



PROFILES: SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

State:	Maryland
Partnership name:	Local Early Childhood Advisory Councils
Web site(s):	http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/planning.html
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1. Background

Twenty-four Local Early Childhood Advisory Councils (LECAC) are part of Maryland's efforts to create a seamless Birth-to-Grade 12 reform agenda, which includes ensuring that all young children and their families are supported in the State's efforts to overcome school readiness gaps. The Local Early Childhood Councils each develop a local action agenda to support Maryland's goals and strategies for quality early childhood education.

The local councils grew out of the strategic planning for Maryland's Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC), which identified a gap in structured early childhood local leadership in the State. The Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), on behalf of the Maryland State Board of Education, engaged in a public-private planning process of more than a year. The Casey Foundation's result-based leadership tools and skills supported the formation of LECACs and the development of impactful local action plans. The statutorily authorized state Early Childhood Advisory Council acts in an advisory capacity for RTT-ELC grant activities and oversees the local councils. (The statewide Council is authorized by House Bill 461, available at <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?pid=billpage&stab=02&id=hb0461&tab=subject3&ys=2014RS>).

2. Mission and Goals

The mission of the 24 LECACs is to implement the action plans that were developed in support of school readiness. Through 2015, the focus is on supporting school readiness for specified populations of children including children from low-income families, children with disabilities, and English Language Learners (ELL). Local councils received start-up funding to enable them to establish their councils. Teams of five people from each jurisdiction participated in sessions provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, in partnership with the MSDE Division of Early Childhood Development, on leadership training and the development of local action plans. Local efforts promote participation in Maryland EXCELS (Excellence Counts in Early Learning and School-age Child Care), the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), provide professional development in the state's early learning standards and assessments, and assist in coordinating services for children with high needs with the goal of narrowing the school readiness gap.

3. Governance and Partnership Members



Each local council has between 15 and 30 members including representatives from public schools, local government, early childhood, family support, families, libraries, and human services, among others. To a large extent, local membership mirrors the membership of the State Council with additional participation to suit local needs. At present, 19 of the Councils are chaired by a representative of the local education agency and 5 are chaired by a representative of local government. Within each Council, there is a core team comprised of 4 to 6 members that acts as a steering committee.

A carefully conceived design links each Local Advisory Council chair with a lead representative and liaison at the MSDE Early Childhood Division. The chair is charged with relaying information to the core planning team as well as to the full LECAC team members, thus facilitating local leadership and communication.

The key statewide partners for the Councils are the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which contributes the leadership development training and support to each Council, the Maryland Division of Early Childhood Development; and the members of the state Early Childhood Advisory Council. Two to three times a year, local chairs attend State Council meetings and present on local action plans and activities.

4. Funding and Other Resources

In the first phase of development, initiated with federal RTT-ELC funding, a total of \$1.1 million was made available across the 24 local advisory councils. Maryland developed a funding formula that took into account items such as child population, disability, and ELL factors to determine the particular amount for each Council. This funding is used to implement the Action Plans developed by each local advisory council. In addition, modest start-up funding of \$3,000 was provided to each Council. Activities in the action plans are often offered in conjunction with local partners.

5. Activities

Each local advisory council created its own unique action plan, with a focus on supporting children from low-income families, children with disabilities, and children who are ELLs. The 2014 –15 project abstracts are available at

http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/docs/LECACProjectAbstracts.pdf.

Local councils use resources to simultaneously support professional development of early childhood professionals; encourage family engagement and support work with health care professionals on strategies such as Reach Out and Read; support early childhood participation in EXCELS, the Maryland QRIS; and promote overall community engagement.

Local councils typically form subcommittees at the local level to carry out their action plans, employing the results-based accountability and results-based facilitation skills that were developed during the training provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Other activity trends occurring locally include use of social media to reach families and a focus on partnerships to accomplish their objectives.



6. Evaluation and Outcomes

The local advisory councils are required to submit annual evaluation reports and quarterly progress reports on the action plans that they have undertaken. Regional Leadership Booster Sessions will be conducted in late 2014 and early 2015 by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to focus on what has been accomplished, what still needs to be done, and how to achieve sustainability.

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