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**TO:** Members of the State Board of Education

**FROM:** Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., State Superintendent of Schools 

**DATE:** May 21, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Blueprint Update: Maryland EXCELS & Maryland Accreditation

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### **Purpose**

To support the goals of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the Division of Early Childhood's Quality Improvement and Initiatives Branch will share updates on the growth in quality among early care and education programs through both Maryland EXCELS and Maryland Accreditation.

### **Background**

Maryland EXCELS is the state's quality rating and improvement system for licensed child care and early education programs that meet nationally recognized quality standards. Programs earn ratings from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating successful completion of initial requirements and 5 representing the highest quality, including state or national accreditation. Support for programs includes user-friendly online standards, guidance and training from Quality Assurance Specialists, peer support, tutorials, toolkit resources, financial incentives such as EXCELS payments and bonuses, and promotional tools to market high-quality programs to families.

Maryland Accreditation is a process for licensed child care centers and Public Pre-K programs to demonstrate their commitment to high-quality learning. Programs use tools such as Maryland Accreditation Standards, self-appraisals with staff and family input, a Program Improvement Plan, optional support through remote or onsite technical assistance, and a validation visit to achieve accreditation status.

In Maryland, there has been an increase in the number of programs publishing first-time or higher ratings as well as an increase in the number of programs achieving accreditation status.

### **Executive Summary**

This presentation will provide information on the following:

- Introduction to Maryland EXCELS
- Increasing Access to High Quality Early Care and Education
- Introduction to Maryland Accreditation
- Growth in Attainment

**Action**

No action.

**Attachments**

Blueprint Update: Maryland EXCELS & Maryland Accreditation.pdf

# Blueprint Update: Maryland EXCELS & Maryland Accreditation

Division of Early Childhood

May 21, 2024

PRESENTED BY

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Dr. Shayna Cook, Assistant State Superintendent  
Jena Smith, Director, Quality Improvement Initiatives





## Presentation Outline

1. Introduction to Maryland EXCELS
2. Increasing Access to High-Quality Early Care and Education
3. Introduction to Maryland Accreditation
4. Growth in Achievement

# What is Maryland EXCELS?

## Maryland's Quality Rating and Improvement System

- **Maryland EXCELS is the state's quality rating and improvement system for licensed child care and early childhood education programs that meet nationally recognized quality standards.**
- Programs earn quality ratings that form a pathway to excellence. A rating of 1 is awarded to providers and programs that successfully meet initial requirements. A rating of 5 is granted to those with the highest level of quality and who are state or nationally accredited.

### Support includes:

- User-friendly standards embedded in an online system that provides a roadmap for improvement.
- Guidance and training from experienced Quality Assurance Specialists, peer support initiatives, tutorials, and toolkit resources.
- Financial incentives such as EXCELS payments, bonuses, and vendor discounts.
- Promotional tools for marketing high-quality programs to families.

## Benefits



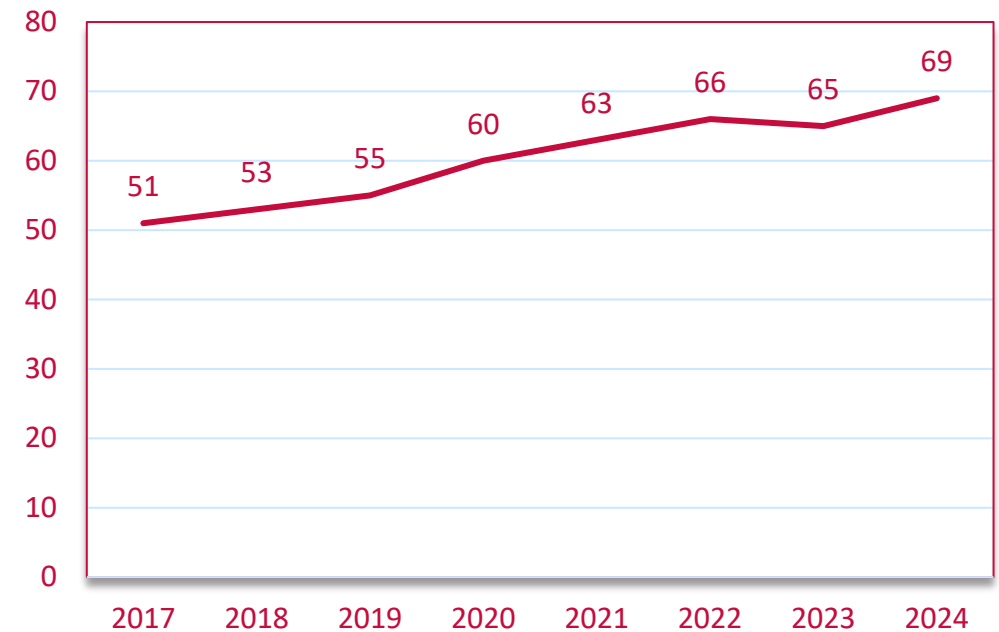
# Increase in Participation in Maryland EXCELS

Since 2013, Maryland EXCELS has been building capacity for high-quality early care and education program across the State.

2017 Participation Rates Across Maryland	
Child Care Centers	Family Child Care Homes
71%	40%

Current Participation Rates Across Maryland	
Child Care Centers	Family Child Care Homes
82%	60%

**% of Average Participation Among All Licensed Programs**



Every year, participation has steadily increased. The [Quality Compendium](#) shows that Maryland EXCELS has one of the highest participation rates of any quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) in the country.

## Increase in Maryland EXCELS Quality Ratings 3, 4, and 5 Among Licensed Child Care Programs

Year	Child Care Center (CCC) Total	Family Child Care (FCC) Total	Programs published at 3, 4, or 5
2020	689	291	980
2021	747	359	1106
2022	738	422	1160
2023	729	470	1199
2024*	728	514	1242

\* To date, 4/30/24

There has been a steady increase in the number of programs with published ratings of 3, 4, and 5 with a significant growth in the quality of family child care programs.

# Increase in Maryland EXCELS by Public Pre-K Participation in Public Schools and Licensed Child Care

Year	Published Public Pre-K (Quality Ratings 4 and 5)
2020	129
2021	128
2022	139
2023	187
2024*	220

\* To date, 4/30/24

Participation among Public Pre-K programs continues to grow each year from 2020 to 2024.





## Maryland EXCELS bonuses enable programs to invest in quality.

Maryland EXCELS Bonuses incentivize quality improvement by awarding bonuses to programs that:

- Increase their quality ratings by publishing a first-time rating.
- Re-publishing a Quality Rating 4 or 5.
- Maryland EXCELS bonuses are some of the highest financial incentives for QRIS nationally.



# Maryland EXCELS Bonuses

Quality Rating	Child Care Center Capacity 1-50			Child Care Center Capacity 51-100			Child Care Center Capacity 101+		
	COMAR	FY23	FY24	COMAR	FY23	FY24	COMAR	FY23	FY24
1	\$50	\$150	\$1,000	\$100	\$300	\$1,000	\$150	\$450	\$1,000
2	\$250	\$750	\$2,000	\$500	\$1,500	\$2,500	\$750	\$2,250	\$3,000
3	\$400	\$1,200	\$3,000	\$800	\$2,400	\$3,500	\$1,200	\$3,600	\$4,000
4	\$1,000	\$3,000	\$4,000	\$2,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$3,000	\$9,000	\$9,000
5	\$1,500	\$4,500	\$4,500	\$3,000	\$9,000	\$9,000	\$4,500	\$13,500	\$13,500

Quality Rating	Family Child Care			Large Family Homes		
	COMAR	FY23	FY24	COMAR	FY23	FY24
1	\$50	\$150	\$1,000	\$50	\$150	\$1,000
2	\$150	\$450	\$1,800	\$200	\$600	\$2,000
3	\$300	\$900	\$2,800	\$400	\$1,200	\$3,000
4	\$500	\$1,500	\$3,800	\$800	\$2,400	\$4,000
5	\$800	\$2,400	\$4,300	\$1,000	\$3,000	\$4,500

*“Providers are aware of and appreciate the bonuses. They may be motivated to increase quality ratings when bonuses are available...smaller bonus amounts awarded to lower-rated programs may not be sufficient motivation for improvement.” – Preliminary Analysis Report*

## The Impact of FY23 Bonuses

*“I spent my bonus funding on hiring a qualified additional staff member. The one I received for achieving Quality Rating 4 actually kept my doors open during a hard financial period.”*

**– Siobhan Lewis-Roach, a family child care provider in Allegany County**

*“These bonuses provided an opportunity to improve the quality of our furniture and learning materials. We were able to replace broken chairs and cubbies. We were also able to purchase new bikes and nap mats for multiple classrooms.”*

**– Little People’s Place, a child care center in Carroll County**

## Bonus Distribution History

In comparison to other states, Maryland provides some of the highest quality incentives for early care and education programs.

Year	Total # of Bonuses Distributed	Total Amount	First-Time Rating	Increase Rating and Republish
October 1, 2018-September 30, 2019	1,025	\$931,995	409	616
FY23	1,028	\$2,632,800	357	671
July 1, 2023-April 30, 2024	1,000	\$3,458,700	362	638

MSDE is on track to distribute a historic number of bonuses for FY24.



# Impact of Bonuses on Quality Ratings

Each month in FY24, there has been a growing number of improved quality ratings.

	July 2023	April 2024
First-time ratings	17	33
Increased Rating or Maintained Quality Rating 4 or 5	35	71

**+ 94% increase**

**+ 102% increase**

# Update: Maryland EXCELS Standards Revisions Process

The Maryland EXCELS Standards are being revised to further align with the values and priorities of families and early childhood education professionals and to provide a better customer experience.

Input from our community includes:

- Survey data
- Roundtable discussions
- Anecdotal information from customer interactions
- Feedback from an upcoming professional institute

Based on community input, we are working to streamline standards reduce barriers.



## Quality Matters Institute

Shaping the Future of  
Quality Care and Early Education

**May 31, 2024**  
**8 a.m. - 3 p.m.**

Maritime Conference Center  
692 Maritime Blvd., Linthicum Heights, MD

Join us for facilitated sessions that will gather input and ideas from early childhood professionals on improving the Maryland EXCELS Standards.

- The Importance of Quality Care
- Next Steps: Maryland EXCELS Standards
- Promoting Quality in Your Programs

Breakfast and lunch will be provided.

**Approved for 4 COK hours.**

**Cost - \$165**  
**Register by**  
**May 20**

# Standards Revision Examples

## Licensing and Compliance

Previous Standard	Revised Standard
<p>LIC 1.2 Licensed, open and operating for at least six months.</p>	<p>LIC 1.2 Program is licensed, open, and operating and not in conditional status.  <b>Removing the 6-month requirement will allow quality programs to publish at higher ratings sooner.</b></p>

## Accreditation and Rating Scales

Previous Standard	Revised Standard
<p>ACR 1.4 Accreditation self-study completed and validation visit requested.</p>	<p>ACR 1.4 The program has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begun the accreditation process, is actively pursuing accreditation, and is within the time allowed by the accrediting organization; OR</li> <li>• Completed the Accreditation Self-Study and requested the validation visit.</li> </ul>

# What is Maryland Accreditation?

Maryland Accreditation is a process through which licensed **child care centers** and **Public Pre-K programs** demonstrate their commitment to providing high-quality learning.

Programs pursue Maryland Accreditation using the following tools:

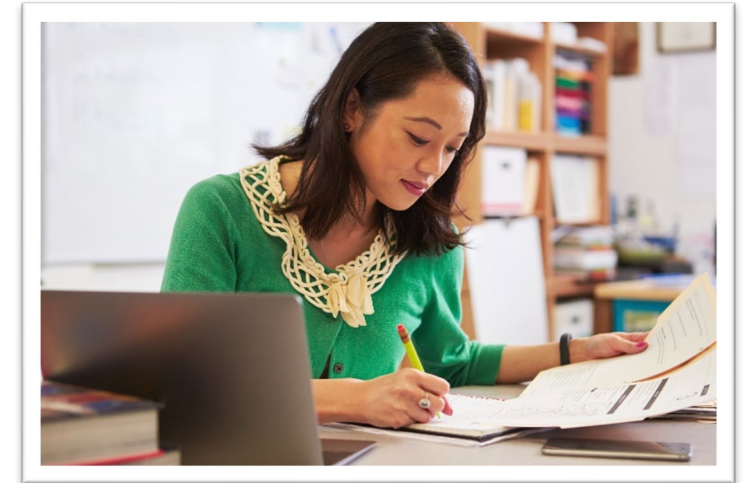
- **Maryland Accreditation Standards** for early childhood and school age programs
- **Self-Appraisal** including input from your staff and enrolled families
- **Program Improvement Plan** based on areas of need for improvement
- Review of program improvements through a **Final Self-Appraisal**
- Optional support through remote or onsite **Technical Assistance**
- Observation and feedback through a **Validation Visit**





# Participation Numbers by Program Type in Maryland Accreditation

Year	Total # of Participating Programs	# of Child Care Centers	# of Public Pre-K
2021	502	219	130
2022	642	214	154
2023	803	186	229
2024*	1005	209	286



\* To date, 4/30/24

Participation in Maryland Accreditation continues to show growth over time.

# Improvement of Assistance to Programs to Earn Maryland Accreditation

**2021:** In-person Program Improvement Visits were replaced with optional remote Technical Assistance, allowing greater convenience for providers.

**2023:** Maryland Accreditation Orientation was re-introduced as a self-paced, mobile-friendly online course, allowing programs to begin accreditation and re-visit information at any time.

**January 2024:** Optional Onsite Technical Assistance became available by request for programs seeking in-person assistance.

**April 2024:** The Maryland Accreditation online system was moved to a faster, mobile-friendly platform with user-friendly features requested by early care and education programs.

**May 2024:** Maryland Accreditation was extended from a three-year status to a five-year status, allowing programs more time to plan future improvements with families and staff.

# Questions