



In Attendance: Jenn Nizer, Tracy Jost, Liz Kelley, Jennifer Arnaiz, Valerie Von Behren, Linda Zang, Robin Hopkins, Crystal Barksdale, Mark Bilger, Debbie Moore, Teresa Rivers, Donna Fowler, Raymond O’Brocki, Myra White-Gray, Erin Olsen, Robin Hopkins, Mary Coster, Cynthia Poindexter, Cathy Dougherty, Judy Kalski, Rachel London, Steve Rohde, Diane Mellott, Debbie Badawi, Kate Garvey, Jessica Silva, Faith Miller, Lindi Budd.

I. Welcome and Introductions – Jennifer Nizer opened the meeting and welcomed attendees. She is the new Chair of the Office of Child Care Advisory Council, appointed by Dr. Bernard Sadusky, Interim State Superintendent of Schools.

II. Assistant Superintendent/Director’s Report – Liz Kelley

Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant Update - Valerie Von Behren and Linda Zang

The Race to the Top (RTT) Executive Summary distributed to Advisory Council members and guests was discussed by Valerie and the ten RTT Projects were explained. Project 2 – Maryland EXCELS. Maryland has already fiscally invested in that project, but if we get the grant funding, there will be additional monetary incentives to encourage providers to move through the levels and improve the quality of their programs. Project 3 is the Breakthrough Centers that target “red-zone areas”, defined as areas in the state that are under-resourced and have a lot of families and children living at poverty level or at risk. Baltimore City and Prince George’s County have a considerable number of red-zone areas so there will be Breakthrough Centers there in the form of two community hubs which are essentially Family Support Centers. There will be satellite Judy Centers in the under-served areas to provide additional Judy Center partnership services. There will be five additional Preschool for All sites. There will be a focus on including children with disabilities and there will be a coaching and mentoring inclusion project where specialists will go into child care and Head Start programs to coach and mentor the staff to include children with specific disabilities. Project 7 – developmental screening process. If we receive the funding, we will set a benchmark that by 2013, all licensed family child care, child care centers, Head Start, school-based preschool and prek programs will be required to conduct developmental screenings. We have a task force of pediatricians and others from child care to recommend tools and provide training to providers on how to conduct the screening and communicate with families. There will also be training for pediatricians on detecting mental health issues. Project 8 – creating a coalition for family engagement to involve parents in their child’s well-being both health-wise and in family relationships. Family Councils in libraries around the state will be formed with resource kits available for families with young children. We will also be expanding Reach Out and Read in those high needs areas. Project 1 is to create Early Learning Councils throughout the state that will work with the Early Care and Education Council to implement what everyone has decided is the best direction around early learning. The Annie E. Casey Foundation will assist us in developing these councils. There will be an emphasis on obtaining data to prove that we are doing what we said we would. The state advisory council was the lead council for the application.

Liz: the Race to the Top Executive Summary represents our application of 300+ pages and an Appendix that was included. We hand-delivered the application to Washington, D.C. Thirty-seven states have applied and the reviewers are currently reading the

applications. We believe that we are very well-positioned to receive funding. The process of putting the application together gave us the opportunity to look at what we are already doing to leverage the good work we have done for many years, and look strategically at where we want to go and how we can do that quickly if we get this influx of money. It will be \$50 million dollars over the next four years, which sounds like a lot of money, but as you know, in state government, that money goes really fast. The funds are for infrastructure building; it is not for direct services so that's why you heard Linda talk about data. We have been data-driven in our state for many years and this will give us the opportunity to obtain data to help us make informed decisions as we move forward.

Budget Issues - There is nothing new on the budget although we continually hear that it's worse than it's ever been before and there will be more cuts that we will have to make. We don't have any information about what that might look like. You know about the Super Committee in Washington and all of the decisions and legislation and bills that are going through, many of which have implications for our work. We are looking at the CCDF re-authorization very carefully and hoping that will move through with additional funds. If the Super Committee does not do what they need to do, then there are a lot of implications and it means our funds will be reduced going forward. We are hopeful that things will work out so that federal funds will continue. There is a lot of pressure with state funds and additional funds being available there too and the limitation of funds and priorities throughout the state. Discussion ensued regarding vacant positions and hiring in licensing regions.

As of today, because of the popularity of the credentialing programs and the usage, we have gone through about half of our budget allocation so we are probably going to freeze or reduce the training voucher reimbursement amounts. We are also going to be implementing the eligibility criteria. We have had that in place but we have never used it, but we will be forced to look at the income of the applicant when submitting for vouchers and reimbursement for training. Credentialing applications experience about a three-month wait even with the data entry personnel. We are modifying the data system which has not been done since 2004 and is a huge undertaking. Because the system does not support any financial steps for credentialing, that step must be done by one person. Once we have the modification for the system, we will have the ability to approve the payment and that will decrease the turnaround time immensely.

The Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund will also be impacted, not for people who are already participating, but for those who want to enter the program. We will continue to support people who are already participating but we will be freezing new applicants for the short term.

Legislation

- **Large Family Child Care Homes** - the regulations have been drawn up and they are going through the process and will be published in the Maryland Register by the end of this month. Assuming everything goes as planned, the new regulations go into effect January 1, 2012. We are modifying our database system to accommodate for this new category of child care provider. We had an all-staff meeting with our licensing staff one week ago and went over their questions about Large Family Child Care Homes and how that is different from Small Child Care Centers. We are planning to have information sessions to answer questions from providers. Programs licensed as a Small Child Care

Center do not need to switch to Large Family Child Care Home. They may remain as they are currently licensed. The new regulation will broaden the ways family child care providers can participate in various programs like accreditation and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

- **Informal Providers Criminal Background Checks** – we require criminal background checks on everybody except for Informal Child Care Providers; these are providers who are family members primarily, caring for children in their own homes or in the child’s home. Currently we receive a child abuse and neglect background check but we do not have criminal background history checks. There is federal regulation that is going through, that says if you receive federal money through the Child Care Block Grant that you must pass the criminal background check. Knowing that this may go through, and there is quite a bit of pressure to make this happen, we want to be out front instead of having to react to federal legislation. We have put together some legislation and I will go to the State Board of Education meeting in December to talk about this legislation; the purpose for it, and why we think it is a good idea to do this. I would like to hear back from the Council on this issue and what we are proposing. That is, if you want to care for children in your home as an informal child care provider, (that would be a family member or caring for the child in the child’s own home), we believe that you have to pass a criminal background check. This means that you have not been convicted of major serious crimes including kidnapping, murder, solicitation or child pornography. These are people who are not required to be licensed in Maryland. If you care for a related child like your grandchild, you do not have any kind of regulation around that. However, if your daughter or cousin or whoever it is, is eligible for child care subsidy, and they want you (grandma, aunt) to care for their child, we will pay the informal rate, which is 50% of the formal rate. One of the conversations that we were having these past few days at the State Administrators meeting was around access and quality. Do you provide access to more children in whatever quality or do you provide higher quality to fewer children? This is a struggle we and all other states continue to grapple with and this is one of those areas where you have to make those determinations about where you draw the line. If we really want all children to come to school healthy and prepared, what kind of child care do we want to provide and make sure they have access to? It does boil down to when the state and federal government is paying for that care, I think we have a certain level of responsibility to that child and that family. Discussion ensued. Liz agreed to share at the next meeting, an overview of the Informal Providers system with a breakdown by jurisdiction and what we are seeing on abuse and neglect with those providers, and whether there is capacity for those children in regulated care.

Updates

- **Credentialing Modification** – When the credentialing program began in 2001, we identified the classes that participants should have in order to move to the different levels. But we had to back away from that because we did not have the capacity to require people to have those specific courses. We have worked on this for 10 years and we believe we do have the capacity now to ramp up and improve the credentialing program. The proposed requirements are for individuals to achieve the requirements for levels 2, 3 and 4. We did not change levels 4+, 5 and 6. They will remain the same.

For levels 2, 3 and 4, rather than an individual just accumulating hours in the various Core of Knowledge areas, we have stipulated specific content that has to be completed. This content can be completed through taking workshops or coursework. The majority of these hours are included in what we typically call our 90 hours or pre-service courses. There are some new content and new workshops that are being developed with the training community. Anyone who is currently credentialed will maintain their level even if they do not have all of the required specific training. They will receive a list of what they do not have so they can focus on those topics for continued training so you continue to meet your level. We will likely allow up to two years for individuals to get the additional training for their level, depending upon how much additional training is needed.

○ ***Licensing – New Health Policies and Forms***

We have developed some new forms and information about Self-Carry Policies for Auto-Injectors and Asthma Inhalers as well as an Allergy Action Plan. The Allergy Action Plan is for child care facilities when they have a child who has asthma or has an allergy and they need to develop a plan around their need. We are also in the process of updating the Health Inventory form and revamping it to mirror what the school health form looks like. There will be a regulation change around Medication Administration training to require any medication to have a doctor's or health practitioner's authorization, even for over-the-counter items. Anything that is used as a "preventative", that will require parental permission. If it is used as a "treatment", that will require a doctor's signature. This change will go into effect sometime next year (2012).

○ ***Child Care Subsidy – Myra White-Gray (for Betsy Blair)***

On February 28, 2011 the Child Care Subsidy program implemented a wait list on their Priority 3 customers. Those are customers who are low-income working families. The wait list is essentially a freeze. A lot of people perceive that they are on a wait list and eventually they will get called. But when we do re-open it, everyone will be invited to re-apply to determine if they are eligible for the child care subsidy. Two handouts were distributed. The first is a wait list chart with the total number of cases, age groups and total number of children. The second chart shows what the child care subsidy program is currently carrying in terms of all of our families. The first level is our Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) families and as you can see, it is broken down by children, families and total cost. The second level is our families who are transitioning off TCA and they continue to be eligible for child care subsidy. The 3rd one is the non-TCA and that is our low-income working families. Liz: the only families that are placed on the waiting list are non-TCA families. The 12,245 children that you see on the last column, those are the number of children that we are not currently able to serve that are potentially eligible for the program. Myra: our funding for the current fiscal year is approximately \$90 million dollars and you see that our current spending is \$104 million, so you can understand why we have had to impose the freeze. Liz: If a family was receiving child care subsidy vouchers prior to February, they continue to receive vouchers as long as they keep up with their re-determinations. If a family is receiving vouchers as TCA, they can transition from one category to another and continue, so if they are not working and they have vouchers now, and then they get a job, they can continue to receive vouchers but they would be at a lower level because they would have different income eligibility. If they don't have vouchers currently and they are not TCA, they are on the waiting list. We will continue to provide you with updates on this.

- **Maryland EXCELS Update – Robin Hopkins, Johns Hopkins University/Center for Technology in Education**

Maryland EXCELS has officially launched its pilot and the new website is www.marylandexcels.org. The website is still a work in progress and there will be additions to the website and new tabs added. We have 45 programs who have agreed to participate in the pilot project. There are 15 programs in each cohort and the first cohort has already started. I made site visits to 13 of those initial cohort participants and they are all very excited. We have nine centers, one school-age provider and five family child care providers. Nine of those programs are accredited and five participate in Tiered Reimbursement so we really attempted to get a good mix of the different kinds of programs that we have in the state. If someone is still interested in participating in the pilot, they can send me an email (rhopkins@jhu.edu) because it is possible that someone will drop out of the second or third cohorts and we can swap them out. The website content and resources will grow and can be added to as we move forward. There will also be a moderated online discussion forum where participating providers can communicate with each other. The program coordinator will be able to participate and ask questions such as “how are you changing your daily schedule to meet your check level 5 standards?” Robin demonstrated the current capabilities of the website. A question was asked about Spanish translation for Maryland EXCELS and other resources. Liz responded that while we would like to have more materials translated, in order to procure translation services, there are budget constraints currently in place that make this very challenging. Robin asked for council members to send resources to her via email to add to the Maryland EXCELS website.

III. Council Member Reports/Updates

Rachel London – the survey on access to child care is closed and I thank everyone for their participation. We had almost 500 families respond to it. We are in the process of looking at and analyzing the data and a report will come out in early 2012 and I will share the results which include demographic data on respondents. There will be formal recommendations coming regarding access and barriers to access. www.md-council.org

Steve Rohde – Maryland Family Network and the Child Care Resource and Referral Services have an eLearning format for people interested in the CDA or CDA renewal with CEUs and nine college credits.

Donna Fowler – the Maryland State Family Child Care Association Fall Conference will be at the Carousel in Ocean City Maryland in October, 2012. We will be sending out RFPs for trainers and we are encouraging you to sign up to train at the conference. The National Association for Family Child Care Conference will be in Atlanta Georgia July 26-29, 2012.

Debbie Badawi – our office for Children with Special Health Care Needs is involved in a state planning grant for children with autism and other developmental disabilities. We will be scheduling a series of regional meetings around the state in the next year as part of that grant and we would like to have local leadership committees together with child care providers participating. If anyone is interested in any region of the state, please have them contact me (cbadawi@dhmh.state.md.us).

Lindi Budd – I distributed a notice about two Environment Rating Scales introductory trainings that will occur in February. Our state anchors, TJ Bennett and Tresa Hanna will offer these trainings in Upper Marlboro and Wye Mills. The trainings and registration information are also on the MSDE website at http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/announce (scroll down and select Event Calendar).

Jenn Nizer – the Maryland State Child Care Association’s conference will be May 4th, 5th and 6th at the Carousel in Ocean City. The theme is “The Many Faces of Early Childhood Education”. Registration will go out shortly.

Meeting Adjourned.

2012 Meeting Dates

Next Meeting - February 23, 2012

May 17, 2012

August 16, 2012

November 15, 2012

10:00 am – 12:00 Noon

MSDE – 200 West Baltimore Street

8th Floor Conference Room 6/7

410-767-1250

Questions? lbudd@msde.state.md.us