

GROWING FAMILY CHILD CARE OPPORTUNITIES (GOFCC)

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HB 944 / SB 711

Growing Opportunity for Family Child Care

According to the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, more than 90,000 licensed family child care homes closed in the United States between 2005 and 2017 (See: https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/addressing_decreasing_fcc_providers_revised_march2020_final.pdf) . Unfortunately, the trend holds true for Maryland as well: the number of registered family child care providers in Maryland has been declining precipitously for more than two decades, from a high of 12,514 in November 1996 to 5,126 in June 2020. Data analysis by Maryland Family Network projects a further decrease of about 27% from 2021 to 2025. (See: https://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/MFN_Trends_Feb2021%20%20FINAL_0.pdf .)

The declining number of family child care homes brings a tremendous degree of unmet need. Many families depend on family child care providers to care for their children so parents can work and go to school. With fewer family child care homes, it is harder for families to find and afford child care. In communities without enough child care options, business and economic growth can suffer. Action is needed to ensure that family child care remains a strong, healthy component of the early childhood education system.

In response to this unmet need, Montgomery County Child Care Resource Center (MCCCRC) developed a project called Growing Opportunities for Family Child Care, or GOFCC, in 2015. The three key components to GOFCC are:

- Recruitment and information sessions for prospective family child care providers on the steps necessary to become registered by the State and for registered (existing) family child care providers on the steps necessary to achieve State or national quality improvement benchmarks.
 - Recruitment is targeted to the specific underserved geographic areas; and
 - Recruitment is multilingual and culturally competent.
- Support individuals through a cohort approach that includes training, coaching, and counseling.
 - Staff support the providers in achieving licensure, certification/credentialing, dramatically decreasing the amount of time typically spent going through these required processes (from an average

- of 12-13 months to 5-6 months); this work is done in partnership with their local Office of Child Care;
- The local Women’s Business Center provides coaching in entrepreneurship and basic business practices like record keeping and tax preparation; and
- CCRC staff maintain a coaching and mentoring relationship with the providers, supporting their navigation of numerous state systems like Maryland EXCELS and Child Care Scholarship.
- Provide services in Spanish, and other languages as requested, in a culturally competent manner.
 - Simultaneous interpretation was needed as well as the translation of all written materials.

In just a couple of years of implementation, GOFCC gained the attention of child care advocates statewide. During the 2021 General Assembly Session, HB 944 and SB 711, sought to replicate and expand this program throughout the state, in an effort to reverse the national and statewide trends of an alarming decrease in Family Child Care providers.

GOFCC Statewide Replication/Expansion – Planning Grants

MSDE partnered with Maryland Family Network (MFN), a leading family and child focused agency for the state, to coordinate the GOFCC program. In October 2021, MFN released the Request for Proposal (RFP) for planning grants for agencies to develop a program which replicates the goals of GOFCC in Montgomery County but addresses specific local needs and concerns. The RFP was published on October 29, 2021, with information sessions held on December 13 and 17, 2021 via Zoom. Proposals were due by February 4, 2022, and awardees were announced March 4, 2022. These planning grants were for the period of March 4 through August 31, 2022 for a total amount of \$75,000 for the 6-month award period.

MFN publicized this opportunity through social media, the MFN website, the MFN newsletter, the Child Care Resource Center Network, the MSDE weekly update to child care providers, and the Statewide Early Childhood Advisory Council, as well as through other key partners and agencies. These grants were supported entirely by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds which MSDE received in support of the early childhood education initiatives. Awardees of the planning grants were The Family Tree, serving Baltimore City, Salisbury University’s Eastern Shore Child Care Resource Center, serving the eight counties of Maryland’s eastern shore, and Abilities Network Project ACT targeting Baltimore County with some support of Cecil and Harford Counties as well.

During the planning period, MFN met regularly with leadership from the three agencies as they each conducted gap analysis of needs vs. available child care, worked with local partners and agencies to identify targeted communities, and identified program elements. Additionally, the three agencies collaborated on several aspects of the project, including selection of a logo for the project, development of a landing page on the MFN website to support interested individuals in identifying local supports, and collaboration on the various training and coaching components of a successful program. Each program successfully designed the key elements of a GOFCC program during this time and submitted proposals in response to the RFP for implementation. Some highlights from the planning grants included:

- The Family Tree developed a roadmap which provides a visual representation of the process to assist participants in understanding the components; this also identified the various agencies and supports which the participant would be connecting with at the various stages
- Abilities Network Project ACT has a deep commitment to actively address the inequities within the early childhood system; within the context of this work this was evident in how they approached the identification of targeted communities and identified necessary supports to advance individuals in historically marginalized communities
- Salisbury University's Eastern Shore Child Care Resource Center tapped into several of the resources available within the university system, including the BEACON Center; this resulted in a strong collaboration and one of the most nimble and detailed data analysis systems to identify child care deserts and where the most child care slots were needed

GOFCC Statewide Replication/Expansion – Implementation Grants

On June 1, 2022, MFN released the RFP for GOFCC Implementation Grants. Two technical sessions were held on July 7 and 21, 2022 via Zoom and several other inquiries were addressed via email. Proposals were due to MFN by July 29, 2022 and all applicants conducted brief presentations to the review committee in August 2022. Awards were announced on August 26, 2022 and the award period is September 1, 2022 through August 31, 2024. Per the legislation, MSDE has provided \$450,000 per 12-month period to fund three agencies at \$150,000 per year. In addition, MFN has expanded the award to include two additional agencies and regions, using an additional \$300,000 per year from ARPA funding received to support child care. Each agency has been awarded \$150,000 of operational funding and is required to have secured an additional \$150,000 in matching donations or in-kind support from collaborative partners. The awarded agencies are:

- Baltimore City Child Care Resource Center at The Family Tree, serving Baltimore City
- Prince George's Child Resource Center serving Anne Arundel and Prince George's Counties

- Abilities Network Project ACT serving Baltimore, Cecil, and Harford Counties (targeting communities primarily in Baltimore County)
- Eastern Shore Child Care Resource Center at Salisbury University, College of Education, serving Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester Counties (targeting communities primarily in Caroline, Dorchester and Wicomico Counties)
- Child Care Choices at Mental Health Association of Frederick County serving Allegany, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett, and Washington Counties