but she said later on in the project they may be included.</p> <p>Crystal Barksdale asked if parents will be included in the conversation as there are a lot of misunderstandings among the parents with regard to the regulations. Betsy explained to the Counsel that while involving parents may seem like a good one, it is not relevant because all policies and procedures must be aligned to Federal requirements and guidelines.</p> <p>Betsy shared that the team is currently exploring what is considered an approved work activity for parents as there are some anomalies in this area. She said a lot of feedback on this matter came from different groups such as advocate groups as well as local departments.</p>
<p>Licensing Branch Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bottle Feeding, Pillows and Straps - Deborah Badawi • Communicating Changes 	<p>Dr. Debbie Basawi said Cheryl DiPinto from DHMH sent her hyperlink to some baby bottle-propping bibs that are being sold online. She said that the products were not available in prominent baby stores such as Babies R Us, etc. It was however mentioned that these bibs are online and can be found at Amazon and other websites. It was clearly noted that these products are not recommended by the Office of Child Care as are not safe for use. The information concerning these bids will be placed in the Partners Newsletter and on MSDE website as hazardous products.</p> <p>Paula Johnson, Licensing Branch Chief, led the discussion on communicating changes to the child care community. She said it is imperative to get information out in a timely manner to avoid the use of unsafe products such as the baby bottle propping bib.</p> <p>Paula said over the past year, she received complaints from several child care providers and most recently met with the Maryland State Child Care Association. She said that it was revealed that there are challenges with how information is communicated from the Licensing offices to providers; particularly when there is the need to alert providers of upcoming regulatory changes. It</p>



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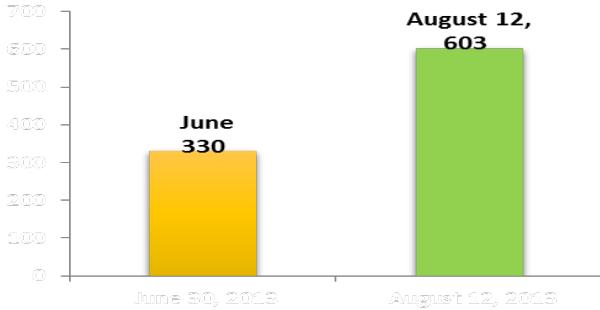
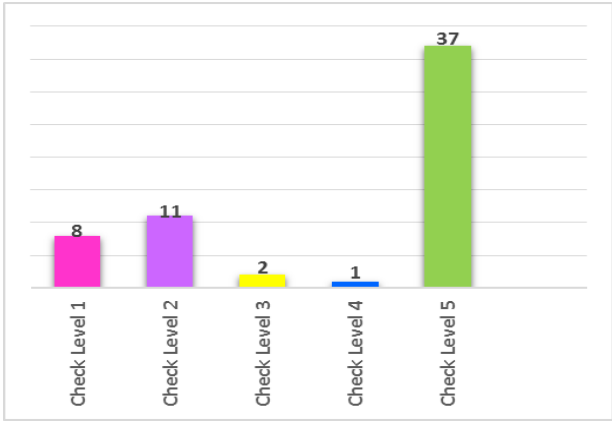


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	<p>was felt that the Partners Newsletter was effective in getting the information out to the providers community but was proven otherwise. Paula said initially, when the Office of Child Care was with the Department of Human Resources, the Partners Newsletter was centered on licensing issues. She said since coming to MSDE as a Division, the Newsletter has growth tremendously as there are many branches/units within the Division. Paula said feedback from the providers indicated that they are having difficulty finding time to read the Newsletter as it is bulky and as such have overlooked pertinent Licensing information and changes.</p> <p>She proposed that the Newsletter should be revised to highlight information providers should know but in the interim periodic updates should be sent out between publications.</p> <p>Paula said to improve the flow of information, a communication feature was created with providers' email addresses and mailing addresses within each region. This system will be used to inform providers when there are important updates/changes. It was noted that the notification will be developed by the Branch Chief and submitted via email to all the Licensing offices and committees/groups/associations throughout the State. She said this one way of improving communication within the child care community and welcome recommendations/ideas from committees/groups/associations on ways of improving the service in the Licensing Branch in relation to communication.</p> <p>Paula said earlier this year a survey web link was sent to providers via Partners Newsletter to give their comments on licensing matters. She said through the Newsletter over 300 responses were received but when an email blast was sent by all regions using the new system "Licensing Update" over 800 providers participated in the survey. Paula said a lot of information was received and both she and Liz will be discussing how to address the issues at the Statewide Licensing Meeting.</p> <p>Jennifer Nizer congratulated Paula on behalf of her team for the meeting held with the provider association. She said the meeting was positive and informative.</p> <p>Paula said MSDE embraced all stakeholders as partners although some providers believed otherwise. She shared that efforts are being made to eradicate inconsistencies in Licensing Branch. She made mention of the annual Statewide Meeting which will be held on October 1, 2013. She said this is the time of the year when she and Liz will meet with all Licensing Specialists and deal with concerns or inconsistencies that affect the child care community.</p> <p>Liz said it would be great to be able to redesign the Office of Child Care website to add on the main page a notification tab with all the current updates.</p> <p>Lindi Budd informed the team that a new search feature was added to the Maryland Public Schools Home Page which has proven effective. Lindi also recommended that the team should retain the section at the back page of the Partners Newsletter where announcements are made</p>

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	<p>for Licensing as providers are tuned in to that section/column.</p> <p>Liz assured the counsel that when the public portal is implemented it will improve communication and flexibility. Betsy also added that the web developers will be switching from the software that is currently being used to SharePoint as most users are familiar with the system. It is hoped that when the transition is made, the information will be streamlined as well as user-friendly and by so doing improve communication.</p> <p>Jennifer Nizer said one of the future communication tools that could be made available to providers that have proven simple but effective is an Emergency Management System. She explained that the user enters a phone number/email address in a smart phone/computer system and receive alerts when there are emergency/irregularities.</p>
<p>Maryland EXCELS Branch Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maryland EXCELS Field Test Reception • Timeline for publicly funded programs to participate in Maryland EXCELS • Quality Assurance Specialists • Dual Language/ELL work group 	<p>Lindi Budd, Maryland EXCELS Branch Chief, reported to the counsel that Maryland EXCELS hosted the second of three Thank You Receptions for the 330 Field Test participants on August 14th. She said these programs (family and center providers) volunteered their time and facilities in assisting Maryland EXCELS in the creation and implementation of processes and systems. The receptions were hosted in three locations (Fredrick, Columbia and Annapolis) to accommodate Field Test participants across the State. Lindi said the events were well attended by providers.</p> <p>She expressed heartfelt gratitude to the sponsors (Maryland Family Network; Maryland State Child Care Association; Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children; Maryland State Child Care Association; Maryland School-Age Child Care Alliance and Kaplan Early Learning a new partner of Maryland EXCELS) who made the events a reality.</p> <p>Lindi also announced the newest Maryland EXCELS partner, Discount School Supply. She thanked Beth Marrow who made follow-up calls based on information received from one of the Quality Assurance Specialists. Maryland State Child Care Association will give member discounts to providers. These institutions will give discounts to providers that are participating with Maryland EXCELS.</p> <p>Lindi stated that three new Quality Assurance Specialists will join the team on August 26th and will be assigned to Baltimore City, Anne Arundel, and Harford and Cecil Counties. This will bring the total to 13 Quality Assurance Specialists across the State. That leaves the two last positions to be filled in the near future which will bring the total to the budgeted target of 15. It was noted every region will have a Quality Assurance Specialist who will conduct training, present at workshops/seminars, go on site visits; assist providers to upload documents to the website and know about the Maryland EXCELS system.</p> <p>The Branch is currently conducting Standards Revision based on the feedback from the Field Test. Johns Hopkins/Center for Technology in Education (CTE) conducted focus groups and surveys in June 2013. The feedback is being used by MSDE and CTE to make revisions to ensure that the Standards reflect best practices and clarity of expectations. Lindi said the revised</p>

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	<p>Standards will be ready by November 2013. She noted that participants registered with Maryland EXCELS are operating under the Standards that currently exist. Providers that joined Maryland EXCELS after November will participate under the revised version. It was also noted that the next time the Standards are revised the team will seek the involvement of providers.</p> <p>It was stated by Lindi that stakeholders were invited to an Advisory Counsel meeting in November to give guidance on how to move forward with implementing Maryland EXCELS with regard to revision or changes. She thanked some of the OCC Advisory Council members for accepting the invitation.</p> <p>Lindi mentioned that the Maryland EXCELS website is being revised with the new logo and new information for families.</p> <p>The chart below shows the 330 programs that participated in the field test in June. Since July 1, when Maryland EXCELS opened to the public and August 12th, 273 programs joined which pushed the total to 603.</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Program Participation in Field Test</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>Number of Programs</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>June 30, 2013</td> <td>330</td> </tr> <tr> <td>August 12, 2013</td> <td>603</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>It was also revealed that since August 12, 2013, 59 programs published their ratings with Maryland EXCELS. The chart below shows the breakdown of the five levels with Level.</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Program Ratings by Check Level</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Check Level</th> <th>Number of Programs</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Check Level 1</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Check Level 2</td> <td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Check Level 3</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Check Level 4</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Check Level 5</td> <td>37</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Lindi revealed that 14 more programs received a check level which will bring the total to 73. She stated that most of the programs opted to publish their ratings later as they are currently in the</p>	Date	Number of Programs	June 30, 2013	330	August 12, 2013	603	Check Level	Number of Programs	Check Level 1	8	Check Level 2	11	Check Level 3	2	Check Level 4	1	Check Level 5	37
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	<p>process of uploading the required documents to the website. (A detailed report was issued to the attendees on Maryland EXCELS progress).</p> <p>A council member asked if published meant that if user click on the "Find a Program" button on the website he/she will be able to see the 59 programs that published their ratings. In response to a question asked Lindi answered yes. It was explained that the publishing process has three steps. The programs can see visually where they are in regards to the levels and what they uploaded to the website. If program is satisfied with the rating, this will be communicated to the Program Coordinator (PC). The PC will verify the documents and then a second verification is completed by MSDE-Maryland EXCELS and approve for CTE to publish the rating to the website. Lindi explicitly noted that programs do not achieve anything until they are published.</p> <p>The projected goal for December 2013 is to register 914 programs in Maryland EXCELS. To date 603 programs have been registered and based on the current trend, this goal will be achieved.</p> <p>It was warmly announced by Lindi that the first group of programs that published their ratings are receiving their bonuses. A congratulation letter, certificate and a sample letter to notify families of the programs' accomplishment were mailed to the programs that received bonus. It was also noted that the payment process is similar to Credentialing.</p> <p>Liz noted that Maryland EXCELS is being marketed as quality driven improvement initiative as depicted on the certificate hence the reason the focus on level is minimal.</p> <p>Lindi said the team is grateful for support given to Maryland EXCELS from the Child Care Resource and Referral Centers and the child care associations. She said the move for quality is not just at the State level but a national initiative; she lauded all the programs and partners who embarked on this thrust for quality.</p> <p>It was also mentioned during the week of August 19th a user-friendly flier was developed to remind programs that are receiving child care subsidy of the mandatory deadlines to participate in Maryland EXCELS. The flier will be inserted with invoices sent to providers by the Child Care Subsidy Branch. The objective is to adequately inform the providers who are receiving subsidy that it will be compulsory to register with Maryland EXCELS to receive subsidy from the State before the families are notified.</p>
<p>Credentialing Branch Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credentialing Modification 	<p>Approval was granted to fill 1 position in the Credentialing Branch. Four candidates were slated for a second interview. The branch is in the process of submitting a Hiring Freeze Exemption Request (HEFR) to fill the Training Coordinator's position due to the promotion of Jena Smith to Quality Assurance Supervisor for Maryland EXCELS.</p> <p>Liz announced that she received her testing login information for the CCATS system to test the credentialing and staff evaluation modifications in the system. She said the requested features are great and will enhance the Credentialing processes.</p>



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Updates	Announcements of various events were made by the council members and others present.
Adjournment	The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:50 am.
Next Meeting	Thursday, November 14, 2013 10:00 am – 12:00 Noon @ MSDE, 8th Floor Conference Room 6