

In Attendance

Council Members: Mary Coster, Jennifer Arnaiz, Debbie Badawi, Shannon Burroughs-Campbell, Judy Kalski, John Krupinsky, Rachel London, Faith Miller, Edisa Padder, Lee Kingham.

MSDE Staff: Liz Kelley, Linda Zang, Betsy Blair, Lindi Budd

Guests: Lynda Davenport, Tonya Wright, Debbie Moore, Shannon Dungan (for Tracy Jost), Rebecca Friedman, Diane Mellott, Chris Peusch (for Jennifer Nizer), Erin Olsen (for Terry Bridger) and Amy Cover (for Jennifer Arnaiz).

I. Welcome and Introductions – Liz Kelley opened the meeting, welcomed attendees and introductions were made.

II. Budget – Liz Kelley

There's nothing new here. As you know, there are a variety of things that are going through the Special Session that will impact on the state budget. Debbie probably has information that she can share with us.

Debbie Moore: I have a piece of good news that anybody who is on the MFN ListServ would have gotten by email last night. We were successful in getting an amendment on the gaming bill that says that if the voters approve it, then one of the uses for the Education Trust Fund, which is where the state's game money goes, is the expansion of early childhood programs. (Applause) We worked on that in the regular session and it was amended to the bill but it went nowhere on sine die and last Thursday, on their own, Senators Ferguson and King decided to see if they could get that amended to the bill and they did it successfully. When the bill went over to the House it got into Ways and Means, and the Chair, the Vice Chair, the Gaming Commission, the Subcommittee Chair and a couple of other members liked it and fought to keep it.

Liz: So we will just have to wait until November to see how it moves forward. At the federal level, we are looking at the CCBG CCDF Child Development Fund re-authorization. We've had several hearings and Rolf testified in Washington at one of those hearings about the importance of early childhood education and some of the things that we would like to see included. We have worked very closely with Senator Mikulski's office. Her office is heading up this re-authorization along with Senator Burr from North Carolina. They are both very much committed to getting this re-authorized. Senator Burr is very interested in the criminal background and criminal history checks and he has been trying to get this through in the last couple of years. It seems to have a lot of broad base support so I would be surprised if it didn't get through. Basically it does what we already do here in Maryland, but it would require all states to conduct criminal background clearances on anyone who is receiving federal money. There is an exemption, if you will, for family relative providers and I will address that in a moment, for us here in Maryland. There have been a lot of calls with Senator Mikulski's office, directly here with us in Maryland, across the states, and the affiliate group that I am a member of, the State Administrators group that includes all the State Administrators across the country, we have had conversations with her office about priority setting. We have had conference calls with Shannon Rudisill, who is in the Office of Child Care at the federal level about some of the priorities and what we would like to see as part of the legislative changes to the CCDF and really moving toward that quality component and having more of a level playing field across all states around licensing criteria for example. Right now, states can basically do whatever they want. But we will be looking

at pushing the envelope, to raise some of the standards and have minimum quality expectations.

Debbie: There is another piece of legislation. Senator Patty Murray from Washington State has a bill in to include homeless children in priorities for subsidy. Is that something we are looking at here?

Liz: That is something we have had a lot of conversations about here and I will have Betsy talk about that.

Betsy Blair: They sent us a list of questions after the hearing and she submitted some questions about that. We did respond that we would like the federal government to consider making the homeless one of our three priority groups. Now it is just TANF and then people coming off of TANF and then people who have never received TANF. We are asking them to make that one of our priority groups within the three, like we have disabled children. We don't know the outcome yet but that is something that we made an argument for as well. It would be tough for us to move on that at the state level and to integrate another group right now while we have so few people being served and so little money but if it falls under that umbrella it would be much easier.

Discussion ensued regarding whether re-authorization will happen.

Liz: It has not been re-authorized since I believe 2002 was the last time. It's something that comes up every time and yes, it is an election year. Part of the problem is that there is funding that goes along with it. It's not so much about what should be included, it's that what we really want to see happen, is a change in the funding allocations. We had the ARRA funds and when those went away, the CCDF fell back to pre-ARRA funding and that is why we have a wait list. We will be pleased if it goes through, but I will be amazed. There are a lot of people working on it. I have a conference call with Beth Myers who works with SEIU and they are working the bill as well and we will continue our conversations with Senator Mikulski's office.

III. Assistant Superintendent/Director's Report – Liz Kelley

- **Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant Update**

This is good budget news because this was additional funding that we received for the ten projects. We have submitted our final Scope of Work and have received comments and have re-submitted it for final approval. The comments that we got back were minor. There were a lot of things about the way we had our projects structured, especially projects 7 and 8 where we had sub-projects. That was not allowed so we had to roll it all up into one and then we had to re-number everything. So it was things like that and providing some clarification and additional detail.

We have started working on the projects. We were given the go-ahead to get to work and start hiring folks. We do have some new hires that will be starting in the next couple of weeks with the Early Learning office, with Linda's (Zang) office and we have been able to get a start date for one of our Quality Assurance Specialists who will be out in the regions. We were interviewing for four people this first year and hopefully we will have those people on site soon.

The projects are going along. For Project 1, the Local Councils, letters went out to the County Executives with copies to Local Superintendents so that work has started. Maryland EXCELS of course, as Project 2, is clicking right along. We have finished the pilot and are moving into the field test. What is really exciting about the field test is that we are also going to include public prekindergarten programs in the field test. We have

draft standards for public prek programs and we are in the process of identifying some schools that are willing to participate in the field test.

Lindi has been putting together a webinar that will help to inform people throughout the state about the Race to the Top grant. For the first webinar, our recording date is August 29th. Rolf and I will be narrating the webinar to provide a general overview of the projects this will not be a live webinar, it will be recorded, so you can view it at any time. Our plan is to have people submit questions and comments to a blog site. We will base future opportunities for webinars on the questions and comments that we receive on the various projects. We will send out a notification when this has been put up for viewing. Discussion followed regarding outreach efforts and involving our partners to disseminate information and gain feedback.

We are very early in rolling things out and there is a lot of reporting that we are going to have to do along the way. There is an online system that we have to utilize called GRADS. That is why we had to re-formulate everything and have it numbered just so. Once that is up and operational, this is transparent and others will be able to see our progress.

Updates

- **Credentialing**

We are still moving right along. CCATS (Child Care Automated Tracking System) is our problem. We have been working on a modification for Credentialing since 2004 which has still not been implemented. We keep saying it's coming and I've been assured it's coming. The modifications to the system will support all the levels and those payments and other financial components of the system, I'm hoping will be implemented by the beginning of next year. This has been one of the reasons why the Credentialing Program continues to have a backlog. So much of the work still has to be done manually. Once we can get the system to work for us instead of against us, a lot of that will, I'm hoping, ease. We are currently a couple of months behind. I know there have been some frustrations. I have gotten some e-mails lately from people who have been frustrated with the process we have put in place, which basically is, if the application is not complete, it is sent back. Because we are delayed, the application does not get seen until a couple of months after it has been sent in. We are trying to come up with some things that will help alleviate this, including utilizing scanning so that we won't have as much paper sitting around. We want to be able to bring up and find things. That is another one of the frustrations that we have because we have paper files. By scanning in the materials, we will be able to pull it up electronically and hopefully that will help with the backlog as well. A lot of the things that we have wanted to do with Credentialing keep getting pushed back because of other priorities. The Large Family Child Care Homes was a priority; the modification that was made because of the Union, that was legislative and we didn't have a choice. So there are other things that get pushed because of regulation changes and changes legislatively and unfortunately Credentialing has been the one program that has suffered because of that.

We have an RFP (Request for Proposal) that we will be issuing that will outline all of the requirements for our scanning needs, and it is not just for Credentialing it is also for some of the components of the Child Care Subsidy program as well. We really are trying to move away from paper as much as possible. One of the other modifications

that will help us to use this on an on-going basis is the public portal. That will allow, for example, our approved trainer community to actually report the people who have taken a training and we won't have to wait for paper certificates. They will be able to say, this is the class that I held, here are the people who attended, here is their I.D. number, and it will be automatically loaded up into that person's "training file." That would be a huge advantage along with the implementation of online applications for Child Care Subsidy. People could go online and submit the application and documentation, and with Licensing, the same thing. There are a lot of things that people could submit through the public portal but what is really exciting to me, is that people would be able to view their own information. They could view their Credentialing file, they could pull it up and see what's in there instead of us having to answer the phone, pull out the file, read it out or print it. So the public portal will be huge in moving us forward and eliminating any backlogs that we have.

Erin Olsen: I am here representing the community colleges and I wanted to share that all the community colleges met a couple of weeks ago to write out all of our courses for the new training requirements with Stacie Burch's help. So all the community colleges will be offering what is more standard so if someone needs to come to P.G. for one, or they go to Howard, they will all be standard and they will be meeting the new Credentialing requirements. That will make it a little bit easier for providers. We are going to try to coordinate when we offer the courses so we won't all be offering them at the same time.

Liz: We are moving forward with the Credentialing Modification and we gave this to you at a past meeting, requiring specific courses and not just clock hours. We have not put that into regulation yet. Right now it is still in draft, but I know a lot of trainers and community colleges are moving in the direction of offering those courses to prepare people for when it is put in place and required. So that is excellent news.

- **Licensing**

Medication Administration Training

We are still on hold for implementing the modification to the Medication Administration Training. As you know, there were a lot of problems with the training as it currently exists. It has gone through quite an update. One of our issues, and why we are not quite at the point of implementing it, is around the issue of self-carry of medication. We have been back and forth with the lawyers in the OAG (Office of the Attorney General), about whether we need legislation for this. We do need legislation for this according to the OAG so we will be putting in enabling legislation to allow us to be able to have children who have been approved to carry during school hours, to continue to be able to carry during child care hours. I can't imagine that anyone would object to this and I don't anticipate that there will be any problems with it. We just have to go through the process and once that is done, we can go forward with the change in the Medication Administration Training, but that is a critical component. All Departmental legislation has to go through the State Board. We have already submitted the legislation so we expect it to be September for the Board. We already have this legislation in the Education Article but we don't go under the Education Article so we could not use that. The Education Article is specific to school buildings and we did not want to limit it to just to school buildings because that really wouldn't gain us anything. It certainly would impact

School-Age programs, but for all children across the State, and any kind of child care that they might need, we want to make sure we keep it as broad and open as we can. It is not a mandatory policy. In the policy that was developed, it says that if a child is approved during school hours, then they can carry during child care hours. There is a form that is filled out by the parent and the provider and the pediatrician/physician that would outline under what circumstances, and so on. At the end of it, this is an agreement, but if the child does not take care of the medication or they are not using it properly, if it's determined this is not the best environment, then this is not something that is mandatory. The purpose is to be enabling and hopefully something that is a partnership between the family and the child care provider and in the child's best interest.

There is nothing else that is going on with Licensing. We are trying not to make any changes in Licensing. There have been a lot of changes over the last couple of years. We are getting a lot of applications and interest in the Large Family Child Care Home. We have already licensed several of them across the state. We are running into a few issues locally. Various local jurisdictions have issues around sprinkler systems, Fire Marshal issues and a variety of different things. But other than that, the online inspection system is working very well and I think everyone is becoming very comfortable with that. I have not heard of any complaints from the provider community. I'm sure there are, but I haven't heard them. There were some mistakes or omissions that we made in the Large Family Child Care Homes regulation. We are cleaning those up. Discussion followed about training requirements for Large Family Child Care Home staff.

One of the things that we will be doing in Licensing, just to give you a heads-up, is that we will be putting into center regulations, the requirement to have a contract or a parent agreement. That is not currently a requirement. I don't know of any center in the state that doesn't currently have one, so it shouldn't have a large impact. It's just good business practice of course, to have a contract. We are going to be putting in a change of regulation to require developmental screening, and we have talked about that as it relates to Maryland EXCELS. This will be in 2014 so it is a couple of years down the road. We still have training that we need to provide and we are still in the process of getting Best Beginnings finalized and getting a training program out there around that.

Are there any other questions or comments or is there anything else you would like to have me look at or consider? You are supposed to advise me, so I am looking for advice here. What I am interested in, just as an aside; I was contacted by BUILD, a National Organization, on behalf of Michigan, who is looking at states around licensing. We are having a conference call with Michigan, Delaware, another state, and us, to talk with them about how we do licensing. We are not always looked at for just the school readiness information. Maryland is also looked at a lot for the different policies we have around licensing and around professional development and licensing. We are still the only state that has our own accreditation project so a lot of states are curious about that as well.

That leads us to Child Care Subsidy and I asked Betsy Blair to come and give us an update on where we are with Child Care Subsidy.

- **Child Care Subsidy – Waiting List and Informal Provider Update**

Betsy Blair: I dislike starting with the bad news but let's talk about the waiting list again. To date, we have 12,981 families on the waiting list and the number of children is 20,096. We produce this report monthly and we have one of our vendors produce it based on the information that is loaded into our automated data system by the Department of Social Services. We are counting on them to put in the data that we need without completing a complete application for these folks because we don't want to waste the parent's time if we are not going to give them services. So it's a bit of a guessing game. We are absolutely sure of the number of families because the parent has to submit an application so we have an accurate count for those. But what the note at the bottom of the copy in your folder is saying is that they are really doing a "best guess" of the number of children based on the information the local departments put in. Literally it is sometimes a guess for them if they load it at all. So they think the number of 20,000 is slightly high so the adjusted number is in the note at the bottom and they think it is closer to the 19,342. They will keep making that adjustment based on the information. We do still have the waiting list in place and no news about opening it any time soon.

We are still serving 19,132 children so that is a good thing. We are serving 11,397 families. We are trying to hang on to all the families that are in there. We encourage them to get those redeterminations in on time because if they fail to do that, they will go on the waiting list. So we try to keep the families that are in. It does cost us 6.4 million dollars per month, just for the number of children we are serving now. We are at an all-time low for the Child Care Subsidy program, for the number of children we are serving. This time last year, it was at 8 million. So that tells you how much it's dropped just in a year. So those are our expenditures for the most recent month for which we have data, which is February. We are still serving families, definitely keeping TCA as the priority, trying to get folks to work, but hanging on to whatever families were on before the waiting list was implemented and trying to serve them as long as we can. In order to be our first priority, which is Temporary Cash Assistance, they have to be getting a check, Food Stamps and Medicaid. If they are not getting that, and they were getting that and they found a job, then they come in our second priority group, which are people transitioning off the cash, Food Stamps and Medical Assistance. They are not wait-listed either. The group it affects is the people who were never getting any of that assistance, your low-income, working families that come in to apply for services because they need help but they didn't have those other services through DHR and so we are unable to serve them at this time and they are waitlisted. If the child is disabled or getting SSI, those are two of our other priority groups.

A question was asked about the impact of putting children who are homeless into one of the priority levels.

That's tough and Rolf and I talked about that a little bit. The thing that is tough about serving those children through Subsidy is that it's hard to get a provider to accept them because they don't have short-term slots. So I think the truth is that a lot of them are being served currently through DHR through services using ...funds, because services is helping to place them and meet their other needs and at the same time, trying to give them a short term child care placement. So I don't know if it would have a huge impact on us because usually our placements for slots are longer.

Linda Zang: I can tell you that Head Start serves about 400 children who are homeless.

Liz: There are a couple of facilities across the state that specifically serve homeless children.

Betsy: Yes, we do that for several of the shelters that are closely related to DSS, battered women shelters and things like that, but I don't have specific numbers because we don't track them as one of those reasons for them to be in the program.

The second topic under Subsidy is the Informal Provider Update. Well, we are going back to the legislature again and we are going to try and get the criminal background checks into place for the Informal Providers. We are going to try a couple of different strategies this year. We didn't have anyone testify for us this time, and in talking with other states and trying to find out how they were able to get this through their legislature, we asked for them to give us some tips. They said that they think the thing they are not aware of is that a lot of this does happen, and it is the result of a family member doing this, so we have Social Workers and Law Enforcement folks who are willing to step up and say, these are the people that have something in their background that is criminal activity. It's not necessarily just the neighbor or friend, sometimes it's the relative. So we are going to go back and have some people testify to give it more weight. We tried to word the bill more clearly for the legislature so all we can do is try again.

Liz: We are really emphasizing again, the fact that we are paying these people on behalf of the family. If we, as a state, are going to pay that child care arrangement, I feel very strongly that we need to be certain that this isn't a health and safety hazard for that child. Discussion followed regarding criminal background checks for Informal Providers and how partners can support the bill. We are also looking at the quality of the care that is being provided. So we are also looking at implementing some minimal training requirements. We want to put some things in place so they can get the benefit of the Child and Adult Care Food Program and that will infuse some additional funds and additional training and monitoring that will support them. I would like to get somebody in those homes to provide some technical assistance and training but I cannot put that on our current licensing specialists at this time. Discussion ensued regarding Informal Providers and Liz asked for support, assistance and testimony when the time comes.

Betsy: Two more things related to Subsidy. I wanted to mention one additional thing about our automated system and one of the perks that is coming related to Subsidy and that is online attendance reporting. We had talked about using swipe cards and we decided that technology is becoming a little antiquated and we aren't going to do that. We are going to go with online reporting like we had planned to in the beginning. It is in very preliminary stages so don't start thinking that some people don't have computers, because we have alternative plans and methods for that. But we just figured that was a way that providers could easily report when children are there and when they are not. So that is what we have coming on the Subsidy side. Discussion followed regarding attendance reporting for Subsidy children.

The other thing I wanted to tell you about is the Task Force. I think Rolf has talked about that in the past - the Task Force that is supposed to benefit low-income and disabled children and get them ready for school and get all the early education benefits to them that we can. Part of that group was DHR and we have met with them regularly to try to enhance the relationship that we have, for customers and providers. We are meeting with them on the 30th to re-draft the MOU that we have with them, to talk about what the expectations are from the Agency and what they expect from us and what we can give them. We wanted to put out on the table whether or not there is anything that you think we need to address based on anecdotal information or your experience working with local departments; things that we need to work on through our partnership, and can put

into the MOU. Even if you don't have them now, you can email me and let me know your ideas or thoughts and as long as you do that by the 30th, we can bring that to the table and try to work out something between the two parties and make sure customers are well-served and so are providers.

Liz: This is specifically around case management. We oversee the program and we set the requirements and so forth, but the eligibility determination is actually done at each Local Department of Social Services so that is the service we are looking at. The MOU that we currently have does not have a lot of detail or specifics so we would like to gain some additional information and put more detail and specificity about what our expectations are for the operation of the program and the responsiveness for customer service. Anything that you can provide on that would help us and we would greatly appreciate it.

Betsy: We want to get down to the specific details of our expectations for an application, how long do we expect a person to wait for a call back? It's really that specific. We do that for our vendors. Our payment processing vendor is supposed to pay within three days or we don't pay them. If they don't pay providers timely, we don't pay them. If I can give you areas that are important to case management, maybe you can let me know which ones are important to you, or what your experiences have been.

Liz: I did have a State Administrators meeting where Subsidy was a huge topic for conversation and we are not, by any stretch of the imagination, the only state that is going through this. One of the things that Betsy didn't mention is that we are actually changing our regulation to reflect that the wait list is not actually a wait list. It is a freeze of the program, so we are changing the terminology. Just the term "wait list" gives people false hope. They think that they have a number assigned, and I'm next, but that's not the way it works. We are clearing that up and hopefully that will provide a little more clarity to folks - that it's a freeze until it is open again. There is no expectation of when it will open again. It is all dependent on funding. We did talk last time about the possibility of opening some portion again, but we are concerned about putting money forward into the waiting list. We do have savings that we were hoping to use to open some portion of the list, but because we don't know if we are going to get further cuts because of Sequestration we are not willing to open the list, and then kick people off the program. We are just not willing to do that.

- **Maryland EXCELS**

We have finished the pilot and there were focus groups with the pilot participants and we received some additional information from them about improvements that we need to make. We are compiling our list of field test facilities. Tonya, do you know how many we have?

Tonya: I'm not sure how many we have waiting but we need 290 to participate and we are not there. We need more family providers to participate.

Liz: Providers can join the field test by going to the website www.marylandexcels.org and there is a place right there on the home page where you can indicate that you would like to participate in the field test. The site is still being built out and there is not a lot there yet. We have had a question about publicizing Maryland EXCELS and we are not ready to do that yet. We are not going to do a publicity campaign about finding a Maryland EXCELS program when there aren't any. So after the field test, and after we roll it out, we will probably wait several months before we will do a big splash and press release and really get going with the marketing for Maryland EXCELS.

A question was asked about whether pilot programs would be able to obtain something that shows they met the check level for EXCELS as part of the pilot.

We can certainly look into that. It's not something that we thought about or considered because it is still a pilot but we'll talk about it with CTE. I have no problem with it. Something we were thinking about was other ways that we can recognize facilities like window decals, yard flags, and so on. A letter of thanks for participating in the pilot may be something. We have been thinking of a variety of things for programs to show what their check levels indicate to families and how they can use that information to market their programs. There have been some conversations, not for facilities that make it to Level 5, because they have met everything, but for facilities that may be stuck at Level 3, but they've met some things at Level 4 and 5, helping them to identify that to show – I'm at Level 3 but I've also met the criteria in 4 and 5 in these areas. Various ideas were discussed regarding how to publicize and recognize programs participating in EXCELS and how we communicate to families and the public. This is a work in progress right now and there will be changes as we evolve, much like children do. When you have those ideas and comments please let us know.

We are also looking very critically at some of the components that go into Maryland EXCELS like the rating scales and like the BAS and the PAS, the Business Administration and Program Administration Scales and really thinking about do we want to use the whole thing are there only certain components that we are going to be looking at and using? I think we can come up with a good compromise where we are actually rating everything on the scale but we are only looking at certain items to inform the EXCELS rating; the other would be just information; here's where you could do better and improve. One of the changes that we made as a result of the pilot is that if a facility comes in as an accredited program, they are not required to have that ERS (Environment Rating Scale) that first year. We will bring you in at a 5, you'll have to have an ERS and get a certain score at some point in time, but we are also looking at components, more around the interactions between the child care provider and the child, the curriculum, so we are going to have to sit down and look at that instrument and make some difficult decisions. Other states have done this as well so it's not something we are just deciding to do, but I think it will make it better, not really easier, but I think it will help programs embrace it a little better instead of applying the entire instrument.

Part of Race to the Top is the evaluation and validation of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and so one of the things that we will be specifically looking at, are the various levels and do the various levels really indicate differentiations in quality and are the things we are looking at actually indicators of quality? If they are not, then why are we measuring them or keeping them? Are there things where there is a tipping point? All states that are participating are looking at these types of things. You may not see differentiation of quality across each level. It's almost like you have to pool them, so you may see differentiation of quality between 2 and 3 and 4 and 5, so there's going to be kind of a split, if you will. That is something we are going to have to look at. Is there really a big difference between a 2 and a 3 or is it really that the difference is between a 2 and a 4 and a 3 and a 5? We have somebody else doing that thankfully; we don't have to do that ourselves, but it will be very interesting to see what the outcome on that information will be.

A question was asked regarding programs obtaining a badge for their website or some other tangible representation of program accreditation with MSDE.

For MSDE Accreditation, it's the same conversation with the same people so we can certainly follow up on it and I don't see where that will be an issue.

- **Early Childhood ListServ – Lindi Budd**

We have a new Early Childhood ListServ that, like our website, does not operate as a stand-alone, but within the Maryland State Department of Education. Lindi will email the Council in a separate email with the ListServ link so that you can subscribe and receive notices for important information from the Division of Early Childhood Development and the Office of Child Care. For example, we will notify subscribers when *Partners* newsletter is published online, when regulation changes become effective and other information for providers and those interested in early childhood education in the State.

(Note: The link to the ListServ is <http://listsrv.msde.state.md.us>.
Select **EARLY CHILDHOOD** from the list and follow the instructions to subscribe.

MSDE has a Facebook page and a Twitter feed at:
<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/aboutmsde/connect>)

III. Council Member Reports/Updates

Christine Peusch: I am the new Executive Director of the Maryland State Child Care Association and we have sent out our registrations for the Leadership Symposium that will be October 11th at Oakland Mansion in Columbia. MSDE will be there along with MFN. Rosemary King-Johnston will be the keynote. MFN will be speaking about Strengthening Families, Liz will be there and Jena Smith will be there to talk about Credentialing. We are also trying to get more connected with the R and Rs and be more interactive with them. I'm excited to be here and to be a part of the group.

Diane Mellott: Maryland School-Age Child Care Alliance is in the process of planning our annual fall conference for October 13th. This is our 7th Conference and we are excited about it.

Debbie Moore: If you're not already on our ListServ for Maryland Family Network, you can go on there and send a letter to the Maryland legislators who supported the support for early childhood education with the gaming bill. The letter is already set up so that you can send your thank you to the members who supported this. If you use your home address, it will identify where you live and where you vote.

Lee Ann Kingham: Abilities Network/Project ACT is having a conference on Saturday, September 29th. The title is *Communication across the Spectrum*. Speaking of autism, we have been providing services through the Autism Waiver for a number of years now, but we can no longer afford to provide respite care services; we have been subsidizing it, but we cannot do that anymore. We will still be doing family education and we will start doing therapeutic integration services through the Waiver and also through the grant that we've received. Project ACT has been working with the Campfield Judy Center for several years and we will also be working with them through our Healthy Families program. We have a new grant for infants and toddlers with special needs and we are going about it in a new way.

Linda Zang: They (Abilities Network/Project ACT) did a study of effective methods of training providers to care for infants and toddlers, particularly those with special needs. What they discovered was there was a real difference in the effectiveness of the training when there was technical assistance included. So this time, the new grant is very much training and technical assistance, trying to go along with what effective practices have shown us and what research is showing us.

Erin Olsen: The colleges, through the credit side, are beginning to offer a couple of new certificate programs for people who want to come back to school but may not be ready to tackle the math/science requirement. They are offering 18 and 24 hour certificates in the infant and toddler, school-age, preschool and now an administrative one, to try to ease them in and build their confidence. Once they get those skills, they may be more likely to move on and do the full Associates degree.

Mary Coster: The Maryland Center for Disabilities is going to be working through a grant with the DD Council to provide trainings on the Eastern Shore to specifically target hard to reach parents and children with special needs. We will be presenting eight different trainings on helping parents understand the IFSP side and focusing on transitions, and there will be strong evaluation procedures built in to determine if the training makes a difference to the parents.

John Krupinsky: I can give you a quick update of what's going on in the world of childhood lead in the state of Maryland. We are in the process of trying to coordinate regarding the level of concern for when a child is considered to have elevated lead levels. The new reference level is that 97.5% of the children in the United States have a blood lead level of less than 5. So it is the 2.5% that we are concerned about. Right now we are trying to work with the physicians and educate the physicians. When we talk about lead levels of between 5 to 9 (those below 10), we start looking away from lead paint because that's how most children develop elevated levels, through the ingestion of lead paint. But now we are going to have to look at lead in the water, old water pipes and contaminated soil where children play outside. It is going to have to be a totally different approach and we are also going to have to educate families. We are also looking at the targeting plan for the state; if you live in a certain zip code, your child should be tested at one or two years of age. We are going to look at data over the last five years, look at children who have had elevated blood lead levels, the housing stock, and so on. These are the kinds of things we are going to be looking at and it will probably be another year before we send out a report.

Edisa Padder: We have a new Operational Director in the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics who is an advocate for early childhood and early education. She will help us implement some of our projects and will be updating some of the resources on our website including helping parents look for quality child care.

Linda: The Maryland Head Start Association will be having their conference November 14th through 16th. This is the fall institute and partners are encouraged to check the website and sign up. It will be held at the Sheraton in Towson. There will be a September 16th Conference with Sharon Lynn Kagan that started as a Head Start project and is being expanded to child care. You can check with Steve Rohde but it will be at the Marriott, BWI. Through the Early Childhood Mental Health Project, Head Start and child care providers, we are giving out free kits on Social Emotional Foundations of Learning and orientation around those kits. That is going to be August 28th and 29th in

Annapolis and the CCRC Director in Southern Maryland is handling that but if you want any information you can call Tresa Hanna in our Branch. We have signed a MOU with the Maryland Chapter of the Academy of Pediatrics. We have a MOU with DHMH on training pediatricians and other medical providers on early childhood mental health. We are also working with pediatricians on developmental screenings. What we are envisioning is a whole circle of pediatricians, providers and parents working together. We are having a family engagement coalition that is going to be looking at strategies for Maryland. Right now there is a Head Start Parent, Family, Community Engagement framework to get families engaged in their child's early childhood experience. Head Start has been doing it for awhile and they know how to do it. We want to expand it so that all children have the opportunity to have their parents involved in their education. If you are interested in being on the coalition please let me know.

Debbie Badawi: My update from DHMH is that we have undergone a re-organization and I think folks from MSDE might have gotten an announcement and be aware. The only way it may interface with this Council is that the Maternal/Child Health Bureau is now a Bureau. There is no Center for Maternal/Child Health. School Health has been moved to a separate office with Rural Health and Primary Care and Dr. Cheryl DePinto is in that office of School Health.

Lindi: We have talked about translating Healthy Beginnings into Spanish at past meetings. Liz identified funding to have the Healthy Beginnings manual and some supporting documents translated. We will be working with a contract MSDE has in place for translation services to get these materials translated into Spanish.

Tonya Wright: I think Liz covered everything for Maryland EXCELS but we encourage you to visit the website at www.marylandexcels.org and the field test begins in November. If you know of any providers who may be interested in participating, send them to the website.

Lynda Davenport: Within a month I'll be getting my license for Large Family Child Care Home and I'll be the first in Catonsville.

Liz: There are additional materials in your packet: there is a listing of the meetings for next year and we had a request regarding more information about the EXCELS designations. There is information about the Physical Activity checklist and the Let's Move information for the Health and Wellness designation. We have not come to an agreement about the Inclusion designation but Lindi sent you the Asthma Friendly Child Care information.

Meeting Adjourned.

Next Meeting
November 15, 2012
10:00 am – 12:00 pm
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
8th Floor Conference Room 6

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