

Excerpt from Expanding High-Quality Child Care for Infants & Toddlers

Lessons from Implementation of Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships in States



Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships

Awards and State Profiles

Total Annual Partnership Awards to All Grantees

State	Federal FY 2015-2019 Round 1 Grants ^A	Federal FY 2017-2021 Round 2 Grants ^B	Federal FY 2019- 2023 Round 3 Grants ^C
ALABAMA	\$ 8.3 million	\$ 2.2 million	\$10.5 million
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	\$ 0.9 million	\$ 3.0 million	\$ 7.6 million
GEORGIA	\$16.2 million	\$ 2.1 million	\$20.1 million
LOUISIANA	\$ 8.4 million	\$ 5.2 million	\$15.5 million
MARYLAND	\$ 3.4 million	\$ 0	\$ 4.5 million
OKLAHOMA*	\$11.8 million	\$ 7.8 million	\$24.3 million
WASHINGTON	\$ 8.4 million	\$ 4.1 million	\$13.3 million

Note:

Round 1 Grants – In Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, Congress allocated \$500 million for the first round of EHS expansion and EHS-CC Partnership grants. ACF awarded the grants for this first round to state and local agencies in winter 2014. Grantees must reapply for these awards every five years.

Round 2 Grants – Congress allocated an additional \$135 million for new EHS expansion and EHS-CC Partnership grants in FY 2016. ACF awarded the grants for this second round of funding in winter 2017.

Round 3 Grants – Congress allocated a combined \$165 million for new EHS expansion and EHS-CC Partnership grants between FY 2018 and FY 2019. ACF awarded the grants in spring 2019. Spring 2019 awards also included grant renewals for state and local agencies that had received Round 1 awards in winter 2014.

Endnote:

A Calculated by the author based on information on the federal fiscal year 2014 awards, found at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/eed/early-learning/ehs-cc-partnerships/grant-awardees>.

B Calculated based on data from the Tracking Accountability in Government Grants System, available at <https://taggs.hhs.gov>.

C Data provided by the Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, via email on August 16, 2019.

* Oklahoma funding amounts include grants to two tribal EHS-CC Partnerships grantees.

To see the full report, please visit: www.theOunce.org/Partnerships

MD



Maryland State Department of Education allowed child care partners to determine eligibility for the child care program themselves, so families could more easily enroll in the Partnerships.

Maryland Profile

Maryland's Story

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Division of Early Childhood is responsible for multiple early learning programs, including oversight of the state child care subsidy system, licensing and monitoring child care sites, quality initiatives, prekindergarten and collaborative approaches such as the Head Start State Collaboration office and the state's network of "Judy Centers" – a network of on-site early childhood and family engagement services located in Title I school sites. When the federal Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships program began to roll out in 2014, MSDE officials saw a chance to pilot ideas they hoped to later bring statewide in order to strengthen their child care system for infants and toddlers and to partner with Head Start agencies.

From the beginning, MSDE administrators wanted to build on the relatively high child care licensing standards in the state to learn what it took to reach the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) in child care settings. For example, the teacher-to-child ratios and group size requirements in Maryland are some of the highest in the country at one adult to every three children under age 2 (although the ratio changes to one to every six children once they turn two years old). Staff at MSDE hoped that child care partners in Partnerships programs would reach the highest level of the state quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) known as Maryland EXCELS, simultaneously as they worked to meet HSPPS. Maryland EXCELS provides technical

assistance and incentives to child care programs as they achieve and improve their quality ratings.

MSDE officials also wanted to pilot changes in the way child care providers were paid through the subsidy system to promote a more stable supply of child care. Rather than relying solely on vouchers issued to parents to pay for child care, MSDE wanted to reinstate the use of direct contracts to child care providers for specific numbers of slots in order to build the supply of care for infants and toddlers, a payment method the state had used before but had discontinued. Using direct contracts, MSDE would allow child care partners to determine eligibility for the child care program themselves, so families could more easily enroll in the Partnerships and establish eligibility for Early Head Start and child care subsidy at the same time. State officials organized training and made state staff available to help Partnerships grantees learn how to adhere to state rules more effectively.

Working with Partnerships grantees to support their success, state officials learned some unexpected lessons. One surprise was that meeting HSPPS proved all-consuming for child care partners, and not as many improved their ratings in the state quality rating system as hoped. The state is now developing an alternative pathway in the rating system for Early Head Start and Head Start programs to be able to attain higher ratings based on the HSPPS they already meet. Another lesson was how different the three federal Partnerships grantees in Maryland are and what they are



Maryland Federal Award

\$3.4 million

Federal FY 2015-2019
Round 1 Grants

\$0.0 million

Federal FY 2017-2021
Round 2 Grants

\$4.5 million

Federal FY 2019- 2023
Round 3 Grants

doing to meet the needs of the specific populations of the state they serve. For example, the state provided quality improvement grants and allowed the local programs to request what they thought was most needed. They were surprised to see wide variation in what each grantee prioritized. One grantee requested funds to support the hearing testing equipment needed to comply with HSPPS to screen children for hearing difficulties, while others asked to use the funds to concentrate on increasing teacher skills and professional development.

All in all, state officials value the Partnerships grantees and plan to draw on the Partnerships implementation experience in their new federal Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five grant plan.

“Get involved with the Partnerships, and make it part of your statewide quality strategy,” advised Steven Hicks, assistant state superintendent for the division of early childhood development, Maryland State Department of Education.

What Were Maryland’s Strategies?

Leveraged multiple funding sources and state systems to support program success and quality.

- Used CCDBG infant and toddler set-aside funding to provide two-year quality improvement grants to the three Partnership grantees in the state. The programs applied for a range of funding uses, including the cost of professional development for teachers, ongoing coaching support and equipment to do hearing testing for the children.

Supported continuous access to infant and toddler child care for working families earning low incomes.

- Contracted directly with the child care partners for a certain number of slots in the program as long as children eligible for the state child care assistance program were enrolled in those slots.

Raised the bar for what quality infant and toddler child care could and should be.

- Developed a track in the state quality rating and improvement system specifically for Head Start and Early Head Start programs to provide an alternative pathway in meeting requirements.

Built a higher education pathway for the infant and toddler workforce.

- Made quality improvement grants to support child care partner teachers’ professional development through practice-based coaching and tuition, books and fees for college coursework at all levels. Teachers are also eligible for the Child Care Career and Professional Fund for tuition assistance.

Piloted reforms that could be taken statewide to improve care for many more infants and toddlers.

- Piloted subsidy slot contracts with child care providers, extended eligibility and continuity of care provisions that eventually became statewide as officials sought to implement the federal CCDBG changes required by law and regulation that emerged at the same time as the Partnerships.

“Use the Partnerships as part of your statewide quality strategy to improve the trajectories of young children and a model for the kind of support the state can provide for our most vulnerable families.”

**STEVEN HICKS, Assistant State Superintendent for the
Division of Early Childhood Development, Maryland State Department of Education**

USEFUL LINKS AND CITATIONS

MSDE Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/child-care-providers/office-child-care/credentialing-branch/child-care-career-and-professional>

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The Ounce of Prevention Fund (the Ounce) gives children in poverty the best chance for success in school and in life by advocating for and providing the highest-quality care and education from birth to age five. The Ounce envisions a world in which high-quality early learning opportunities beginning at birth are an integral part of our nation's education system. With commitment to quality as our guiding principle, the Ounce works at the intersection of practice, policy and research and forges public-private partnerships. Over the last 30 years, the Ounce has developed an effective approach to advancing knowledge, testing ideas in real-world settings, advocating for policy change, engaging champions and training practitioners and leaders.