



Growing Opportunities for Family Child Care

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Division of Early Childhood

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MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Background

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. 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 the Maryland Family Network (MFN) projects a further decrease of approximately 27% from 2021 to 2025.¹

The declining number of family child care homes brings about a tremendous degree of unmet need. Many families depend on family child care providers to care for their children so parents and guardians 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 care and education system.

In response to this unmet need in 2015, Montgomery County Child Care Resource Center (MCCCRC) developed a project called Growing Opportunities for Family Child Care, or GOFCC. There are three key components of the GOFCC program that support prospective and existing family child care providers. These components include:

- 1. Recruitment and Quality Improvement:** For prospective family child care providers, the GOFCC program provides recruitment and information sessions to support these individuals with the steps necessary to become registered by the State to operate a family child care program. In addition, for registered (existing) family child care providers, the program supports participants with the steps necessary to achieve State or national quality improvement benchmarks.
 - Recruitment is targeted to specific underserved geographic areas; and
 - Recruitment efforts are multilingual and culturally competent.
- 2. Training, Coaching, and Counseling:** The GOFCC program provides support to participants through a cohort approach that includes training, coaching, and counseling.
 - GOFCC staff support the providers with achieving registration, certification, and credentialing. This support decreases the amount of time that a prospective or existing family child care provider typically spends going through these required processes (from an average of 12–13 months to 5–6 months). This work is done in partnership with family child care providers and the Regional Licensing Office.
 - In partnership with the GOFCC program, the local Women’s Business Center locations provide coaching in entrepreneurship and basic business practices such as record keeping and tax preparation.
 - As a part of the GOFCC program, local Child Care Resource Centers (CCRCs) staff maintain a coaching and mentoring relationship with the providers, supporting their navigation of State systems, such as Maryland EXCELS and the Child Care Scholarship program.

¹ https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/addressing_decreasing_fcc_providers_revised_march2020_final.pdf

3. **Culturally Competent and Multilingual Services:** The GOFCC program provides services in Spanish, and other languages as requested, in a culturally competent manner. Now, that the Individual Taxpayer Identification regulation was adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education in October 2023, the GOFCC program anticipates an increase in the number of multilingual participants given that this new regulation allows refugees, asylees, and newcomers to apply for a family child care registration.
 - During coaching and training sessions, simultaneous interpretation was provided as well as the translation of all written materials.

During the 2021 General Assembly Session, ED § 9.5-113(i) 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. This program expansion has supported prospective and existing family child care providers from across the State.

GOFCC STATEWIDE REPLICATION/EXPANSION – PLANNING GRANTS

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) partnered with MFN, a leading family- and child-focused organization in Maryland, to coordinate the GOFCC program. In October 2021, MFN released the Request for Proposal (RFP) for planning grants for organizations to develop programs that replicate the components and goals of GOFCC program in Montgomery County. In addition, the RFP required organizations replicating GOFCC to address specific local needs and concerns in other counties.

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. MFN publicized this RFP opportunity through social media, the MFN website, the MFN newsletter, the Child Care Resource Center Network, the MSDE bi-weekly update to child care providers, and the State Early Childhood Advisory Council, as well as through other key partners and organizations. These grants were supported entirely by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Awardees were announced on March 4, 2022. These planning grants were awarded for the period of March 4–August 31, 2022, with a total funding amount of \$75,000 per awardee for the grant period.

Planning grant awardees 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 and some areas within Cecil and Harford Counties. During the planning period, MFN met regularly with the leadership from the three agencies as they each conducted gap analyses of need vs. available child care, worked with local partners and organizations to identify targeted communities, and identified program elements based on the local context.

Additionally, the three agencies collaborated on several aspects of the project, which include selecting a shared GOFCC logo, developing a landing page on the MFN website to support interested individuals in identifying local supports, and collaborating on training and coaching components to support program success. Each program designed the key elements of a GOFCC program based on their local context during this time and submitted proposals in response to the next RFP for Implementation. Some highlights from each planning grantee include:

- **The Family Tree** developed a roadmap which provides a visual representation of the process to assist participants in understanding the individual parts of the Family Tree GOFCC pathway components. The roadmap also identified key organizations and supports that participants could be connected with at various stages.
- **Abilities Network Project ACT** exhibited a deep commitment to actively addressing the inequities within the early care and education system through the organization’s approach to the identification of targeted

communities. In addition, Abilities Network Project ACT provided necessary support to advance individuals from 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 Business Economic and Community Outreach Network (BEACON) Center. The strong partnership and collaboration with the BEACON Center enabled the creation of a nimble and detailed data analysis system to identify child care deserts and to determine where child care slots were needed the most.

GOFCC STATEWIDE REPLICATION AND EXPANSION THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS

On June 1, 2022, MFN released the RFP for GOFCC Implementation Grants. Funds have been allocated to implement a family child care recruitment program modeled after the successful GOFCC initiative in Montgomery County, Maryland, due to the decline in family child care businesses and the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Legislation passed in 2021 mandated the allocation of \$150,000 annually to a minimum of three jurisdictions, enabling agencies to replicate and expand this vital program to support the growth and sustainability of the family child care field.

Two technical assistance sessions were held on July 7, 2022, and July 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 from September 1, 2022, through August 31, 2024. MSDE has provided \$450,000 per 12-month period to fund three agencies at \$150,000 per year. MFN has supplemented program needs through the allocation of an additional \$300,000 per year using ARPA funds MFN receives from MSDE to award funding to an additional two organizations in the interest of expanding the total reach of this project. Each agency has been awarded \$150,000 in operational funding and is required to secure 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

GOFCC IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS UPDATE

In FY2023, five Child Care Resource Centers (CCRCs) crafted unique jurisdiction-specific routes to registration as part of the GOFCC program. These pathways were meticulously tailored to align with the specific jurisdictions targeted by each CCRC receiving the implementation grant. Each pathway encompassed the following components:

- Learning Cohorts
- Pre-Service Professional Development
- Individual and Group Coaching
- Guidance on Paperwork and Applications
- Access to Maryland Excels, the Child Care Scholarship program, and the Maryland Child Care Credential program

- Access to resources, training, and coaching in business administration

Starting in September 2023, the CCRCs identified areas of the greatest need for child care in Maryland through research and analysis of child care deserts. The CCRCs concentrated their marketing efforts on the following regions:

- Baltimore City (including Cherry Hill, Brooklyn/Curtis Bay, Lakeland/Westport, Madison East, Patterson Park North and East, Greater Highlandtown, Greater Rosemont, Southwest Baltimore, and Poppleland)
- Baltimore County (including Dundalk, Middle River, Rosedale, Woodlawn)
- Caroline County
- Carroll County
- Dorchester County
- Frederick County
- Garrett County
- Prince George's County (specifically Oxon Hill)
- Wicomico County

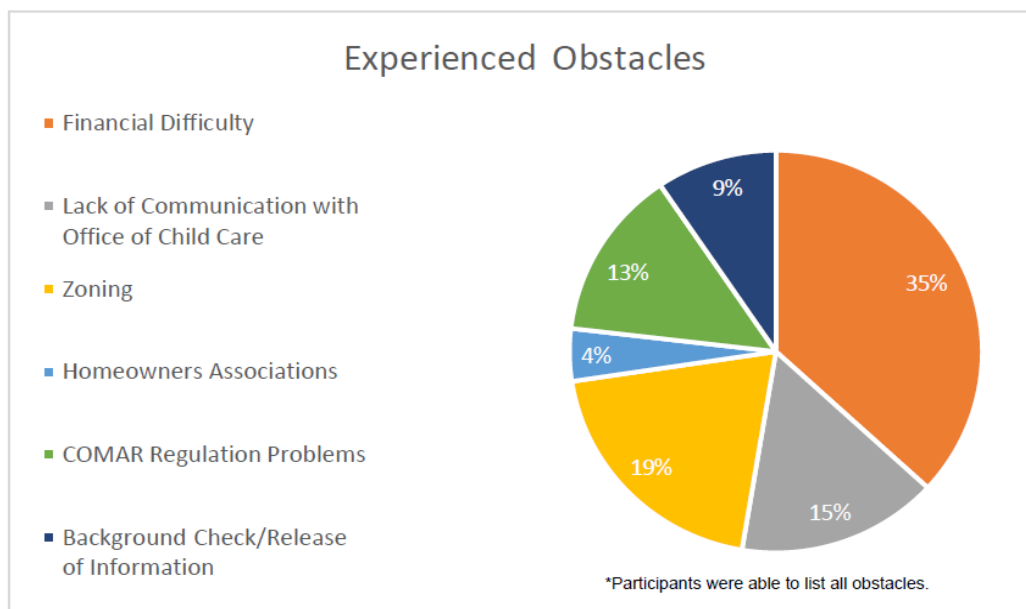
The initial objective was to recruit 149 new family child care professionals in year one and 170 in year two, with each CCRC working collectively to achieve these targets across all jurisdictions. In year one, the CCRCs extended invitations to 195 participants to join the GOFCC cohorts, exceeding the year one goal. Participants expressed various motivations for joining the GOFCC program and in their aspirations to become family child care professionals. The majority of participants cited a strong passion for working with children as their driving force. Others were inspired by a desire to give back to their community. Some individuals had to exit the workforce due to the increasing costs of child care but chose to work as a family child care educator. They saw opening a family child care program as an opportunity to both support their family financially and provide early care and education for their own children at the same time.

Initially, the pathways were designed to be completed within a timeframe ranging from seven to twelve months. Over the course of the fiscal year, the CCRCs adjusted their initial pathway designs and introduced innovative strategies in response to valuable lessons learned and unforeseen challenges that required creative solutions. As a result of their adaptability, the average time needed to complete the GOFCC pathway was reduced even more (by 33%), aligning with the program's goal of establishing an accelerated and sustainable process. Consequently, the average time to complete a GOFCC pathway now stands at four to six months.

Some of the challenges encountered included:

- Zoning requirements and associated costs
- Housing repairs and associated costs
- Equipment needs
- Varying interpretations to Office of Child Care's Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR)
- Challenges understanding the Office of Child Care (COMAR) approval process
- Housing (Homeowners associations (HOA) and rental/landlord-related obstacles)
- Documentation of citizenship

Figure 1: Experienced Obstacles



MFN and the CCRCs are working closely with MSDE’s Division of Early Childhood, Office of Child Care (OCC) to develop strategies aimed at addressing these challenges. For instance, in October 2023, the Maryland State Board of Education adopted a regulation proposed by MSDE to allow for individual taxpayer identification numbers to be used in lieu of social security numbers to become a registered family child care provider. This new regulation opens a new pathway for refugees, asylees, and newcomers to become family child care providers. The OCC continues to collaborate with stakeholders on new proposed regulations to support the early care and education workforce, including family child care providers.

Additionally, throughout the first year of implementation, MFN coordinated a “shared services” model to increase the efficacy and efficiency of the implementation of the GOFCC programs. As part of these efforts, MFN designed a distinct GOFCC logo that is used by every CCRC to create branded materials. These branded materials served a dual purpose, not only for internal use, but also for marketing. During FY2023, MFN also established a dedicated website, allowing interested participants to easily get in touch with the organizations implementing GOFCC. Furthermore, MFN coordinated participation in the All Our Kin Business Training Series, where 14 trainers and coordinators underwent "train-the-trainer" sessions. This training equips GOFCC staff with the skills to deliver the program to family child care professionals within the cohort. During this training event, MFN, alongside CCRC trainers, ensured that CCRC leadership was aligned in terms of language, terminology, and concepts. As an incentive for graduates who complete the GOFCC pathway and obtain their MSDE OCC family child care registration, MFN provided a technology bundle comprising of a laptop and printer.

Additionally, MFN acquired 200 subscriptions to a child care management software program called Brightwheel, offering valuable support during the onboarding process for Child Care Management Systems (CCMS). GOFCC not only provides training and support for participants to receive their registration to provide quality care for children, but also introduces educators to the importance of building a network with other family child care professionals. To help support this effort, MFN coordinated memberships to the National Family Child Care Association (NAFCC).

In addition, MFN distributed Red Leaf Press Calendar Keepers to each agency. These Calendar Keepers serve as a valuable resource for educators, assisting them with record-keeping and time tracking. This support documentation will prove invaluable as educators prepare for tax season.

In year two, MFN is currently working with CCRC leadership to coordinate further shared service support to unify the programs across Maryland.

According to the 'Trends in Child Care 2022' report produced by MFN, it was projected that family child care programs in Maryland would undergo a 22% decrease from 2022 to 2026, resulting in an annual reduction of 8%.² However, when examining the data for 2022-2023 as reported by MSDE, there was a net difference of 105 programs. This data indicates that the actual percentage decrease in the number of family child care programs from 2022 to 2023 was 2.37%. While there is a strong correlation between the introduction of GOFCC and the reduction of the percentage decrease, it is essential to recognize that various factors may have contributed to this outcome, and further analysis is needed to determine causation.

As a result of the CCRCs effort with support from MFN and MSDE, 75% of the participants successfully completed their GOFCC pathway in FY23. Among those graduates, 52 individuals have received their registrations and 32 are currently pending approval. This accomplishment has resulted in the establishment of 360 additional child care slots, and an additional 256 slots are expected to be added in the near future.

Table 1: Regional Comparison of GOFCC Program Goals

Jurisdiction	Recruitment Goal	# of Potential Child Care Openings	# of Participants	Pathway Completed	OCC Registration Received
Baltimore City	30	240	44	35	12
Baltimore County	30	240	35	30	6
Central MD South (Prince George's/Anne Arundel Co)	20	160	29	14	2
Eastern Shore	44	352	47	28	13
Western MD	25	200	40	40	19

- 94% of the registered participants have enrolled in the Maryland EXCELS program.
- 77% of the participants who enrolled in Maryland EXCELS, will participate in the Child Care Scholarship Program.
- 100% of the cohort has developed a connection to a Family Resource Specialist that will support families who are moving through the Child Care Scholarship Program.

Throughout this process, participants actively participated in program assessments to gauge the impact and efficiency of the jurisdictional pathways they followed. The results indicate a strong endorsement, with 96% of surveyed participants expressing their willingness to recommend GOFCC to individuals interested in launching their own family child care programs. One graduate enthusiastically expressed, “This is a wonderful program for people that want to open their own daycare. I hope that this program stays for years to come!”

In FY2024, CCRCs and MFN are further refining the program through continued stakeholder engagement and collaboration with local governments and MSDE’s Division of Early Childhood, Office of Child Care. MFN is actively exploring additional workforce development opportunities to support participants who have successfully completed the program but were unable to obtain their registrations. These alternative pathways include Family Child Care Apprenticeship programs and employment prospects within child care center-based programs. In addition, MSDE’s Division of Early Childhood is collaborating closely with the Maryland Department of Labor to

² Maryland Family Network. (February 2022). Trends in Child Care 2022 [PDF]. Maryland Family Network. <https://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Trends%20in%20Child%20Care%202022.pdf>

support early care and education organizations with becoming registered apprenticeship programs to support both the incumbent workforce and new members to the workforce. The Maryland Rebuilds Grant, which used American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, is supporting the early care and education workforce in FY2024 by standing up apprenticeship and workforce support programs that focus on family child care educators and other members of the early care and education workforce.

Some highlights from each of the GOFCC jurisdictions:

1. In FY23, *The Family Tree* implemented strategic course corrections, broadening participation in the GOFCC pathway and ensuring that more participants successfully completed their registrations. Their approach involved a thorough analysis of data, including Office of Child Care application denial letters and off-boarding interviews/surveys. This assessment identified areas for additional support, leading to a reallocation of funds. Specifically, they directed resources towards assisting educators who faced challenges in obtaining their registration. This support included providing necessary equipment, such as changing tables or infant gates.
2. *Abilities Network Project Act (ANPA)* utilized its strong community partnerships with local government agencies, OCC, and local family child care associations. Through these collaborations, ANPA delivered tailored capacity building and technical assistance services to support individuals on their GOFCC pathway. A noteworthy initiative was the development of a comprehensive mentorship program by ANPA, fostering partnerships between experienced family child care professionals and GOFCC participants.
3. *The Eastern Shore Child Care Resource Center at Salisbury University* employed innovative strategies to promote the program across the eight counties in their region. They established a dedicated website, www.openchildcaretoday.com, to effectively showcase and support the program. Moreover, the GOFCC coordinator collaborated with local Judy Centers, fostering a partnership to jointly recruit family child care professionals in the rural areas of the region.
4. *Child Resource Connect*, serving Anne Arundel and Prince George's Counties, established a partnership with Employ Prince George's, the county's American Job Center. Through this collaboration, Child Resource Connect works closely with their Family Resource Specialist to assist individuals in search of employment, child care services, and Child Care Scholarships, particularly those keen on exploring the possibility of becoming a family child care provider.
5. *The Mental Health Association of Frederick County/Child Care Choices* crafted a highly effective GOFCC model, boasting an impressive completion rate of 90%-92%. This initiative not only raised the number of registered family child care homes in five counties, but also achieved a remarkable 20% increase in Garrett County. The GOFCC program, pioneered by Child Care Choices, stands out for its distinctive group coaching model, providing valuable support to participants in overcoming individual challenges.

The success of the GOFCC program and the dedication of the Child Care Resource Centers involved is evident in the significant reduction in the time needed to complete the GOFCC pathway, resulting in the creation of 360 additional child care slots. This achievement reflects the commitment and hard work of all stakeholders. Additionally, the program has played a crucial role in lowering the anticipated decrease in family child care programs, reducing the percentage decrease from the projected 8% (annually) to an actual 2.37% in 2022-2023.

In FY2024 thus far, the GOFCC program is supporting the State with maintaining a successful trajectory by continuing to support new family child care program with becoming registered providers. Since September 1, 2023, the implementation of GOFCC has resulted in the opening of 20 new family child care programs with the potential of serving 160 more children.

To ensure the continued success of GOFCC and its expansion into state wide implementation beyond FY2024, continued support and funding is essential. Family child care remains a critical component of the early childhood education system, and securing resources is essential to meet the growing demand for quality child care services in Maryland.