Montgomery County
Early Childhood Coordinating Council

Annual Report
2019-2020

Table of Contents

Early Childhood Coordinating Council

Letter from the Chair

EARLY CHILDHOOD COORDINATING COUNCIL

January 19, 2021

The Honorable Marc Elrich Montgomery County Executive	The Honorable Tom Hucker, President Montgomery County Council
Dr. Raymond Crowel, Director Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services	Residents of Montgomery County

Dear Mr. Elrich, Mr. Hucker, Dr. Crowel and Residents:

The Early Childhood Coordinating Council (ECCC) is pleased to submit its 2019-2020 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, 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 2019 and 2020, the work of the ECCC focused on three major areas:

a. Participation in projects and initiatives of the Maryland State Department of Education ECE around licensing and regulation
b. Coordinating with other early care and education groups at the local level
c. Fulfilling three projects funded through the MSDE Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) for Local Early Childhood Advisory Councils

In the Spring of 2020, the ECCC was forced to shift some of its timelines and priorities due to the impact of the national public health emergency. While in person activities for the PDG B-5 could not continue, the ECCC was able to organize a survey that was distributed to parents and families in June 2020. This survey polled parents and caregivers about their current needs for child care in a fluctuation school and camp environment. A summary of this survey can be found in ***Appendix A.***

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,

J. Z. Burghardt

Jody Burghardt
Chair, 2020-21

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 on the third Wednesday of each month from 9:00 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 typically held in-person at the Early Childhood Training Center (1401 Rockville Pike, Rockville). Due to the public health emergency, the ECCC was not able to host in-person meetings during the months of March and April of 2020. In May of 2020, the ECCC was able to resume meetings by moving to a virtual platform. The ECCC is currently hosting virtual meetings on Microsoft TEAMS.

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: Licensing and Regulation, Local Coordination, and Preschool Development Grant Birth-5 Event Planning. These committees meet on the third Wednesday of each month (excluding July, August, and December) during the full council meetings.

A meeting schedule for the Early Childhood Coordinating Council can be found at this link.

Membership

The ECCC is comprised of a variety of stakeholders and professionals with expertise in the early childhood field including: County parents, representatives of the philanthropic and business communities, child care providers, state licensing staff, higher education, and representatives from county agencies such as Montgomery County Libraries (MCPL), Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

ECCC Members: Year 2019-2020

Dr. Barbara Andrews
Ex-Officio – Appointed
Administrator, Division of Early Childhood Services
MCDHHS

Jennifer Arnaiz
Ex-Officio – Appointed
Montgomery County Child Care Resource and Referral Center
MCDHHS

JoAnn Barnes
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

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

Membership-continued

Richard A. Crump
Public
Local Business Community

Joan Glick
Ex-Officio – Appointed
School Health Services
MCDHHS

Liran Laor
Public
Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children

Mary Manning-Falzarano
Ex-Officio – Appointed
Montgomery County Infants and Toddlers Program
MCDHHS

Lauren Martino
Ex-Officio – Appointed
Montgomery County Public Libraries

Carrie Meyer
Public
Organization of Child Care Directors

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

Paula Sayag
Public
Local Interfaith Community

Charisse Scott
Public
Montgomery County Council Parent Teacher Associations

Rebecca Smith
Ex-Officio – Appointed
Montgomery County Community Health Services

Louise Tolin
Ex-Officio – Invited
Division of Early Childhood Programs and Services
MCPS

Taniesha Woods Myles – **Vice Chair**
Public
Parent Representative

Vivian Yao
Ex-Officio – Appointed
Montgomery County Council

Monica Ortiz
Staff
Early Childhood Coordinating Council
MCDHHS

2019-2020 Priorities

The Early Childhood Coordinating Council selected the following three priorities for the 2019-2020 year:

Priority 1: Participating in MSDE Early Care and Education Projects and Initiatives

Taking part in projects and initiatives of the Maryland State Department of Education ECE around licensing and regulation in order to better inform the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) focus on quality in early childhood services, the ECCC will actively participate in and respond to invitations to roundtables, surveys, community feedback, public comment, and other activities.

Priority 2: Collaborating and Coordinating with other Early Care and Education Stakeholders

Coordinating with other early care and education groups at the local level to collaborate, align, and advance the work around each group's ECE priorities collectively. The work of the ECCC is aligned with the goals from the DHHS Strategic Plan for Early Care and Education 2017, and helps to inform the ECE priorities partners such as the Community Action Board, the Commission on Child Care, the Montgomery County Early Care and Education Initiative, Montgomery Moving Forward, and communities connected to Montgomery County Public Schools.

Priority 3: Fulfilling Projects funded through the MSDE Preschool Development Grants

Fulfilling the three (3) projects funded through the MSDE Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) for Local Early Childhood Advisory Councils.
To include:
- Marketing and outreach campaign
- Focus groups and information sharing with Reading Corner families at Montgomery College-Germantown
- "No Small Matter" documentary screening for public awareness-building with legislators

2019-2020 Priorities Update

<u>Fulfilling Projects funded through the MSDE Preschool Development Grants</u>

In the middle of FY20, the Early Childhood Coordinating Council had to shift its focus and priorities in response to the public health emergency. To streamline the work, the ECCC decided to focus its efforts on concluding the activities related to the PDG B-5 grant and identifying a focus area for the prospective grant project for the next year. The initial grant funding period was extended through June 2020 so the ECCC decided to use those funds to create a survey for families inquiring about their child care needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. This survey was conducted before initial decisions about public schools and child care openings for the Fall of 2020 were announced, therefore it presents a snapshot of the initial concerns and priorities of families in the early days of state-mandated stay-at-home and school closure orders. A copy of the survey and a summary of findings can be viewed in *Appendix A* and *Appendix B*.

After a brief disruption, the ECCC was able to resume their monthly meetings in May 2020 and planning for the subsequent PDG B-5 grant project began. The ECCC decided to partner with the Judy Centers of Montgomery County for this second project and planned to replicate their model of "at-home activity kits." Recognizing that the Judy Centers had to remain closed due to the health emergency, they created and distributed at-home activity kits to their families with children under the age of five. The kits offered families the opportunity to keep their children engaged in structured child development activities while at home. In the Fall of 2020, Montgomery County Public Libraries became an additional partner for the grant project, helping to select age appropriate reading materials and facilitating the bulk purchase of books for the activity kits. Due to the progress made with Judy Center family engagement activities, the joint Department of Health and Human Services and Montgomery County Public Schools Family Involvement Centers (FIC) program was identified as a key distribution partner for the activity kits.

2019-2020 Priorities Update-cont.

Collaborating and Coordinating with Early Care and Education Stakeholders

When the Montgomery County Early Care and Education Initiative (ECE Initiative) was developed in March 2019, the ECCC was one of the County Boards, Committees and Commissions invited to participate in the stakeholder group. Additionally, the ECCC chair was invited to participate in the Workforce and Training subcommittee. As the work of the ECE Initiative evolved, an [action plan](#) was developed from the input of the subcommittees.

In June 2020, the ECCC had the opportunity to hear from members of Montgomery Moving Forward (MMF) about their proposed plans and recommendations for creating a coordinating entity for early care and education in Montgomery County. Members of the ECCC (i.e., the past chair, current chair and vice chair and assigned DHHS staff) had the opportunity to participate in focus groups related to the development of these recommendations.

In June of 2020, the ECCC received an overview of the County Executive's proposal to the Council recommending that the ECCC be re-developed as the Early Care and Education Board and serve as the coordinating entity for Early Care and Education. The proposal includes membership and leadership reorganization to include the interagency workgroup for the ECE Initiative and the stakeholder group. This board institutionalizes the ECE Initiative with voting members from the community who will serve as the Steering Committee.

2020-2021 Priorities

Early Childhood Coordinating Council

The Early Childhood Coordinating Council will advance its work in FY21 and FY22 by focusing on the following three priorities:

Priority 1: Supporting the Mental Health and Social Emotional Well-Being of Children, Families, and the Early Childhood Workforce

Supporting the wellness of families and their children, as well as the early care and education workforce caring for and teaching young children.

- Public awareness of available resources regarding mental health and social-emotional well-being for children and families
- Training and technical assistance provided on the Pyramid Model on social-emotional development of children for child care professionals

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 COVID-19 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
- Support the use of and make future recommendations for the Working Parents Assistance program to address the developing needs of families in the community
- Continue to promote current and alternative pathways for early childhood credentials at Montgomery College and other higher education institutions

2020-2021 Priorities-cont.

Early Childhood Coordinating Council

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 a building a more comprehensive ECE system. Montgomery Moving Forward (MMF) will be a primary partner of the ECCC on advocacy.

- Partnering with Maryland Family Network and other organizations across the state on the Pritzker funded Building Better Beginnings prenatal through three project
- Licensing regulations revisions, temporary and permanent
- Training regulations revision

Appendix A

Results of the
Early Childhood Coordinating Council Survey for
Families on Child Care Needs and Interests
June 2020

Introduction

Survey information was sent out in June 2020 to families and stakeholders across the county in English and Spanish. Results and key findings are outlined below and are displayed for families with children under 5 and with school-age children.

The Montgomery County, Maryland Early Childhood Coordinating Council (ECCC) conducted a survey of families in Montgomery County with children up to age 13 regarding their child care needs and interests. This survey was conducted as part of a project funded by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

Methodology

Montgomery County fielded two anonymous surveys for county parents in June 2020. English and Spanish versions of the survey were available. The County distributed the surveys through various electronic listservs targeting families within the community. All respondents self-selected into the survey. Statistics presented are descriptive of the survey data and may not be fully representative of Montgomery County as a whole. In total, there were 1,114 responses to the survey, of which 91 percent (1,012 responses) were complete surveys. Ten respondents opted for the Spanish-language survey, while all other respondents chose the English-language survey.

Development of the survey was informed by discussions about county child care programs with English-speaking parents who participated in the Reading Corner[1]. National and regional news reports about families and child care were also instructive in developing the survey's framework. The survey was delivered in a Spanish format to capture information from Latino families within the community.

---

[1] The Reading Corner is a partnership between Montgomery College's School of Education on the Germantown campus and the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services' Linkages to Learning program. The Reading Corner is located at Fox Chapel Elementary School in Germantown.

About the ECCC

The Montgomery County Early Childhood Coordinating Council was established by the Montgomery County Council in 2015. The ECCC brings together representatives of a variety of stakeholders to develop recommendations for the County Executive and the County Council on early care and education issues. The ECCC is part of the statewide system of local Early Childhood Advisory Councils (ECAC) that focus on children age birth through 8 years.

Survey Respondents

Sample Size
The majority of respondents completed the survey in English.
- 99% of respondents completed the survey in English (n=1002)
- 1% of respondents completed the survey in Spanish (n=10)

A majority of respondents were married with a spouse at home.
- 86% of participants in the English-language survey (n=862)
- 75% of participants in the Spanish-language survey (n=7.5)
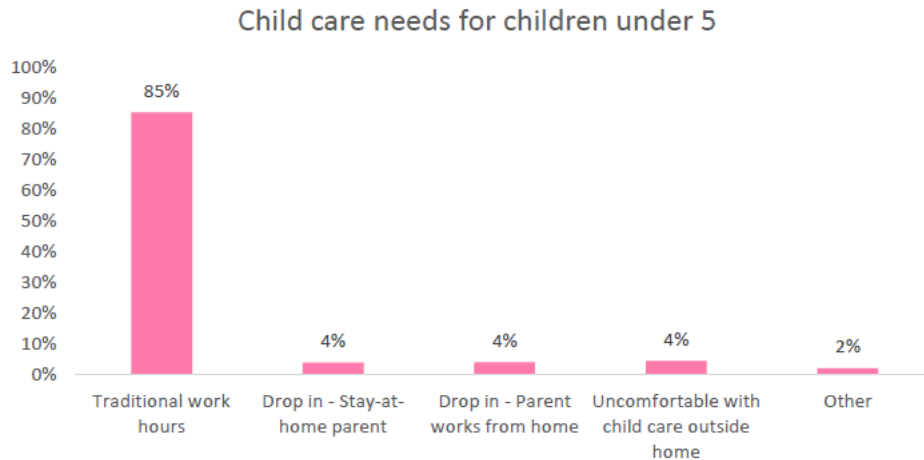
Family demographics:
- 47% of participants in the English-language survey are a family of four; 31% are a family of three; 14% are a family of five or more
- 35% of the Spanish-language survey participants are a family of four;32.3% are a family of three; 21% are a family of five or more

Respondents with children in age categories (respondents may have more than one child in each age group):
- Infant – 4 years of age = 1037
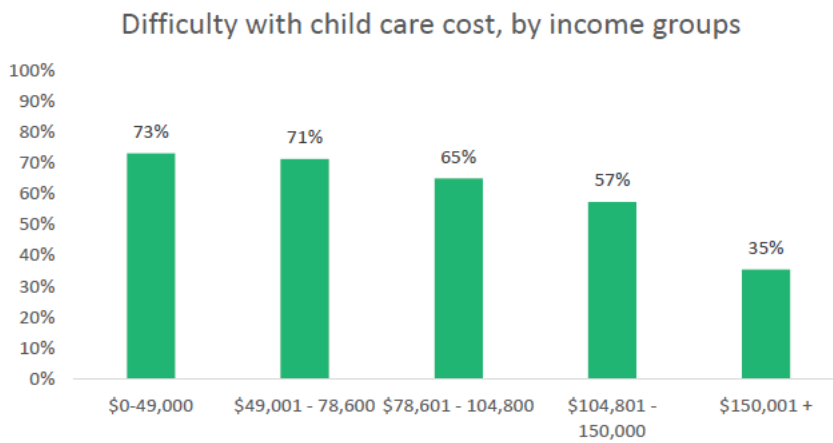- School-age children = 58

Children Ages Birth through Five

Parents need child care during traditional work hours. The survey results showed that 85 percent of respondents needed child care during traditional work hours, and another 4 percent of parents who work from home needed drop-in care options. While expansion of remote work has undoubtedly increased the number of parents working from home, the need for child care options that support parents' ability to work during traditional business hours is still a top concern.
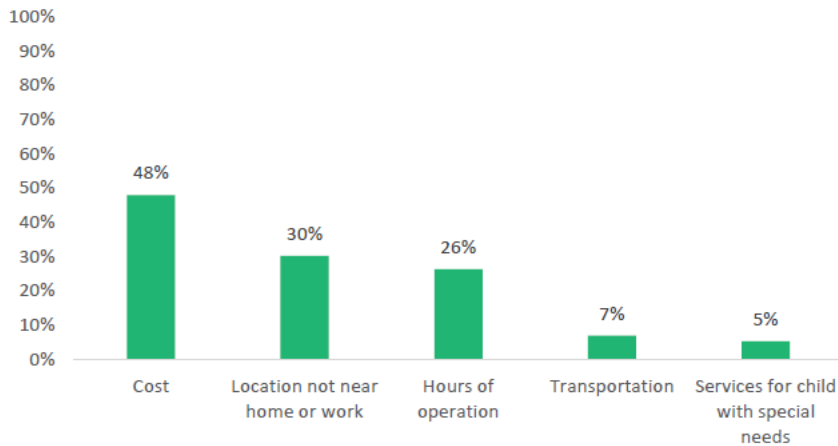
Child care needs for children under 5

Category	Percent
Traditional work hours	85%
Drop in - Stay-at-home parent	4%
Drop in - Parent works from home	4%
Uncomfortable with child care outside home	4%
Other	2%

Overall, 25 percent of parents left written comments about how the pandemic's effect on child care was impacting their ability to work. This was the most common concern that parents voiced on the survey, given how many parents rely on access to child care for work. Many parents who now work from home describe difficulties balancing their workload and their children's needs. Other parents who report to work outside the home were concerned about how reduced child care availability was going to impact their ability to work.

Parents identify cost as the biggest barrier to child care access. Cost is an issue that affects parents across the income spectrum, with nearly half of parents citing cost as a barrier to child care for their children under 5.Over half of parents whose households earn up to $150,000 say that cost is a barrier, and 35 percent of parents whose households earn over$150,000 say that cost is a barrier. According to the January 2018Montgomery County Self-Sufficiency report, almost three-quarters of parents whose households make below the County's self-sufficiency income level of $105,924 for a family of two adults with one infant and one preschooler, cite the cost of child care as a barrier for their children under 5.

Difficulty with child care cost, by income groups

Income Group	Percentage
$0-49,000	73%
$49,001 - 78,600	71%
$78,601 - 104,800	65%
$104,801 - 150,000	57%
$150,001 +	35%

Parents list the location of child care as the second most common barrier. Overall, 30 percent of parents report that child care not being near their home or work is a barrier, with 72 percent of parents wanting child care to be closer to home and 28 percent want child care to be closer to work. However, as the pandemic has expanded remote work options for many parents, parents' preferences may have changed.

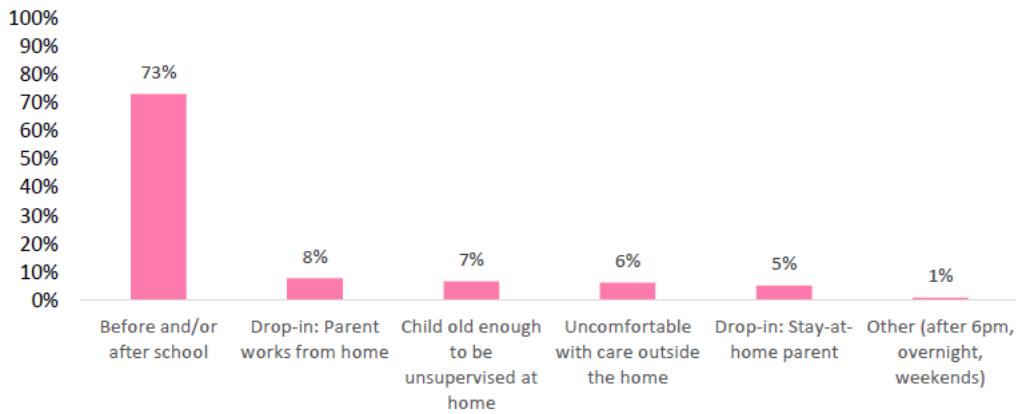Barriers to obtaining child care for children under age 5

The third most common barrier to child care is hours of operation. Overall, 26% of parents listed this as a barrier, though only 3 percent of those parents need child care overnight, on weekends, or after 6pm. For parents who noted that hours of operation are a barrier, 88 percent want child care during traditional work hours and 56 percent of them use center-based care. This pattern suggests difficulties at the margins of the hours of operation, such as pick-up or drop-off times, rather than a widespread need for weekend, evening, or overnight care.
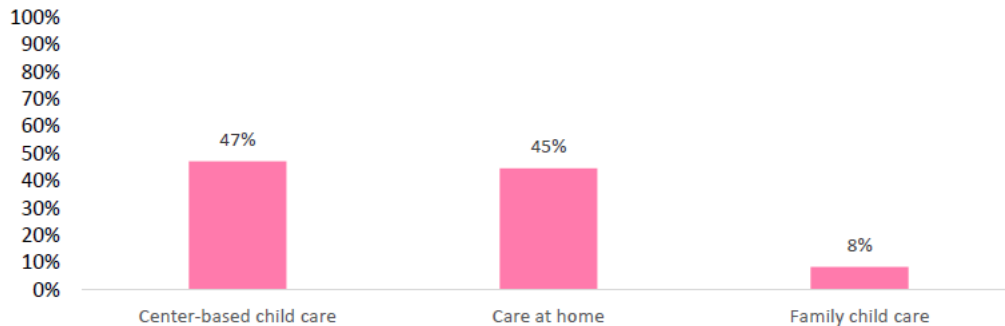
Children Over Age Five

Almost all parents seeking consistent child care services are looking for before and/or afterschool care. Only 1 percent of parents needed care after 6pm, overnight, or on weekends. Other parents either only needed drop-in care because they are regularly at home, or they are not seeking child care outside the home.

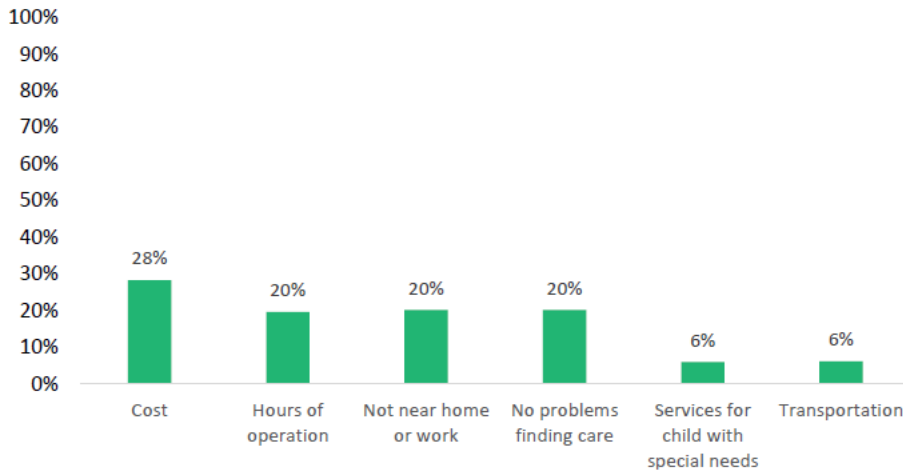Child care needs for children over 5

Category	Percent
Before and/or after school	73%
Drop-in: Parent works from home	8%
Child old enough to be unsupervised at home	7%
Uncomfortable with care outside the home	6%
Drop-in: Stay-at-home parent	5%
Other (after 6pm, overnight, weekends)	1%

The vast majority of parents had their children over 5 in just two settings: center-based care (47 percent) or care at home (45 percent). Only 8 percent of parents who responded to the survey placed their children in family child care homes.

Most recent child care arrangement for children over 5

Category	Percent
Center-based child care	47%
Care at home	45%
Family child care	8%

The barriers to child care for children over 5 are cost, location, and hours of operation, but the issues affect comparatively fewer parents. Overall, 20 percent of parents reported having no problems finding child care.

Barriers to obtaining child care for children over age 5

In conclusion, the survey results show some of the difficulties families were having at a specific point-in-time. Due to the changing nature of the effects of the pandemic, the answers may have fluctuated throughout the remainder of 2020 and may change in the future as the pandemic subsides with the roll-out of the vaccine. The survey does highlight how the strain and stress of the pandemic has amplified the existing barriers and gap between demand and supply for child care.

Appendix B

**SURVEY
Montgomery County Child Care and
Child Development Since COVID-19**

Greeting Page
The coronavirus pandemic has changed how Montgomery County, Maryland families - especially those with children under age 13 - will live for the foreseeable future. Montgomery County's Early Childhood Coordinating Council wants to hear from you to learn more about child care arrangements--what they were before the pandemic and what you are looking for now. Please take 3-5 minutes to complete this survey. The information received will be used to make decisions about programs and services.
The Council appreciates your time and values your feedback.

Survey Text
Please participate in our survey for Montgomery County, Maryland families with children under age 13. Review each question in relation to your child care needs and interests. While you do not need to reply to each item to submit the survey, the more information you share with us, the better we will be able to understand what matters most to families in Montgomery County.

1.What is the age of your child/ren?
☐Infant
☐Toddler
☐2 years old
☐3 years old
☐4 years old
☐School-aged

2.What hours do you typically need child care for your child UNDER age 5?
☐Traditional work hours
☐After 6 pm
☐Overnight
☐Weekends
☐I just need drop-in. I work from home.
☐I just need drop-in. I'm a stay-at-home parent.
☐I'm uncomfortable with putting my child in care outside the home.
☐My child will stay home until going to Kindergarten.

3.What type of child care arrangement have you had most recently for your child UNDER age 5?
☐Family Child Care provider (registered)
☐Family Child Care provider (unregulated)
☐Center-based child care (non-profit or faith-based)
☐Center-based child care (for-profit)
☐Public school Pre-Kindergarten or Head Start
☐ Care in a relative's home
☐ Care in my home by a relative
☐ Care in my home by a non-relative (unpaid)
☐ Care in my home by a non-relative (paid)
☐ I am home with my child but seeking child care
☐ I am a stay-at-home parent

4. What hours do you typically need child care for your child OVER age 5?
- ☐ Before and/or after school
- ☐ After 6 pm
- ☐ Overnight
- ☐ Weekends
- ☐ I just need drop-in. I work from home
- ☐ I just need drop-in. I am a stay-at-home parent.
- ☐ I'm uncomfortable with putting my child in care outside the home.
- ☐ My child is old enough to be home without supervision.

5. What type of child care arrangement have you had most recently for your child OVER age 5?
- ☐ Family Child Care provider (registered)
- ☐ Family Child Care provider (unregulated)
- ☐ Center-based child care (non-profit or faith-based)
- ☐ Center-based child care (for-profit)
- ☐ Care in a relative's home
- ☐ Care in my home by a relative
- ☐ Care in my home by a non-relative (unpaid)
- ☐ Care in my home by a non-relative (paid)
- ☐ My child is old enough to be home without supervision
- ☐ I am home with my child but seeking child care
- ☐ I am a stay-at-home parent

6. Rank the following items in order of their importance for your family
(1 = Most Important)
- ☐ Hours of operation
- ☐ Location
- ☐ Price
- ☐ Cleanliness
- ☐ Serves children in multiple age ranges
- ☐ Small ratio between adults and children
- ☐ Home-based provider
- ☐ Center-based provider
- ☐ Faith-based instruction
- ☐ Licensed child care

7. Rank the following items in order of their importance for your family
(1 = Most Important)
- ☐ Teachers with qualifications
- ☐ Experienced teachers
- ☐ Reliable provider

8. Rank the following items in order of their importance for your family
(1 = Most Important)
☐ Use of a developmentally appropriate curriculum (for children under 5)
☐ Focus on social-emotional development
☐ Quality of facility, equipment, children's materials
☐ Philosophy on child rearing (discipline, expectations of behavior)
☐ The safety of my child
☐ Accepts subsidy payments
☐ Focus on school readiness (for children under age 5)
☐ Cultural connection with my family
☐ Teaching approach - Montessori, Waldorf, bilingual, etc.

9. What are the barriers to accessing high quality child care for your child?
☐ Location - not near home or work
☐ Transportation
☐ Hours of operation
☐ Cost
☐ Services for child with special needs
☐ I haven't had problems finding child care
☐ Other

10. What will help you secure a seat for your child in a high-quality child care?
☐ Tuition assistance
☐ Expanded hours of operation
☐ Better family transportation for my child
☐ Better transportation by the provider for my child
☐ Having a location close to my home
☐ Having a location close to my work
☐ Before and/or after care at my child's school (children over age 5)
☐ I am not looking to change my current child care arrangement
☐ Other

11. Mark all of the services that you would like included in child care
☐ Toys/equipment provided
☐ School readiness (for children under 5)
☐ Healthy food choices
☐ Social interaction for children
☐ Activities (crafts, sports, science, etc.)
☐ Homework help (for school-aged children)
☐ Skill development (chess, team sports, dance, martial arts, etc.)
☐ Tutoring (for school-aged children)
☐ Drop-in option

12. Where do you get information about local child-related services and activities?
☐ Friends
☐ Family members
☐ Library
☐ Church, Temple, or Mosque
☐ Pediatrician or Dentist
☐ Neighborhood Listserv
☐ School flyers
☐ TV ads
☐ Local Newspaper
☐ Radio
☐ Flyers at stores, laundromat, etc.
☐ Other

13. What is the primary language spoken in your home?

14. What is your current family status?
☐ Single
☐ Married with spouse living at home
☐ Separated or divorced
☐ Widowed
☐ Multi-generational family

15. How many family members are in household?
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5
☐ 6
☐ 7+

16. What is your family income?
☐ $0-49,000 per year
☐ $49,001-78,600 per year
☐ $78,601-104,800 per year
☐ $104,801-150,000 per year
☐ $150,001+ per year

17. Please share anything else you would like for us to know.

Marc Elrich
County Executive

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

JoAnn Barnes
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.