



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

October 19, 2022

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice 

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment for Supplemental Appropriation #23-14 FY23
Montgomery County Government Department of Health and Human Services
(DHHS), Montgomery County Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Support
Services (IECMHSS) Grant

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #23-14 FY23 *Montgomery County Government Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Montgomery County Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) - ARPA Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Discretionary Grant* aligns with the County's overall objective to advance racial equity and social justice and could ultimately advance equitable outcomes for low-income families of color with young children. This assessment is contingent on whether the number of requested Family Resource Specialist positions is sufficient to handle the expressed need of CCRCs and who the County ultimately contracts to fill the positions.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #23-14 FY23 DHHS, CCRC – ARPA CCDF Discretionary Grant is to expand existing CCRC services with the addition of two contracted Family Resource Specialist staff in Montgomery County to support families with young children who face significant barriers in accessing state and local childcare programs. Grant funds will also go towards enhanced delivery of the existing FY23 CCRC Grant to add needed support within the childcare community for FY23.

Since 1998, DHHS has partnered with Maryland Family Network (a non-profit that is the State's coordinating entity for the Child Care Resource Center Network of Maryland) to operate the Montgomery County CCRC – a core program within Early Childhood Services. The CCRC has a long history of community collaboration and partnerships to meet the needs of its early care and education system. The County is committed to this partnership and ardently works with the Maryland Family Network to meet the expressed goals of the CCDF Discretionary Grant which includes providing services for:

- childcare programs in Montgomery County,
- childcare providers in Montgomery County, and
- parents, caregivers, and guardians living or seeking childcare in Montgomery County.

III. **ANALYSIS:** ORESJ has previously documented the importance of early childhood educational opportunities for young children and their families and the inequities in educational opportunity and resources impacting students' kindergarten readiness in Montgomery County in the following Racial Equity Impact Assessments (REIAs):

1. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #22-24 High-Quality Early Childhood Inclusion <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-24.pdf>
2. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #22-66 Martha B. Gudelsky Center <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-66.pdf>
3. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #22-77 ARPA IDEA Part B1 Grant and SA#22-78 ARPA IDEA Part B2 Grant <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-77and22-78.pdf>
4. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #22-75 ARPA IDEA Early Intervention Grant <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-75.pdf>
5. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #23-05 – Secondary (P652102) <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/23-05.pdf>

The REIAs highlighted above serve to provide readers with an understanding of the early childhood landscape as it pertains to barriers families with young children experience in ensuring their children are kindergarten ready in Montgomery County and the importance of high-quality early educational opportunities. Some of the issues highlighted in these REIAs are not unique to the County and have been amplified as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Across the nation, communities are experiencing the ramifications of the pandemic, which has disproportionately impacted communities of color. For the childcare sector, the pandemic served to exacerbate an already brewing crisis. Families have long struggled to find affordable and accessible childcare options that meet the needs of both caregivers and their children—options that enable them to work or attend educational opportunities while their children are in safe and enriching learning environments. Childcare workers themselves contended with stagnant, poverty-level wages with little to no benefits and few opportunities to advance within their industry. The onset of the pandemic has now served to push the childcare industry to the brink of collapse with reduced enrollment caused by

the pandemic along with increased health and safety costs making it difficult for providers to make ends meet¹ and continue to provide services to children and families, resulting in one in seven childcare workers leaving the industry.² For families, the lack of affordable and accessible childcare options in addition to contending with lost jobs or reduced hours and wages has forced some to make oftentimes impossible decisions, with the burden falling heavily on mothers.

Cities of Montgomery County frequently rank high among national lists that spotlight diversity, with four ranking within the top ten this year alone.³ The County's diversity is often lauded as one of its strengths as it is seen to enrich the County's economic development, education, and communities⁴. This diversity extends to the County's youngest residents as 65.1% of children under 18 in Montgomery County are children of color.⁵ The passage of ARPA in March 2021 provided states with an opportunity to not only begin addressing systemic inequities built into the childcare industry but also allow for early childhood systems to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse group of children and families.⁶

¹A. Hardy, & K. Gallagher Robbins. *Child Care Relief Funding in American Rescue Plan: State-by-State Estimates*. 2021.

<https://www.clasp.org/publications/report/brief/urgently-address-child-care-crisis-and-invest-equitable-child-care-and/>

² C. Johnson-Staub. *Six Opportunities to Advance Equity in the ARPA Child Care Stabilization Grant Guidance*. 2021.

Available at: <https://www.clasp.org/blog/six-opportunities-advance-equity-arpa-child-care-stabilization-grant-guidance/>

³ A. McCann. *2022's Most & Least Ethnically Diverse Cities in the U.S.* 2022. Available at:

<https://wallethub.com/edu/cities-with-the-most-and-least-ethno-racial-and-linguistic-diversity/10264>

⁴ K. King. 4 Montgomery County cities make national top 10 for diversity. 2022. Available at:

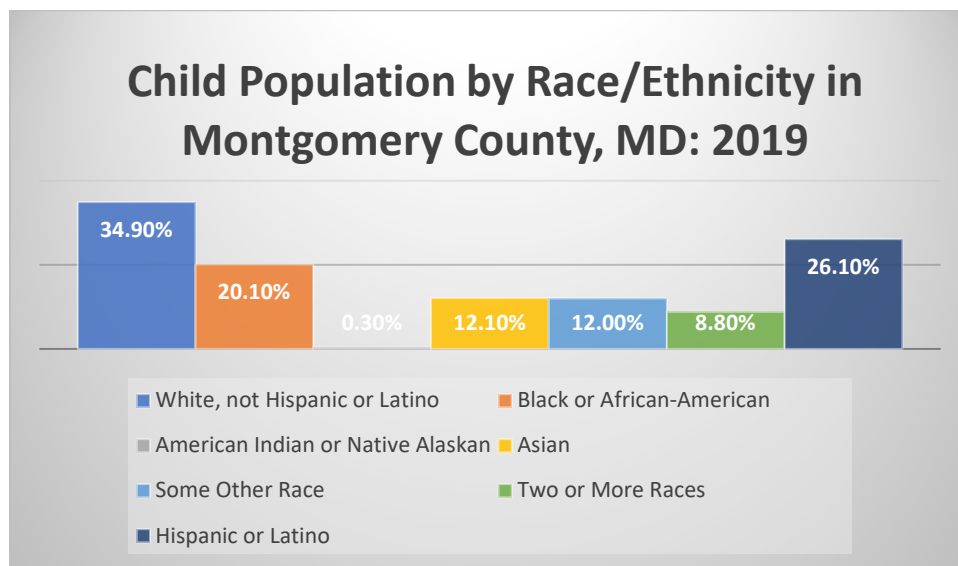
<https://wtop.com/montgomery-county/2022/09/what-landed-four-montgomery-county-md-cities-on-a-list-of-national-rankings/>

⁵ Kids Count Data Center. *Child population by race/ethnicity in Montgomery: 2019*. Available at:

<https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6949-child-population-by-race-ethnicity?loc=22&loct=5#detailed/5/3315/false/1729/4406,3303,3304,2161,3305,3306,3307,3301,2796/14060,14061>

⁶ C. Johnson-Staub. *Six Opportunities to Advance Equity in the ARPA Child Care Stabilization Grant Guidance*. 2021.

Available at: <https://www.clasp.org/blog/six-opportunities-advance-equity-arpa-child-care-stabilization-grant-guidance/>



**Kids Count Data Center*

(Because individuals in the 'Hispanic or Latino' group can also be included in other race/ethnicity groups, total percentages may be greater than 100.)

Now, more than ever, as the County continues to contend with the effects of the pandemic, ORESJ understands the importance of connecting families to high-quality childcare options that enable parents and caregivers to continue to work, re-enter the workforce, or receive training and educational opportunities that better equip them to find gainful employment. Funds requested through this supplemental appropriation should serve as a starting point in helping to strengthen the County's early childhood system. The two-Family Resource Specialist positions that will be filled as a result of these funds can serve as vital resources for families with the greatest needs in their search for high-quality childcare options. ORESJ would stress the importance of ensuring that the two contract hires are reflective of the diverse families with young children that they'll be serving, with particular emphasis on ensuring that they can speak to families in their home language. As noted in the information accompanying this supplemental request, these families would have access to one-on-one assistance specific to their childcare search that includes identifying potential scholarship opportunities to reduce the cost of care and be referred to additional county support relative to their circumstances. It is of the utmost importance that vital information such as this be communicated in that families can clearly understand.

Grant funds will also be put towards enhancing the County's current early childhood system by offering support to childcare providers to assist them in meeting high-quality standards as defined by Maryland EXCELS⁷. This is especially important for low-income families of color as they often struggle to find and afford high-quality childcare options that

⁷ Maryland EXCELS is the state's quality rating and improvement system for licensed childcare and early education programs that meet nationally recognized quality standards. More information is available here: <https://marylandexcels.org/about-us/>

meet their needs. As such, ORESJ supports the intended use of these grant funds to support childcare programs located within identified zip codes that have a demonstrated need. Accompanying information states that DHHS has identified five specific zip codes within their jurisdiction comprised of high numbers of children living in extreme poverty, who are often children of color or live in mixed-status homes. Grant funds should be targeted to specifically assist childcare programs within these zip codes in meeting high-quality standards.

The proposed use of the requested supplemental funds should serve as a starting point to equitably address the County's early childhood system. The addition of two-Family Resource Specialists in the County and targeted funds for a limited number of childcare programs in an already strained industry should mark the beginning of more sustained investment into the lives of families with young children struggling to make ends meet and their childcare providers. As ORESJ has previously recommended in some of the REIAs highlighted above, we would ask that reviewers continue to consider the following in efforts to ensure that young children in families of greatest need are prioritized as well as those charged with their care:

- The pandemic has all but decimated the current childcare industry which had already been under immense strain. As a result, families have been forced to make difficult decisions regarding the care of their young children with some opting to exit the workforce or seek more affordable and accessible options such as FFN care⁸. Those who operate in these home-based settings are often exempt from receiving County and State-level support despite having demonstrated their ability to meet the needs of young children and families in a culturally responsive manner. For some of these providers, the cost and time associated with obtaining licensure serve as barriers. ORESJ would advise considerations be made that provide these workers with a path to licensure, should they desire, and an opportunity to qualify for grants and funds that their licensed peers have access to.
- ORESJ continues to stress the importance of making earnest investments in the recruitment, training, and retention of a qualified, effective, and culturally responsive childcare workforce equipped with the skills to work with low-income and BIPOC young children and their families (including mixed-status families). This includes ensuring that providers are appropriately compensated (comparable to kindergarten teachers) with an accompanying benefits package.
- Targeted resources should be dedicated to young children in families that are hardest to reach. While the grant focuses on meeting the needs of low-income families of color with young children, ORESJ would also highlight engaging children who have

⁸ Family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) care is provided in the child's or caregiver's home by a person who is a relative, friend, or neighbor, or a babysitter or nanny. These providers are typically exempt from licensing and regulations. More information available here: <https://childcare.gov/consumer-education/family-friend-and-neighbor-care#:~:text=Family%2C%20friend%2C%20and%20neighbor%20care%20is%20provided%20in%20the%20child's,exempt%20from%20licensing%20and%20regulations.>

REIA for SA: #23-14 FY23 Department of Health and Human Services, Infant and Early
Childhood Mental Health Support Services Grant

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been expelled from more mainstream childcare facilities (which disproportionately impacts young Black boys), families involved in the child welfare system, those experiencing homelessness or those living in areas with high concentrations of poverty (extreme poverty).

cc: Raymond Crowel, Director, Department of Health, and Human Services
Ken Hartman, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive