

Montgomery County  
Early Childhood  
Coordinating Council



Annual Report  
2021-2022

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# Letter from the Chair



## EARLY CHILDHOOD COORDINATING COUNCIL

The Honorable Marc Elrich  
Montgomery County Executive

The Honorable Gabe Albornoz, President  
Montgomery County Council

Dr. Raymond Crowel, Director  
Montgomery County Department  
of Health and Human Services

Residents of Montgomery County

Dear Mr. Elrich, Mr. Albornoz, Dr. Crowel and Residents of Montgomery County:

The Early Childhood Coordinating Council (ECCC) is pleased to submit its 2021-2022 annual report.

The role of the ECCC is to monitor, advocate, and make policy recommendations for developing a comprehensive, coordinated early care and education system that supports school readiness and provides support to state and local initiatives.

The ECCC is comprised of a variety of stakeholders and professionals with expertise in the early childhood field including County parents, business and foundation representatives, early childhood associations representatives, child care providers, a pediatric representative, Montgomery County Public School staff, Maryland State Department of Education staff, Montgomery County Libraries and County Government representatives. Our collective knowledge and expertise about the early care and education system and understanding the importance of school readiness, allows the ECCC the ability to examine, discuss, problem solve, and provide a complete perspective to County officials.

The ECCC was formed from the work of the prior Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) which was initially established at the request of the State Department of Education. In May of 2015, the County Council Bill 13-15 established the current coordinating council.

During 2021 and 2022, the work of the ECCC focused on three major areas:

- a. Mental health and social/emotional well-being of children, families, and the early childhood workforce
- b. Child care sustainability and systems
- c. Early Childhood advocacy at the local and state levels

Due to the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ECCC continued to meet virtually to support work in the early childhood community. The pandemic has brought to the forefront the essential nature of early childhood and child care and the importance of creating high-quality, sustainable systems in the community. Because of its essential nature, the ECCC collaborated with Montgomery Moving Forward, the Community Action Board, as well as the Montgomery County Collaboration Council to further this important work.

The Early Childhood Coordinating Council looks forward to working with you again this year and welcomes your thoughts and input into how we can be most successful.

Sincerely,

*Jody Z. Burghardt*

Jody Burghardt  
Chair, 2021-22

# Early Childhood Coordinating Council

## Purpose

The Early Childhood Coordinating Council (ECCC) was established by Montgomery County Bill 13-15 and serves as the local Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) for Montgomery County, liaising with the State ECAC at the Maryland Department of Education (MSDE). The ECCC monitors, advocates, and makes policy recommendations for the development of a comprehensive system of early care and education (ECE) in Montgomery County that supports children entering school ready to learn.

## Meetings

The full Council regularly meets virtually on the third Wednesday of each month from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. The ECCC does not meet in the months of July, August, and December. All meetings are open to the public and are being held virtually via Zoom. Members of the general public can access the Early Childhood Coordinating Council meeting schedule and Zoom registration links on the [ECCC website](#) or on the [Montgomery County Calendar](#).

A significant portion of the ECCC's work is accomplished through committees. Volunteers from the public are invited to assist with the work of these committees. The ECCC has three standing committees based on the priority areas. These committees meet on the third Wednesday of each month (excluding July, August, and December) during the full council meetings.

## ECCC Membership Year 2021-2022

**Dr. Barbara Andrews**

Ex-Officio – Appointed  
Administrator, Division of Early Childhood Services  
MCDHHS

**Jennifer Arnaiz**

Ex-Officio – Appointed  
Montgomery County Child Care Support Services  
Early Childhood Services  
MCDHHS

**Dira Treadvance**

Ex-Officio – Appointed  
Chief, Children, Youth and Families  
MCDHHS

**Stephanie Brant**

Ex-Officio – Invited  
Principal, MCPS Elementary School  
MCPS

**Jody Burghardt – *Chair***

Public  
Local Provider of Early Childhood Education and Development Services

**Dr. Robin Chernoff**

Public  
Pediatrician

**Cindy Chichester-Olivierre**

Ex-Officio – Invited  
MCPS Superintendent or Designee

**Amy Cropp**

Ex-Officio – Invited  
Division of Prekindergarten, Special Programs and Related Services  
MCPS

## Membership-continued

**Richard A. Crump**

Public  
Local Business Community

**Cassandra Malik**

Ex-Officio – Appointed  
Montgomery County Public Libraries

**Mary Manning-Falzarano**

Ex-Officio – Appointed  
Montgomery County Infants and Toddlers Program  
Early Childhood Services  
MCDHHS

**Laurie Moran**

Ex-Officio-Appointed  
Office of Child Care, Region 5  
Maryland State Department of Education

**Charlene Muhammad**

Ex-Officio-Appointed  
Head Start Administrator  
Montgomery Community Action Agency  
MCDHHS

**Bernadine Occhiuzzo**

Public  
Local Provider of Early Childhood Education and Development Services

**Jade-Ann Rennie**

Ex-Officio – Appointed  
Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth & Families

## Membership-continued

**Kimberly Rusnak**

Public

Local Philanthropic Community

**Charisse Scott**

Public

Montgomery County Council Parent Teacher Associations

**Rebecca Smith**

Ex-Officio – Appointed

Montgomery County Community Health Services

MCDHHS

**Louise Tolin**

Ex-Officio-Invited

Division of Early Childhood, Title I Programs, and Recovery Funds

MCPS

**Beka Urgessa**

Ex-Officio – Appointed

School Health Services

MCDHHS

**Lynette Weaver**

Ex-Officio-Invited

Public Institution of Higher Education

Montgomery College

**Dr. Taniesha Woods Myles – *Vice Chair***

Public

Parent Representative

**Vivian Yao**

Ex-Officio – Appointed

Montgomery County Council



## 2021-2022 Policy Priorities

**The Early Childhood Coordinating Council selected the following three policy priorities for the 2020-2021 year:**

**Priority 1: Mental Health and Social/Emotional Well-Being of children, families, and the early childhood workforce.**

- Increase public awareness of available resources regarding mental health and social-emotional well-being for children and families.
- Advocate for increased opportunities for training and technical assistance to child care professionals on social-emotional development to address the ongoing impact of the pandemic.
- Support the implementation of a public awareness campaign specifically focused on parents and caregivers.

**Priority 2: Child Care Sustainability and Systems: Integrating a broad approach to the sustainability of child care as an industry, as a workforce, and as a provider of enriching and educational experiences for young children.**

- Develop actionable recommendations that focus on the direct support of child care programs to aid in the industry's recovery from the economic and enrollment effects of the pandemic.
- Support the development of a local "LOCATE" service to increase community members' knowledge about child care options, improve access, and connect families with available child care providers.
- Continue to promote current and alternative pathways for early childhood credentials at Montgomery College and other higher education institutions.
- Provide recommendations and advocate for increased compensation for early childhood educators to create a more sustainable workforce.

# 2021-2022 Policy Priorities Continued

**Priority 3: Advocacy: Focusing on communication with MSDE, as well as allowing the ECCC to shift its areas of focus to address a broad range of topics and needs as they come up throughout the year. This will also allow the ECCC to support different groups, projects, and initiatives in the service of building a more comprehensive ECE system. Montgomery Moving Forward (MMF) will be a primary partner of the ECCC on advocacy.**

- Partner with Maryland Family Network and other organizations across the state on the Pritzker funded [Building Better Beginnings \(B3\)](#) prenatal through age three project.
- Advocate for a competency credential and career ladder to allow for more providers to participate in Pre-K for All as proposed in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.
- Address licensing regulations revisions, temporary and permanent.
- Advocate for training for regulations revisions.
- Advocate for an equity focus within the early care and education workforce and the children and families served including an intentional focus on engaging families from across the socioeconomic spectrum as well as members from underrepresented communities including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.



# Recommendations Based on 2021-2022 Policy Priorities

**Recommendation 1: Urge the County to work with the State on changes to the Blueprint certification requirements and timelines so that community programs (centers and family child care) can participate fully and assist the County and State in meeting the Blueprint goals for Pre-K.**

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future has outlined a plan for the significant expansion of full day prekindergarten (Pre-K) programs so all children have access to early learning opportunities regardless of a family’s socioeconomic status. The Blueprint’s Pre-K plan includes standards that require both public and private programs to meet defined quality rating systems (EXCELS) and mandate that all Pre-K teachers and paraeducators meet specific educational and certification criteria.

This past year, members of the Early Childhood Coordinating Council had the opportunity to attend and provide feedback at community forums dedicated to the Blueprint’s Pre-K plan. Forum participants shared resounding concerns about the education and certification requirements contained in the Blueprint. Educators from community child care programs and family child care voiced their concern about the current challenges recruiting and retaining a workforce and feel the requirements from the Blueprint will only add to this challenge.

To reduce these challenges and remove barriers to participation, the County should continue to promote current and alternative pathways for early childhood credentials and certifications at Montgomery College and other higher education institutions. A comprehensive, mixed delivery model will be essential to meet the needs of all prekindergarten students as well as maintain the essential child care services provided in many of these same programs for infants and toddlers.

# Recommendations Based on 2021-2022 Policy Priorities Continued

**Recommendation 2: Recommend that the County proactively support early screening efforts and early intervention for children birth to three so that they have the best opportunities for success.**

Early intervention is key to giving children the best opportunity to succeed and reducing the impacts of development delays on young children now as well as in the future. Support should be given for developmental screening tools to be used in all environments where families with young children frequent. This includes places such as pediatrician offices, medical clinics, child care programs, family support centers, home visiting programs as well as in other perinatal, infant and toddler programs. Support for the use of screening tools such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, CHADIS and others can help identify needs early and support participation in early intervention programs like the Montgomery County Infants and Toddlers Program. It is critical that parents receive timely information from prenatal stages to preschool so that they are well informed and can opt into early screening opportunities.



# 2022-2023 Policy Priorities

## **Priority 1: Mental Health and Social/Emotional Well-Being of children, families, and the early childhood workforce.**

- Recommend and support the development of a mapping tool that identifies available resources regarding mental health and emotional well-being for children and families.
- Recommend specifics for a public awareness campaign through use of the mapping tool.
- Advocate for increased opportunities and access to ongoing, high-quality job embedded professional development for child care professionals to help support the social-emotional development of children in early care environments.

## **Priority 2: Child Care Sustainability and Systems: Supporting the integration of a broad approach to the sustainability of child care as an industry, as a workforce, and as a provider of enriching and educational experiences for young children.**

- Focus on the broad approach to sustainability of the early care and education system by providing recommendations on the following issues:
  - ❖ Continue to promote current and alternative pathways for the ECE workforce, specifically surrounding credentialing requirements outlined in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.
  - ❖ Provide recommendations and advocate for increased compensation for early childhood educators to recruit and retain a more sustainable workforce.

# 2022-2023 Policy Priorities Continued

**Priority 3: Advocacy: Focus on building a relationship with the new ECE coordinating entity, The Children’s Opportunity Alliance, and building more effective communication with MSDE.**

- Advocate for a more equitable, proactive and responsive relationship between MSDE and early care educators.
- Support the development of a shared services network where child care providers can access services and supplies at a no-fee or reduced fee cost (in ECEI Action Plan)
- Advocate for changes to the credentialing requirements in the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future to allow more educators and child care programs to participate in the Pre-K programs.





Marc Elrich  
County Executive

Dr. Raymond Crowel  
Director, Department of Health and Human Services

Dira Treadvance  
Chief, Children, Youth and Families

To learn more about the Early Childhood Coordinating Council, please visit this [link](#)

*Language translation and alternative formats of this report can be made available upon request.*

*Montgomery County does not discriminate on the basis of disability in employment or in the admission or access of its programs or services.*

