



MARYLAND
EXCELS
Check for Quality

Program Workbook
Center-Based Child Care
Programs

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Please Note: This workbook is designed to be read online and in print form. There are links embedded so that those reading it online may click text. All links used in this text are listed on page 27 for those who may be reading this workbook in print format.



Maryland EXCELS Overview

Maryland EXCELS is a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). A QRIS is a program that awards ratings to family providers, center-based and public school child care and education programs, and school-age before and after school programs that meet increasingly higher standards of quality in key areas. EXCELS stands for **Exc**cellence in **E**arly **L**earning and **S**chool Age Child Care. Maryland EXCELS is a voluntary program designed to increase parent and provider awareness of the elements of high quality early care and education, to recognize and support providers who are meeting those standards, and to educate families and the community about the importance of high quality child care.

Maryland has implemented a Quality Rating and Improvement System as a central component of the State's commitment to its youngest children. Quality Rating and Improvement Systems have emerged nationally as a systematic way to measure quality and promote high quality early care programs. Maryland EXCELS will help assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education settings.

Programs participating in Maryland EXCELS will use a web-based system to work through the Standards. Using the online system, programs will provide evidence that shows that each criterion is being met. As a program moves up from a Check Level One to a Check Level Five, additional evidence is required to demonstrate that higher levels of quality are being achieved. Each check attained includes criteria that were met in the preceding levels. The 5 Content Areas covered in EXCELS are:

1. Licensing and Compliance
2. Staffing and Professional Development
3. Rating Scales/Accreditation
4. Developmentally Appropriate Learning and Practice
5. Administrative Practices and Procedures

As programs move up through the check levels, the expectations for each content area become more rigorous. All standards within each check level and all prior levels must be completely satisfied in order to qualify for that check level rating. There are several events that can trigger a ratings review or a loss of rating for the program, including a substantiated serious licensing violation. Programs are encouraged to reapply to Maryland EXCELS after successfully addressing the licensing violation, and after maintaining a license in good standing for a minimum of 12 months. Additional events that could trigger a program rating review may include change in location, staff turnover of greater than 50% (calculated at the time of annual renewal), or failure to submit an annual update. In the event that a check level rating should change, it is the program's responsibility to inform parents of the change and to revise any publications used for marketing that indicates the Maryland EXCELS check level rating. The new rating will be reflected on the Maryland EXCELS website to be viewed by the public.

Application and Registration

Any licensed center-based program, Head Start, family child care provider, public prekindergarten or school-age program that is in compliance with the appropriate regulations and has been in operation for at least six months is eligible to participate in Maryland EXCELS. Providers participating in Maryland EXCELS are expected to be engaged in an ongoing process of self-evaluation and program improvement.

Before the process of uploading documents can begin, programs must first **apply** and then **register** for Maryland EXCELS.



1. Visit www.marylandexcels.org and click on the **Providers** tab.



2. Click **video orientation** to learn more about Maryland EXCELS.

3. Click **How to Apply** to begin the registration and application process.

Basics

How to Apply

Benefits to Programs

Professional Development

Technical Assistance

Healthy Beginnings and MMSR

Accreditation

Resources

Fall 2012 Field Test (NEW!)

How to Apply

If you are a center-based program, Head Start, family child care provider, public preschool, or school-age program that is in compliance with licensing and has been in operation for at least 12 months, you are eligible to participate in Maryland EXCELS. To register and apply for Maryland EXCELS, click on the Register and Apply button below.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, and applicants will be accepted into cohorts of providers based on the following criteria:

- Application completeness
- Geographic and demographic information
- Availability of Program Coordinators

You will be notified of the status of your application via email. Any program that submits a completed application and is not accepted into a cohort will be placed on a waiting list for admittance into the next available cohort.

REGISTER AND APPLY FOR MARYLAND EXCELS

Please Note: We are currently running a closed Pilot Program for Maryland EXCELS. Check back to find out when Maryland EXCELS is open for enrollment.

4. Click Register and Apply for Maryland EXCELS.

5. Complete the registration information.

Registration

First Name *

Last Name *

Program Name *

If you are a chain, please indicate your city within the Program Name.

Program Type *

- Center Based:** Public or private child care programs that provide care for all or part of the day, which include Head Start, Early Head Start, and nursery schools.
- Family Provider:** A registered child care provider that operates a residence in which care is provided for no more than 8 children.
- School Age:** A public or private program that provides care for children who are school age, typically before and after the school day.
- Large Family Provider:** A registered child care provider that operates a residence in which care is provided for at least 9, but not more than 12 children.
- Public Pre-K:** State-funded prekindergarten programs that are administered by local school systems.

Licence/Registration/LOC # *

Email *

Confirm Email *

Username *

Password *

Confirm Password *

Registration Tips

- ✓ Select a uniquely identifiable Program Name. If your program has multiple locations, consider adding your location to the Program Name.
- ✓ If your license number has two numbers before the dash (such as 21-12345), do not enter the numbers that precede the dash.
- ✓ Keep your username and password handy. You will need them for step 6.
- ✓ An email address may only be registered once. If you are registering multiple programs you will need multiple email addresses.

Login

- You are registered for Maryland EXCELS. Please login to your account.

Username *

Password *

Login

[I forgot my username and/or password.](#)

[Register for a Maryland EXCELS Account.](#)

JOHNS HOPKINS
UNIVERSITY
School of Education

CENTER FOR
TECHNOLOGY IN
EDUCATION



6. Log in with Username and Password.

7. Click Apply to Participate in MD EXCELS.

Home Dashboard Messages Profile Users Account

MD EXCELS



Maryland EXCELS awards ratings to providers and programs that meet increasingly higher standards of quality in key areas. Maryland EXCELS is a voluntary program designed to recognize early care and school age education programs that provide quality care, encourage providers to increase the level of quality provided in their programs, and to provide parents with information and choices about quality child care.

[Apply to Participate in MD EXCELS](#)

MARYLAND EXCELS
Check for Quality

Home Dashboard Messages Profile Users Account

Apply to Participate in MD EXCELS

Program Type *

- Center Based
- Family Provider
- School Age
- Large Family Provider
- Public Pre-K

Established Since *

2013

Lead Contact *

First Name

Last Name

Phone

Add New Member

Street Address *

City *

State *

Maryland

Zip Code *

County *

Annapolis

Phone *

Website

Photo

Business Hours

From *

To *

Does your program participate in licensed reimbursement? *

Yes No

Does your program receive childcare subsidies for any children currently enrolled? *

Yes No

Center Based

Enrollment/Staffing Information

Age Range	Number of Children	Number of Classrooms	Number of Staff Members
Birth to 18 months	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
18-24 months	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
24-36 months	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3-4 years	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5-6 years	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Totals	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Is your program currently accredited? *

Yes No

8. Complete the application and Enrollment information. Click "Submit Application."

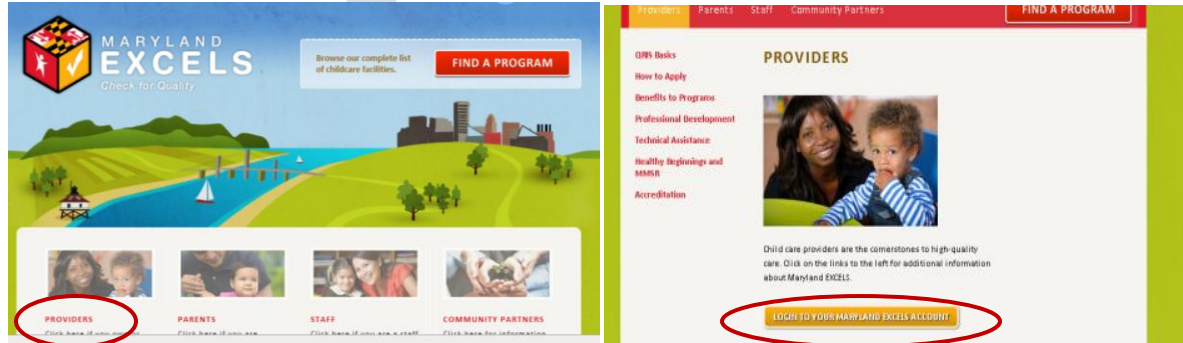
Your application will be reviewed by a member of the Maryland EXCELS Team. If accepted, you will be assigned to a Program Coordinator who will contact you and help guide you through the Maryland EXCELS program.

Uploading Documents for Maryland EXCELS

After your application has been accepted, you can log onto Maryland EXCELS and begin uploading evidence. From the date of acceptance into Maryland EXCELS, you will have two years to upload your evidence and receive an initial rating. Programs that have received a rating can upload documents at any time in an effort to improve the program's check level. A program is required to submit an annual update to maintain the current rating.

Logging On

Go to <http://marylandexcels.org/>, click on **Providers** and then click on **Login to Your Maryland EXCELS Account**.



Uploading Files

1. Navigate to the Maryland EXCELS tab to get to your active cycle.

Home Dashboard **MD EXCELS** Appointments Messages Profile Users Account

MD EXCELS Cycles MD EXCELS Applications

Date Check Level Achieved: 02/15/2012
Expiration: 02/15/2013

Licence #: 4436291392
Rubric: Center Based 11/15/2011

Status: Submitted
Date Last Updated: 09/13/2012

Coordinator: Test Coordinator 1
Published: No

Rating Scale and Accreditation

Criteria	Evidence to Upload	Evidence / Comments	Status
Check Level: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Open	No Requirements for this check level	
Check Level: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A program must meet all of the standards in check levels 1 and 2 in order to satisfy check level 2			NECPA
Accreditation: The Director or designated staff person has visited an accredited child care center within the past 12 months.	Open		Criteria
Evidence: Upload statement from Director or Leadership from accredited child care center documenting visit.			

2. Select the content area where you want to begin uploading documents.

3. Click "Open" to begin to upload documents.

4. Click "Post a Comment or File."

Comments and Evidence

Rating Scale and Accreditation

Criteria
Improvement plan created for any Environment Rating Scale (ERS) subscale score below 4.0.

Evidence to Upload
ERS improvement plan for any subscale score below 4.0

Attachment:
 None Upload new file Choose from previous uploads

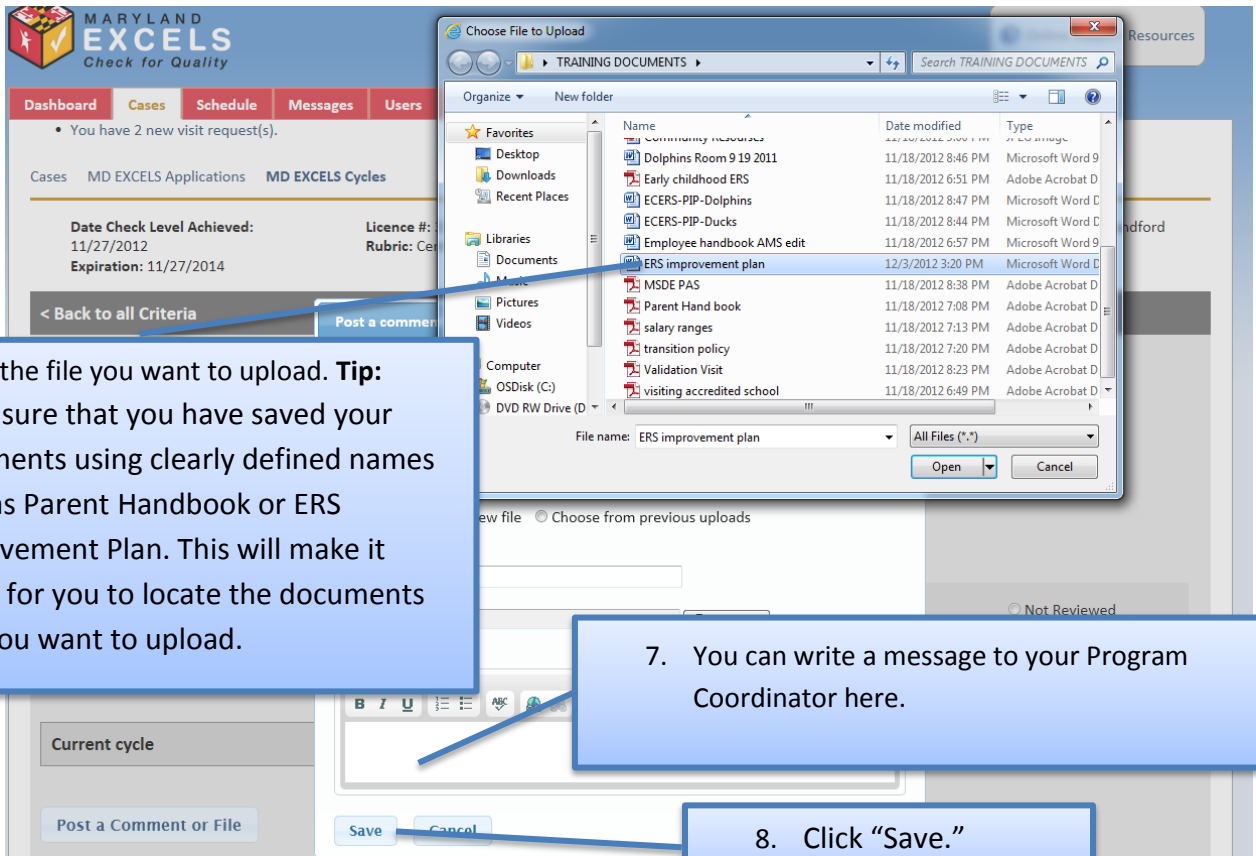
File Name:

Comment:

Current cycle

Past Cycles

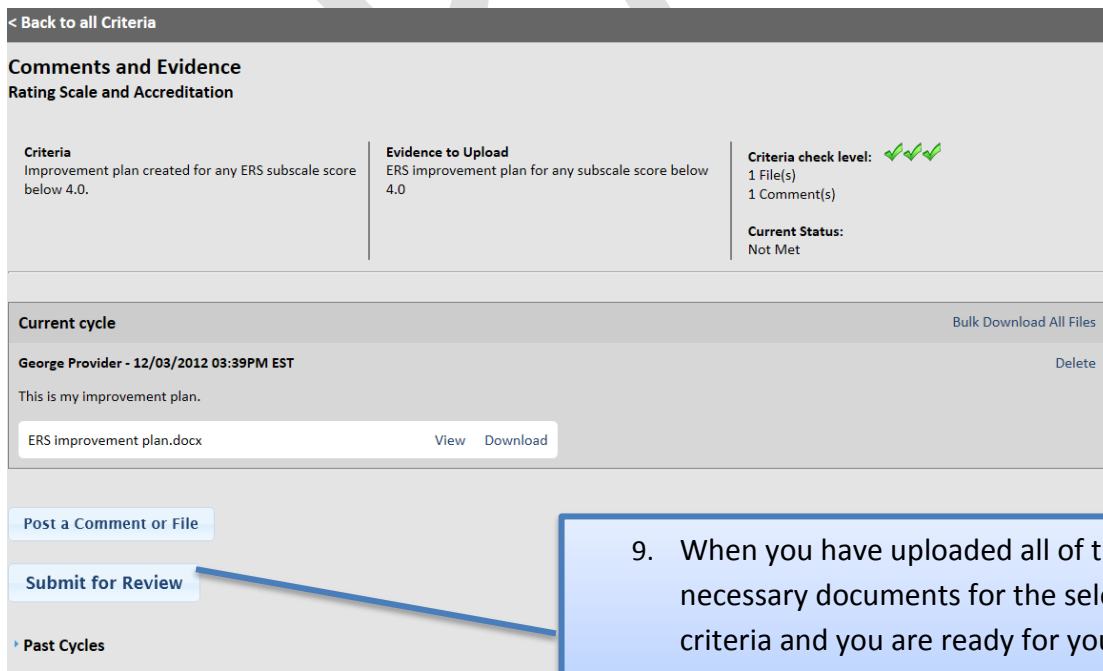
5. Select "None" if there is no file to upload. Select "Upload new file" to upload a document into EXCELS for the first time. Select "Choose from previous uploads" to select a file that has already been uploaded into your EXCELS portfolio. Then click "Browse."



6. Select the file you want to upload. **Tip:** Make sure that you have saved your documents using clearly defined names such as Parent Handbook or ERS Improvement Plan. This will make it easier for you to locate the documents that you want to upload.

7. You can write a message to your Program Coordinator here.

8. Click "Save."



9. When you have uploaded all of the necessary documents for the selected criteria and you are ready for your Program Coordinator to rate the evidence, click "Submit for Review."

Submitting for Rating

Maryland EXCELS operates as a cycle. A cycle begins when a program applies and is accepted. A new cycle begins as soon as a program receives a rating. You can expect your Program Coordinator to review and rate your evidence in approximately 30 days.

Programs will always have the opportunity to move up a check level and can continue to work on meeting the criteria for higher check levels in each program area. You can continue to submit evidence to your online portfolio.

Note that clicking “Submit for Review” will turn the item yellow and alert your Program Coordinator that the item is ready to be reviewed.

Check Level: 🟢				
Open	There is no criteria for Level 1.	No evidence required	0 File(s) 0 Comment(s)	Criteria Met 11/26/2012 MSDE
Check Level: 🟢🟢				
Open	Visited or spoken to director of an accredited program	Letter from Director	0 File(s) 0 Comment(s)	Criteria Met 11/26/2012 MSDE
Check Level: 🟢🟢🟢				
Open	Accreditation self study completed	Pro	0 Comment(s)	Criteria Met 11/26/2012 MSDE
Open	Accreditation developed		0 File(s) 0 Comment(s)	Criteria Met 11/26/2012 MSDE
Open	ERS self-assessment conducted	ERS self-assessment score sheet	0 File(s) 0 Comment(s)	Not Met Submitted for Review 11/26/2012
Open	ERS imp		0 Comment(s)	Not Met

Green items have been met.

Yellow items are pending review from your Coordinator.

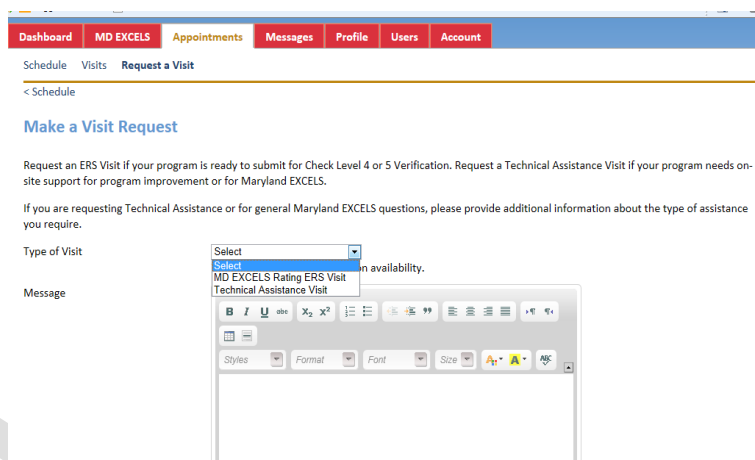
White items have not been met.

Maryland EXCELS Onsite Visits

There are several types of onsite visits as part of Maryland EXCELS. **In addition to the types of visits described below, all programs participating in Maryland EXCELS are subject to random verification visits conducted by a member of the Maryland EXCELS team.**

Environment Rating Scale

(ERS): At Check Level 4, a MSDE-approved ERS evaluator will be assigned to conduct a formal onsite assessment using the Environment Rating Scales. These formal classroom observations will be conducted on a random sample of classrooms, including at least one classroom of every age range using the appropriate Environment Rating Scale. Your visit can be requested and scheduled through the Maryland EXCELS website. **(During the field test, all ERS visits are scheduled through your Program Coordinator.)**



The screenshot shows a web interface for requesting a visit. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Dashboard, MD EXCELS, Appointments, Messages, Profile, Users, and Account. Below this, there are tabs for Schedule, Visits, and Request a Visit. The main heading is 'Make a Visit Request'. A sub-heading reads: 'Request an ERS Visit if your program is ready to submit for Check Level 4 or 5 Verification. Request a Technical Assistance Visit if your program needs on-site support for program improvement or for Maryland EXCELS.' Below this, a note states: 'If you are requesting Technical Assistance or for general Maryland EXCELS questions, please provide additional information about the type of assistance you require.' The form includes a 'Type of Visit' dropdown menu with options: 'Select', 'MD EXCELS Rating ERS Visit', and 'Technical Assistance Visit'. A 'Message' field is also present, with a rich text editor toolbar above it.

It is not required for programs to have an ERS visit if they have had an accreditation or reaccreditation visit in the past twelve months. Accredited programs should read the Alternative Pathway Information on page 22. **Accredited programs do NOT need to have an ERS visit or self-study during their first year in the Maryland EXCELS program. The chart on page 16 will help you determine if you need to have an ERS assessment.**

Program Administration Scale (PAS): To achieve Check Level 5, a program must have an MSDE-approved assessor complete the [PAS](#). PAS ratings are valid for three years, after which, another visit is required. The PAS assesses quality in ten areas: human resources development, personnel cost and allocation, center operations, child assessment, fiscal management, program planning and evaluation, family partnerships, marketing and public relations, technology and staff qualifications.

It is not required for programs to have a PAS visit if they have had an accreditation or reaccreditation visit in the past twelve months. Accredited programs should read the Alternative Pathway Information on page 22. **Accredited programs do NOT need to have a PAS visit or self-study during their first year in the Maryland EXCELS program.**

Technical Assistance: Programs may have a Technical Assistance visit for program improvement or for assistance with Maryland EXCELS. These visits are either through program request or based on a recommendation by the Program Coordinator. Technical Assistance visits are conducted by trained early

childhood specialists from the local Resource and Referral Agencies and can be requested through the Maryland EXCELS website. Assistance may be provided onsite or may be in the form of a group session with other local providers.

Quality Assurance Visit: A Quality Assurance Specialist may visit to provide additional technical assistance or to verify the accuracy of a Maryland EXCELS rating.

Accreditation: In order to achieve Check Level 5, programs must achieve accreditation through one of the agencies approved by Maryland (see page 17). These visits are coordinated directly by the Program and they require an evaluator from an approved accrediting agency to visit your program to observe, evaluate, and assess. These visits are not scheduled through Maryland EXCELS.

Demonstrating Achievement of the Standards

The charts on pages 13-21 are designed to help you gather the necessary evidence and documentation to upload. For a complete list of the standards, visit the [Maryland EXCELS Resource Page](#).

Standard 1: Licensing and Compliance

Rationale: *The state of Maryland has established rigorous standards for licensure. Licensure requirements ensure that all child care programs operating in the state of Maryland provide care to infants and children with consideration for their health and safety. These regulations cover basic health and safety practices, prevent the transmission of communicable diseases, establish minimum criteria for training, professional development, and background checks for people working with or sharing space with children, and clearly define the minimum practices that must take place in a child care program in order to maintain licensure. Licensure regulations also outline practices that are violations related to staff qualifications, supervision and treatment of children, ratios and group sizes.*

All programs in Maryland EXCELS must be fully licensed or registered, open, and operating in order to meet Check Level 1. At Check Levels 2 through 5, programs must be out of provisional and/or conditional licensing status. Additionally, all participating programs must have no substantiated complaints of abuse, neglect, or injurious treatment, and must provide adequate supervision (including group sizes and ratios) for all children. For additional information about Licensing Requirements, see the [COMAR regulations](#). Maintaining a license in good standing is a requirement at all levels of Maryland EXCELS; a substantiated complaint of child abuse, neglect, injurious treatment or supervision will automatically trigger the revocation of a program’s Check Level.

Documents to Upload for Licensing and Compliance				
Check Level 1	Check Level 2	Check Level 3	Check Level 4	Check Level 5
There are no documents to upload for Standard 1. All license and compliance information will be uploaded from the Child Care Administration Tracking System (CCATS).				

Standard 2: Staffing and Professional Development

Rationale: Early childhood educators have a unique responsibility for the health, well-being, and early learning opportunities for children, often starting as early as 6 weeks of age. Infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children all have unique needs, expectations, and abilities. Early childhood educators are asked to provide loving, compassionate care and educational experiences, while maintaining the health, safety, and happiness of multiple children. Ongoing training in the areas of child development, inclusive practices, learning environments, curriculum, health and safety, and assessment practices help staff members continue to provide research-based care that meets best practices in all areas of programming. Additionally, increasing staff members' knowledge and skills can promote smoother transitions for children, reduce staff turnover, and improve a program's ability to move through the Maryland EXCELS system. Program managers, owners, and operators, also need proper training in the area of program administration and business practices.

Staff members working in child care programs or family child care homes are required to meet minimum standards for training and professional development as outlined in [COMAR](#) regulations. As a



participating program in Maryland EXCELS, staff members are expected and encouraged to seek continued personal and professional development opportunities. Starting at Check Level 2, lead and assistant staff members must either enter into Maryland's [Credentialing](#) Program, or demonstrate the equivalent training or coursework for a specified Credentialing level. At least 60% of lead staff must have achieved a specified Maryland Credential level in order to achieve Check Levels 2 through 5.

Maryland provides multiple ways for providers to seek professional development and training, including online courses and modules, face-to-face training provided by MSDE-approved trainers, Resource and Referral Agencies, and institutes of higher learning. Information about specific training related to QRIS components can be found under Professional Development in the Provider and Staff sections of the [Maryland EXCELS](#) website.

In Maryland EXCELS, programs are required to demonstrate administrative competence by meeting increasingly sophisticated levels of administrative practice and policy, culminating in completing training in either the Program Administration Scale or the Business Administration Scale or successfully demonstrating comparable competencies through the accreditation process or equivalent training. Equivalent Training is 90 hours of approved coursework in areas related to business administration, computer technology, or program management. College courses and the [National Administrator Credential](#) are each equivalent to 45 hours of training.

Evidence to Upload for Staffing and Professional Development					
	Check Level 1	Check Level 2	Check Level 3	Check Level 4	Check Level 5
Maryland Credential	<input type="checkbox"/> Credential Certificates for lead staff OR proof of equivalent training for lead staff members			<input type="checkbox"/> Credential Certificates for lead staff	
PAS Training				<input type="checkbox"/> Documentation of PAS training OR Documentation of 90 hours of approved training	

Programs will be asked to list required information for each staff member into the Maryland EXCELS web tool. Click on “Add a staff Member” and list the requested information. The system will calculate your percentage for you.

The screenshot displays the Maryland EXCELS web tool interface. On the left, the 'Comments and Evidence' section for 'Staffing and Professional Development' is visible, containing criteria text and a 'Staff List' table. A red circle highlights the '+ Add a Staff Member' button in the staff list. A modal window titled 'Add a Staff Member' is open in the center, containing fields for First Name, Middle Initial, Last Name, DOB, Start Date, End Date, Credentialed (Yes/No), and Lead Staff (Yes/No), along with 'Save' and 'Cancel' buttons. On the right, a summary panel shows 'Criteria check level: ✓✓', 'Current Status: Criteria Met /04/2012 SDE', and a table with the following data:

Credentialed Lead Staff	0% (0)
Non-Credentialed Lead Staff	100% (0)
Total Lead Staff	0

Standard 3: Rating Scales & Accreditation

Rationale: The classroom environment is a critical component to the quality of care provided in a program. The Environment Rating Scales provide a consistent, reliable, and comprehensive measure of classroom environment, program practices, and teacher/student interactions. The Program and Business Administration Scales are tools that measure the overall quality of business, professional and administrative practices. Additionally, the rating scales can be used as a measure of program status and provide the groundwork for improvement plans. In addition to rating scales, accreditation by an outside source is another critical component of high-quality early childhood programming. Accreditation offers validation and recognition of the program’s practices, and demonstrates a commitment to continued progress toward increasing levels of quality. The process of self-appraisal helps programs identify strengths and weaknesses and can be used as a “roadmap” to identify successful program improvement

strategies. For programs, outside validation is also a valuable marketing and awareness tool, as it is a visible sign of quality for parents and community members.

Environment Rating Scales

Beginning at Check Level 3, the program must conduct a self-evaluation using the [Environment Ratings Scales](#) (ERS). A center-based program must conduct a self-evaluation for at least one classroom at each age group using the appropriate scale:

- ITERS-R: *The Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised*
- ECERS-R: *The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised*

To reach Check Level 4, programs will be assessed by a trained outside evaluator using the appropriate ERS tool. The ERS visit is scheduled through the Maryland EXCELS website, and may be conducted by more than one evaluator (depending on program size). A random sample of classrooms will be assessed during the ERS visit, including at least one classroom from each age group. The ERS evaluations can take up to an entire day. An average classroom score is calculated after the ERS visit and a minimum score must be reached at Check Levels 4 and 5. **Programs receiving national or state accreditation are not required to complete an ERS self-assessment or have an outside ERS assessment within twelve months of having an accreditation visit or reaccreditation/renewal visit by an approved accrediting body. Please see the section on Alternative Pathways (page 22) for more information.**

To request a visit, click on the Appointments tab and then click Visits. Use the drop down menu to choose the type of visit you are requesting. **NOTE: For the field test, please visit the [RESOURCE PAGE](#) to complete a form if your program is ready for an ERS visit.**

In order to assist you in determining if your program needs an ERS visit, please review the chart below and consult with your Program Coordinator.

My program is accredited by an MSDE approved agency and this is my first year in EXCELS.	No, you do not need an ERS rating or self-study. Next year, you will either <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an accreditation or reaccreditation visit • Complete an ERS self-study OR • Have an ERS assessment You will work with your Program Coordinator to determine your ERS need(s).
My program has had an accreditation or reaccreditation visit within the past 12 months.	No, you do not need an ERS rating or self-study. Next year, you will complete an ERS self-study.
My program has achieved check level 1 or 2 in EXCELS.	No, you must achieve at least a level 3 before you request an ERS assessment.
I'm participating in Tiered Reimbursement.	Maybe. Continue to complete all of your Tiered Reimbursement Requirements during the field test. ERS assessments conducted for the purpose

	of receiving or renewing Tiered Reimbursement can be used for your Maryland EXCELS portfolio.
My program has achieved a level 3 in EXCELS and we would like to achieve Levels 4 or 5.	Yes. Please contact your program coordinator.
I have had an ERS assessment by MSDE within the past 12 months for Tiered Reimbursement.	No, you do not need an ERS rating or self-study. Next year, you will either <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an accreditation or reaccreditation visit • Complete an ERS self-study OR • Have an ERS assessment You will work with your Program Coordinator to determine your ERS need(s).

Program Administration Scale (PAS)

In addition to having an outside environment rating using the ERS and achieving accreditation at the state and/or national level, programs seeking to reach a Check Level 4 or 5 must also meet the requirements of the [Program Administration Scale](#) (PAS). The PAS is a tool used to assess the business practices and administrative policies in place in a child care center. Programs must meet minimum average scores to reach Check Level 4 or 5. Accredited programs may meet the PAS requirements by uploading their accreditation score sheet(s) in the applicable areas of program administration. **Programs receiving national or state accreditation are not required to complete a PAS/BAS self-assessment or have an independent assessment within 12 months of having an accreditation visit or reaccreditation/renewal visit by an approved accrediting body.**

Accreditation

Maryland EXCELS is designed to support programs as they work, incrementally, to achieve success in all areas, and to recognize these significant milestones in a program’s progress toward accreditation.

MSDE and Maryland EXCELS recognize the following accrediting organizations:

- [American Montessori Internationale/USA](#) (AMI/USA)
- [American Montessori Society](#) (AMS)
- [Association of Independent Maryland Schools](#) (AIMS)
- [Association of Waldorf Schools of North America](#) (AWSNA)
- [Council on Accreditation - After-School Accreditation](#) (COA/ASA)
- [Maryland State Department of Education](#) (MSDE)
- [Middle States Commission – Early Ages](#) (MSCES-Early Years)
- [Middle States Commission of Elementary Schools](#) (MSCES)
- [National Accreditation Commission](#) (NAC)
- [National Association for the Education of Young Children](#) (NAEYC)
- [National Association for Family Child Care](#) (NAFCC)
- [National Early Childhood Program Accreditation](#) (NECPA)

Programs that are currently accredited by MSDE and/or a national accrediting body will use the Maryland EXCELS Alternative Pathways. The Alternative Pathways give programs credit for components that have already been satisfied by the accreditation award.

Evidence to Upload for Rating Scale and Accreditation					
	Check Level 1	Check Level 2	Check Level 3	Check Level 4	Check Level 5
Accreditation		<input type="checkbox"/> Letter signed by Director or Leadership documenting contact with an accredited program	<input type="checkbox"/> Accreditation self-study or receipt of completed self-study from accrediting agency	<input type="checkbox"/> Accreditation improvement plan or receipt of completed improvement plan from accrediting agency	<input type="checkbox"/> Letter of Accreditation award from Accrediting Agency and annual report to accrediting agency
Environment Rating Scale			<input type="checkbox"/> ERS self-evaluation rating form for at least one of each age group and improvement plan for any subscale score below 4.0.	<input type="checkbox"/> Program improvement plan for any subscale below 4.5 <input type="checkbox"/> ERS score sheet (Required: average program score of at least 4.5 and no classroom scoring below 3.5)	<input type="checkbox"/> Program improvement plan for any subscale below 5.0 <input type="checkbox"/> ERS score sheet (Required: average program score of at least 5.0 and no classroom scoring below 4.0)
Program Administration Scale				<input type="checkbox"/> PAS score sheet for self-rating (completed within 12 months) OR accreditation score sheet in applicable areas of program administration	<input type="checkbox"/> PAS score sheet from an independent observer (completed within the past 3 years) with minimum score of 4.5 OR accreditation score sheet in applicable areas of program administration

*PAS and ERS self-study and independent assessments are not needed during an accredited program's first year in Maryland EXCELS OR if a program has had an accreditation or reaccreditation visit within the past 12 months.

Standard 4: Developmentally Appropriate Learning and Practice/Child Assessment

Rationale: Developmentally appropriate practices are those in which staff members are constantly informally and formally evaluating children’s needs, and setting expectations and goals that are reasonable for each individual child. Optimum learning takes place when children are provided with the instruction, guidance, and support to meet challenges and build new knowledge. High quality programs aim to identify each individual child’s needs, interests, and abilities, and to create learning experiences that encourage children to continue to grow. High quality early care and education programs are intended to serve every child, including children with disabilities or special health care needs. Inclusive practices are program policies and practices that optimize the learning experiences for all children in the program.

Early care and education programs are more than just “daycare” programs; they are programs in which children thrive, learn, grow, and prepare for entering kindergarten ready to succeed. In order for that to happen, a high quality child care program must provide care and learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate, provide individualized instruction based on each child’s interests and needs, and conduct ongoing formal and informal assessment on each child’s progress to determine the need for changes in instruction. Developmentally appropriate practices are responsive, and based on the needs of the children in the program.

In Maryland EXCELS, developmentally appropriate practices include using a curriculum that is either part of the MSDE recommended [list](#), or a curriculum that has undergone an alignment to the developmental domains in the Maryland Model for School Readiness ([MMSR](#)) and has been approved by MSDE. A highly rated program is one in which there is a written method for curriculum planning that incorporates the interests, skills and needs of the children in the program, while still providing flexibility.

Evidence to Upload for Developmentally Appropriate Learning and Practice						
		Check Level 1	Check Level 2	Check Level 3	Check Level 4	Check Level 5
Daily Schedule	<input type="checkbox"/> Daily Schedule					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy regarding screen time or Media Policy					
Curriculum Planning	<input type="checkbox"/> Written description of curriculum planning process					
		<input type="checkbox"/> Sample Lesson Plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Representative recent lesson plan in use with at least one age group	<input type="checkbox"/> Recent lesson plan for each age group served	<input type="checkbox"/> Recent lesson plan for each age group served and IEP/IFSP* if applicable	
Chart continues on the following page						

Evidence to Upload for Developmentally Appropriate Learning and Practice - continued				
Check Level 1	Check Level 2	Check Level 3	Check Level 4	Check Level 5
Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Developmental Screen (ECDS) practices and policies for sharing results (not required during the field test). <i>The screening tools have been identified and posted on the Maryland State Department of Education website. They are currently being validated by a national panel. The approved list will be available before Spring 2013. All programs participating in Maryland EXCELS will be required to use a recommended tool as of July 1, 2014. After January 1, 2015, all child care programs will be required to implement the use of an approved screening tool.</i>			
		<input type="checkbox"/> Written description of assessment practices	<input type="checkbox"/> Written description of assessment practices including sample child assessment measures	<input type="checkbox"/> Written description of assessment practices including sample child assessment measures AND written policy for sharing assessment results

*IEP = Individual Education Program; IFSP = Individual Family Service Plan

*ECDS – Early Childhood Developmental Screening

Standard 5: Administrative Policies and Practices

Rationale: *Sound business practices, policies, and procedures help programs run smoothly and deliver the services that parents expect and children deserve. Parents, staff members, and leadership are all able to commit to and understand the policies and procedures that govern the program’s practices. Written policies and procedure manuals also allow leadership to set and maintain consistent expectations for staff and for members of the program community.*

Early care and education programs are responsible for providing care, support, and engaging learning experiences for children in their program. A quality program recognizes the need to function as a sustainable business. From family child care providers to large, corporate-run centers, administrative policies and practices are the components that tie together licensing regulations, policies and procedures related to teaching, behavior management, inclusive practices, parent communication, health and safety issues, fiscal responsibilities, staffing, and overall leadership.

Documents to Upload for Administrative Policies and Practices				
Check Level 1	Check Level 2	Check Level 3	Check Level 4	Check Level 5
Families	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent Handbook			
				<input type="checkbox"/> Signed notification from parent handbook
			<input type="checkbox"/> CACFP* form (if eligible)	
			<input type="checkbox"/> Menu	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Examples of at least 2 ways families may participate in the program	<input type="checkbox"/> Examples of at least 3 ways families may participate in the program	<input type="checkbox"/> Examples of at least 4 ways families may participate in the program including conference plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Examples of at least 5 ways families may participate in the program including conference plan
Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff Meeting and Performance Evaluation Schedules			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Statement of staff policies	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff handbook	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff handbook and at least one signed handbook notification	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Incremental Salary Scale	<input type="checkbox"/> Incremental Salary Scale and description of benefits	
Communi	<input type="checkbox"/> Description of how community and referral sources are maintained/updated			
			<input type="checkbox"/> Transition Protocol(s)	

*[Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)

Completing the Annual Update

After a program completes one year at a Maryland EXCELS check level, an annual report is due. This report will be completed online within the Maryland EXCELS web tool. **(Note: Annual reports are not required during the field test.)**

At the top of your cycle (on the Cases tab), you will see the date you achieved your most recent Maryland EXCELS check level. Notice that the expiration date is one year later; your annual report is due on or before this date. With each new check level achievement, the expiration date is automatically updated.

You will get an email alert from Maryland EXCELS 90 days prior to your renewal date. To complete your annual report will be asked to verify the criteria required at your current check level rating. If all criteria are met, your program will maintain its check level rating. If any criteria are unmet, your rating will be calculated based on the documentation submitted by your program.

Dashboard Cases Schedule Messages Users Reports Account

- You have 2 new visit request(s).

Cases MD EXCELS Applications MD EXCELS Cycles

TEST - CENTER

Date Check Level Achieved: 02/15/2012
Expiration: 02/15/2013 Edit

Licence #: 4436291392
Rubric: Center Based 11/15/2011

Licensing / Compliance

✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

Staffing and Professional Development

✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

Licensing / Compliance

Criteria

Check Level: ✓

Fully licensed, opened and operating.

Alternative Pathways

Programs that have demonstrated a commitment to quality by pursuing accreditation need not duplicate work to receive a Maryland EXCELS rating. Upon acceptance into Maryland EXCELS, programs will be asked to indicate whether or not they are accredited, by whom, and when. Accredited programs travel an alternative pathway because they receive credit for many components of the EXCELS Standards. Accredited programs interested in moving to a higher Check Level will not be required to upload evidence for criteria met by their accreditation. Instead, accredited programs will begin uploading evidence for the next level as indicated by EXCELS in the online portfolio.

Programs who receive a validation visit by an approved accrediting body need not perform the ERS self-assessment or have an ERS assessment done by an MSDE-approved evaluator in the year of their accreditation or the year of their re-accreditation. Programs receiving a validation visit are also exempt from completing the PAS self and independent assessments during the year of their accreditation or reaccreditation visit.

By looking at your active cycle, you will see that the Maryland EXCELS system automatically gives you credit for certain criteria based on your program’s accreditation status. Maryland EXCELS will also grant credit for programs with multiple accreditations.

Check Level: A program must meet all of the standards in check levels 1 through 4 in order to satisfy check level 4				
Open	Director and at least 60% of lead staff have a Level 4 Credential or higher	CCATS verification	0 File(s) 0 Comment(s)	Criteria Met 12/03/2012
Open	Designated person has completed PAS training or 90 hours of approved training *This fulfills requirements for check levels 4 and 5.	PAS certificate or proof of 90 hours of approved training	0 File(s) 0 Comment(s)	Criteria Met 12/03/2012 MSDE
Check Level: A program must meet all of the standards in check levels 1 through 5 in order to satisfy check level 5				
Open	Director and at least 60% of lead staff have a Level 4+ Credential or higher	CCATS verification	0 File(s) 0 Comment(s)	Criteria Met 12/03/2012

Benefits to Participating Programs

Maryland’s child care providers are a great resource to children and families; many are already providing a level of care above what is required by licensing standards. By participating in Maryland EXCELS, program leaders have the opportunity to share information and resources about the quality of care provided.

Programs participating in Maryland EXCELS will have access to a variety of resources, both face-to-face and online, that offer professional development, information about available funding, and an entire community of other providers to share thoughts, practices, ideas, and encouragement.

Financial incentives are available for participating Maryland EXCELS programs with published ratings including increased subsidy reimbursements for low-income families, annual bonuses for participating programs, access to funds from MSDE’s [Credentialing Branch](#), [Accreditation Project](#), and [Curriculum Project](#). Additionally, participating programs will have access to targeted technical assistance from the following resources:

- The Maryland Family Network
- Maryland’s Infant/Toddler Specialists
- The Head Start Quality Initiative
- Maryland EXCELS

Participation in Maryland EXCELS is also an excellent opportunity to share information about quality initiatives with parents and community partners. Maryland EXCELS supports programs and provides information to families and community members regarding high-quality care. Advertising an EXCELS Check Level demonstrates to parents and the community that a program is committed to excellence and is continually working toward greater achievements. A Maryland EXCELS Check Level is a marketing and promotional tool and programs will be able to display the Check Level prominently. Rather than simply letting families know whether a program is accredited or not accredited, Maryland EXCELS will outline the levels of quality that exist at each level. Information about Maryland EXCELS participating providers will be available for consumers on the website. Parents will be able to use the map and a mobile phone application (coming in fall 2013) to locate programs participating in Maryland EXCELS.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why has Maryland EXCELS been developed?

There are approximately 10,000 early childhood programs serving 250,000 children every day in licensed settings across the state. EXCELS is a systematic way to distinguish the level of quality in these programs and to aid parents' ability to make informed choices on behalf of their children. Higher quality care leads to greater cognitive language and social skills for children, which are key measures of school readiness. The goal is not to influence parents' choice, but to inform it.

Maryland EXCELS has three main goals:

1. To recognize programs that provide quality care and to help providers make targeted improvements to their programs:
 - Increase and measure quality
 - Increase the number of programs that are prepared to serve children with special needs
 - Improve the professional experiences of early childhood educators in Maryland
 - Recognize providers who go above and beyond what is required in order to provide high quality programming for young children
2. Strengthen Families through Early Care and Education:
 - Inform parents about the value of, importance of, and goals of quality early education
 - Partner with families and their networks in the prevention of child abuse and neglect
 - Produce positive outcomes for children
 - Support parents as their child's first and life-long teacher
3. Inform Parent Choice:
 - Provide information to help parents seek quality child care
 - Educate parents about the components of quality early childhood programs
 - Encourage parents to request and expect high-quality care

What is the connection between Licensing and EXCELS?

The Maryland State Department of Education's Office of Child Care is responsible for issuing licenses, regulating child care, monitoring caregiver compliance with licensing requirements, conducting licensing visits, investigating complaints, and taking enforcement actions against programs found to be in violation of child care regulations. A license to operate an early care and education facility is required by the state. Maryland licensing requirements are written into Maryland legislation, and compliance is required for all child care providers to operate legally in the state. Licensing requirements focus on health and safety regulations, and are primarily designed to ensure that child care programs are in compliance with rules and regulations that will keep children safe and healthy while in a child care facility. Licensing regulations set the minimum standards to ensure that the basic health, safety, and developmental needs of children are being met.

Maryland EXCELS includes licensing as the first rating level in the process. As a participating provider in EXCELS, maintaining basic health and safety requirements is essential. Maryland EXCELS requires you to take ownership of the self-evaluation, improvement, and demonstration of the quality of care you provide. Through EXCELS, you determine strengths and weaknesses, identify goals, and develop clear plans to achieve those goals. EXCELS provides the platform to share progress with parents, and gives parents and community members the knowledge to make informed decisions about child care arrangements.

What if my program has regulatory non-compliance or a substantiated complaint?

Regulatory non-compliance and substantiated complaints include those things that pose a serious risk to children.

Regulatory non-compliance includes violations of:

- Injurious treatment
- Child supervision
- Child capacity
- Group size/Staff child ratio
- Child protection

Substantiated complaints include violations of:

- Injurious treatment
- Supervision
- Overcapacity
- Staff/child ratios
- Infant care violations
- Health/fire/safety hazards

In order to apply for EXCELS or maintain your EXCELS level standing, you must work with your licensing specialist to resolve any non-compliance and/or substantiated complaints. Programs that are removed from Maryland EXCELS because of a substantiated complaint or regulatory non-compliance will be ineligible to apply for participation for one year. In the event this should happen, it is the program's

responsibility to inform parents of the change in level and to revise any publications used for marketing that indicates the Maryland EXCELS level.

How are overall check level ratings calculated?

Maryland EXCELS is a block rating system. Your overall check level rating is based on the highest level achieved in each content area.

Summary

Criteria	1 Check	2 Checks	3 Checks	4 Checks	5 Checks	Achievement Date
Licensing / Compliance	✓	✓	✓	✓	MSDE ✓	03/19/2012
Rating Scale / Accreditation	✓	MSDE ✓	?	?	?	05/16/2012
Developmentally Appropriate Learning & Practice	✓	✓	✓	✓	MSDE ✓	03/19/2012
Staffing & Professional Development	✓	✓	MSDE ✓	?	?	05/16/2012
Administrative Practices and Policies	✓	✓	ECR ✓	?	?	05/10/2012
Current Quality Check Level	✓					

How long is the Maryland EXCELS rating valid?

Your level is valid until one of the following events occurs:

- You provide evidence that improves your rating
- There is a change in the status of any of your program’s evidence (such as the loss of an accreditation)
- You fail to submit an annual update to Maryland EXCELS
- Your program has a substantiated serious licensing violation
- Your program has turnover of 50% or more (calculated at the time of the yearly update)

When does my rating become public?

Your rating will be available on the Maryland EXCELS website as soon as it is calculated by your Program Coordinator. You can control when your Coordinator calculates your rating by waiting until you believe that you have uploaded all of your evidence before clicking the “Submit” buttons within each criterion. Ratings must be published in order to access Maryland EXCELS incentive funds. **Ratings are not made public during the pilot phase and field test.**

How does QRIS address inclusion in child care settings?

Inclusion means inviting all children to participate in a child care program and intentionally planning for ways to help every child be successful, whether or not that child has an identified disability. Maryland EXCELS Standards require participating programs to: understand individual needs of children; value and appreciate individual differences; assist in providing experiences that build skills and confidence;

understand community resources; provide equal opportunities and rights for all; and, build partnerships through collaboration.

My program is already accredited. Why should I participate in Maryland EXCELS?

Participation in Maryland EXCELS has many benefits including access to state quality funds for child care subsidy, quality improvements, and training support. A Maryland EXCELS rating is also a great marketing tool and will help communicate to your parents that you are committed to continuing quality. Beginning in the fall of 2013, parents and community stakeholders will be able to use a mobile application to locate programs participating in Maryland EXCELS.

Who can I call for help?

Contact your Maryland EXCELS Program Coordinator for any problems, questions, or challenges that you may face. You can also email support@marylandexcels.org

What if I forget my password?

On the log in screen, click on the link "I forgot my username and/or password" or contact your Program Coordinator.

What is the connection between Johns Hopkins University, MSDE, and Maryland EXCELS?

The Center for Technology in Education (JHU) is a part of the Johns Hopkins University School for Education. CTE has partnered with MSDE on several projects, including Maryland EXCELS. Within this partnership, CTE provides teaching and technology resources, policy support, and conducts research on Maryland EXCELS and other MSDE projects. CTE provides operational management of Maryland EXCELS under MSDE's leadership.

How does Maryland EXCELS affect my participation in Tiered Reimbursement?

Programs who were participating in the **Tiered Reimbursement Program** will be required to move to Maryland EXCELS. Programs who participated in Tiered Reimbursement will be enrolled in Maryland EXCELS, and will continue to be eligible for increasing subsidy payments as they make progress through the Check Levels. Current Tiered Reimbursement providers will be eligible to maintain their current subsidy rates for one year from their initial Check Level Rating. After one year, those providers will receive the subsidy rate commensurate with their current Maryland EXCELS Check Level rating. Any participating program that serves families who receive child care subsidy reimbursements will receive a tiered reimbursement payment directly related to their Maryland EXCELS rating.

Must I participate in Maryland EXCELS to receive state funds?

Participation in Maryland EXCELS is voluntary, however programs wanting to access state funds including but not limited to Accreditation Support, Tiered Reimbursement, and state-funded grants will need to have a published Maryland EXCELS rating.

Links and Resources

Links

COMAR Regulations	http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/regulat.htm
Child Care and Adult Care Food Program (for Centers)	http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/schoolnutrition/nutr_prog/childcare.htm
Child Care and Adult Care Food Program Eligibility Calculator	https://marswebprod.msde.state.md.us/MARS2P/EligibilityCalculator.aspx
Environment Rating Scales	http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/
Maryland EXCELS Resource Page	http://marylandexcels.org/81419
Maryland Family Network	http://mdchildcare.org/mdcfc/mcc.html
Maryland Credential Equivalent Training Chart	http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/D68F205B-0C8C-40BB-90F0-AC91486BC2B9/32350/CredLevReqs_051612.pdf
Maryland Healthy Beginnings	http://www.marylandhealthybeginnings.org/
Maryland Infant/Toddler Specialists	http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/earlyinterv/infant_toddlers/directories/local_program.htm
Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR)	http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/early_learning/MMSR.htm
Maryland State Department of Education, Recommended Curricula	http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/preschool_curriculum/
National Administrator Credential	http://www.necpa.net/nac.php
National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Early Childhood Education	http://www.nrckids.org/
Program Administration Scale	http://marylandexcels.org/81419

Accrediting Agencies Recognized by MSDE

Agency	Website	Phone Number
American Montessori Internationale/USA (AMI/USA)	http://www.montessori-ami.org/	
American Montessori Society (AMS)	http://www.amshq.org/	212-358-1250
Association of Independent Maryland Schools (AIMS)	http://www.aimsmdc.org/	410- 761-3700
Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA)	http://www.whywaldorfworks.org/	919-667-7993
Council on Accreditation - After-School Accreditation (COA/ASA)	http://www.coaafterschool.org/	212.797.3000
Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)	http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/credentials/Accred	1-877-605-1539
Middle States Commission – Early Ages (MSCES-Early Years)		
Middle States Commission of Elementary Schools (MSCES)	http://www.msa-cess.org	267-284-5000
National Accreditation Commission (NAC)	http://www.naccp.org	800-537-1118
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)	http://www.naeyc.org/accreditation/	800-424-2460
National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)	http://nafcc.org	801-886-2322
National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA)	http://www.necpa.net/AboutOurAccreditation.html	1-800-505-9878

Resource and Referral Contacts

[Arundel Child Care Connections](#) (Anne Arundel County)

Arundel Center, 4th Floor

44 Calvert Street

PO Box 2700

Annapolis, MD 21404

Main: 410-222-1712

Web: <http://arundelccc.org>

Email: welcome@arundelccc.org

Baltimore City Child Care Resource Center

1001 Eastern Avenue, 2nd Floor

Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Main: 410-685-5150

Web: <http://www.bcccrc.org>

Email: childcare@bcccrc.org

Child Care Links (Baltimore County)

1101 North Point Boulevard, Suite 112

Baltimore, Maryland 21224

Main: 410-288-4900

Web: <http://www.childcarelinks.net>

Email: info@childcarelinksinc.org

Child Care Links of Harford and Cecil Counties

2105 Laurel Bush Road, 105

Bel Air, Maryland 21015

Main: 443-512-0461

Web: <http://www.hcchildcarelinksinc.org>

Email: info@hcchildcarelinksinc.org

Child Care Choices (Carroll County)

255 Clifton Blvd., Suite 319

Westminster, Maryland 21157

Main: 410-751-2917

Web: <http://www.fcmha.org/childcarechoices/>

Email: childcarechoices@fcmha.org

Child Care Choices (Frederick County)

226 South Jefferson Street

Frederick, Maryland 21701

Main: 301-662-4549

Web: <http://www.fcmha.org/childcarechoices/>

Email: childcarechoices@fcmha.org

Howard County Child Care Resource Center

3300 North Ridge Road, Suite 380

Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

Main: 410-313-1940

Web: <http://www.co.ho.md.us/DisplayPrimary.aspx?id=4294967456>

Email: childcare@howardcountymd.gov

Montgomery County Child Care Resource Center

332 West Edmonston Drive

Rockville, Maryland 20852

Main: 240-777-3110

Web: <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhstmpl.asp?url=/content/hhs/cyf/CCRRC/CRC09/AboutUs.asp>

Email: earlychildhoodservices@montgomerycountymd.gov

Prince George's Child Resource Center

9475 Lottsford Road, Suite 202

Largo, Maryland 20774

Main: 301-772-8420

Web: <http://www.childresource.org>

Email: pgcrc@childresource.org

The Promise Center (Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties)

29958 Killpeck Creek Court

Charlotte Hall, Maryland 20622

Main: 301-290-0040 or toll-free 1-866-290-0040

Web: <http://www.thepromisecenter.org>

Email: info@smccrc.org

[Apples For Children](#) (Allegany, Garrett and Washington Counties)

6 West Washington Street

Suite 210

Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

Main: 301-733-0000

Web: <http://www.applesforchildren.org>

Email: apples@applesforchildren.org

[Lower Shore Child Care Resource Center](#) (Wicomico, Somerset, and Worcester Counties)

Suite 500

East Campus Complex

Salisbury University

Power and Wayne Streets

Salisbury, Maryland 21804

Main: 410-543-6650

Web: <http://www.lowershoreccrc.org>

Email: kjgoldman@salisbury.edu

[Chesapeake Child Care Resource Center](#) (Caroline, Kent, Dorchester, Queen Anne's and Talbot Counties)

Chesapeake College

1000 College Circle

P.O. Box 8

Wye Mills, Maryland 21679

Main: 410-822-5400 (press 1 follow operators directions) ext. 357#

Web: <http://www.cccrc.org>

Email: ccrc@chesapeake.edu

Definition List and Relevant Terminology

Accreditation – A process that validates that a program is employing quality processes and procedures in delivering early care and education that conforms to national standards. Although many professional organizations accredit early care and education programs, Maryland recognizes accreditation by the following accrediting organizations:

- [American Montessori Internationale/USA](#) (AMI/USA)
- [American Montessori Society](#) (AMS)
- [Association of Independent Maryland Schools](#) (AIMS)
- [Association of Waldorf Schools of North America](#) (AWSNA)
- [Council on Accreditation - After-School Accreditation](#) (COA/ASA)
- [Maryland State Department of Education](#) (MSDE)
- [Middle States Commission – Early Ages](#) (MSCES-Early Years)
- [Middle States Commission of Elementary Schools](#) (MSCES)
- [National Accreditation Commission](#) (NAC)
- [National Association for the Education of Young Children](#) (NAEYC)
- [National Association for Family Child Care](#) (NAFCC)
- [National Early Childhood Program Accreditation](#) (NECPA)

Accreditation Self-Study – The process of implementing a formal comprehensive program assessment for the purpose and preparation of external program evaluation; MSDE Division of Early Childhood Development Accreditation Project refers to “self-study” as “self-appraisal” while NAEYC uses the term “self-study.”

Americans with Disability Act (ADA) – Enacted in 1990 (ADA), Congress intended that the Americans with Disability Act provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with mental or physical disabilities thereby removing societal and institutional barriers, and increasing a person’s right to fully participate in all aspects of society.

Assessment – Measuring or evaluating progress

- Child assessment – instrument to measure the child’s progress; Examples include: work sampling, teacher-made “tests”, observational notes demonstrating progression.
- Program assessment – instrument to measure the program’s progress; Examples include Program Administration Scale (PAS) or Business Administration Scale (BAS)
- Rating scales – see “Environment Rating Scale”

Assessment System – The process of documenting, usually in measurable terms, knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs of the learning community and their educational instruments to determine achievement.

Benefits – Contributions made by the program/center on behalf of its employees to its employees as an incentive towards sustained employment. Typical benefits include, but are not limited to: medical insurance, dental insurance, vision plans, professional development reimbursement, and child care tuition reduction.

Benefit package – An outline of benefits offered to employees. Benefits may include but are not limited to: parking, meals, emergency/inclement weather leave, reduced child care rates for children of staff, tuition reimbursement, paid training, mileage reimbursement for training and education, health insurance, dental insurance, disability insurance, retirement plan, paid vacation, paid sick time, paid personal time, and/or paid holidays.

Business Administration Scale (BAS) – A tool developed by Teri Talan and Paula Jorde Bloom at The McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership for measuring the overall quality of business and professional practices in family child care settings.

CCATS – Child Care Administrative Tracking System

Center Based Child Care (CBCC) – Refers to programs that are licensed as child care centers.

Child abuse reporting – All employees and volunteers in child care settings are required legally and ethically to report child abuse in accordance with state law.

Conditional Licensing Status – Licensing status which is issued for a period up to 120 days when a provider who holds a Continuing License or Registration fails to remedy a violation as required.

Confirmed non-compliance¹ – Non-compliance with COMAR (regulations governing regulated child care in Maryland) is a conclusion reached by the fact-finder (the licensing specialists) that a violation of COMAR) has occurred. This conclusion of non-compliance is a result of a thorough investigation conducted by the licensing specialist and is supported by finding of facts that substantiate the violation.

Confirmed serious violations – Licensing violations that pose serious risk to children.

Developmentally Appropriate Lesson Plans – Regular instructional planning, based on observation, assessment, and milestones, that measure, addresses and adequately reflects a child’s growth and development; lessons should challenge children to use new competencies and focus on a child’s specific needs.

¹ NOTE: The Office of the Attorney General recommends replacing the term “substantiated” with “confirmed” whenever and wherever possible. The term “substantiated” is used by CPS, not OCC. When discussing confirming outcomes, encourage members of the Maryland child care community to use the word “confirmed” to avoid confusion and allow consistent terminology.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) – Care and instructional practices that acknowledge the differing needs and developmental levels of children and offer a program that is responsive to those needs and levels.

Discipline policy – A policy that outlines the methods a program uses to manage children’s behaviors; inappropriate methods of discipline are outlined in the MSDE Child Care Regulations.

Division of Early Childhood Development (DECD) – A division within the Maryland State Department of Education developed to assist, monitor and develop policies, education, facilities and general child care for infants and children birth to preschool. The Division of Early Childhood Development at the Maryland State Department of Education is responsible for early care and education in Maryland. The main mission of the Division is to improve early education in Maryland so that young children are well prepared for school.

Early Childhood Curriculum Project - Developed to provide guidance and resources to child care and other nonpublic early childhood programs about curricular resources for three, four and five year-olds. These resources are aligned with the State’s prekindergarten and kindergarten curricular frameworks, also known as the Maryland Model for School Readiness. All recommended curricular resources are aligned with the pedagogy standards of the guidelines of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards.

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) – One of a series of standardized tools used to assess quality in early childhood group settings (ages 2 ½ - 5 years). Aspects assessed include: space and furnishings, personal care routines, language-reasoning, interactions, activities, program structure, parents and staff. This tool can highlight areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

Early Learning Guidelines – A set of expectations and guidelines for what children know and can do at specified age ranges. *Healthy Beginnings* (Birth through Three Years) and *Maryland Model for School Readiness* (Three-Five Years) are examples of Maryland’s early learning guidelines.

Enforcement Action – Results after a complaint is confirmed by Office of Child Care Licensing Division

English Language Learners – **ESL** (English as a second language), **ESOL** (English for speakers of other languages), and **EFL** (English as a foreign language) all refer to the use or study of English by speakers with a different native language. These terms are most commonly used in relation to teaching and learning English, but they may also be used in relation to demographic information.

Environment Rating Scales (ERS) – One of a series of standardized tools used to assess quality in early care and education settings. Different settings are assessed using different standards. Early childhood group settings are assessed using the Early Childhood Scale (ECERS), family care settings use the Family Child Care Scale (FCCERS), infant and toddler programs use the Infant/Toddler Scale (ITERS), and school

age programs use the School Age Care Scale (SACERS). Aspects assessed vary by setting. The tool identifies areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

Family Child Care (FCC) – FCC has the same meaning as family day care as defined in Family Law Article, 5-501(e), annotated Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), and means the care given to a child younger than 13 years old or to the developmentally disabled person younger than 21 years old in place of parental care for less than 24 hours a day, in a residence other than the child’s residence, for which the provider is paid in cash or in kind.

Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS) - One of a series of standardized tools used to assess quality in family child care programs conducted in a provider’s home. Aspects assessed include: space and furnishings for care and learning, basic care, language and reasoning, learning activities, social development, and adult needs. The tool highlights a program’s areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

Family involvement activities – A planned set of activities geared specifically around the needs and desires of the parents and families.

Fully licensed – There are two stages through which a provider’s license or registration is processed. An applicant must first apply for an Initial License or Registration which is valid for two years. At the end of the two year period, the provider must apply for a Continuing License or Registration. If the provider is not granted a Continuing License or Registration after the two year period, (s)he may no longer operate.

Healthy Beginnings Guidelines – A set of developmental and learning guidelines developed by MSDE/Division of Early Childhood Development, to ensure that the people who care for infants and young children have the knowledge and resources to support and encourage children during the ongoing process of growth and learning. The guidelines were developed to help those living or working with young children to recognize appropriate behaviors and set realistic expectations for infant, toddler, and preschooler growth, development, and learning. Originally compiled in 2007 by a workgroup composed of early childhood professionals, the guidelines were revised in 2009-2010 to ensure the information continues to meet the goals of being family-friendly, accurate, and developmentally appropriate.

Improvement plan – A written action plan based on program areas for growth and improvement identified through self-assessment and/or as a result of a formal observation.

Incremental salary scale – A written salary scale of increasing rates of pay or pay ranges that, at a minimum, take into consideration the employee’s position, education level, and related experiences.

Independent evaluation – Objective program feedback conducted by external early care and education professionals; the use of an approved rating scale by a trained observer who is not an employee of the program.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) – A written plan developed in conjunction with parents, educators, service coordinators and other professionals (such as special educators, school district representatives, etc.) that describes actions and services needed to meet the individual special needs of a child, usually aged 3 through 21; normally updated at least yearly.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) – A written plan developed in conjunction with parents, educators, service coordinators and other professionals (such as special education service providers, early childhood evaluators, etc.) that describes actions and services needed to meet the individual special, needs of a child, usually aged birth through age 2; normally updated at least every six months.

Infants and toddlers – Children from birth through eighteen months (infants) and eighteen to twenty-four months (toddlers)

Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) – One of a series of standardized tools used to assess quality in infant and toddler programs (birth through 30 months). Aspects assessed include: space and furnishings, personal care routines, listening-talking, activities, interactions, program structure, parents and staff. The tool can highlight areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

In good standing – Status of a program that meets current rules and regulations; program has valid current license, registration or letter of compliance and is not currently under any enforcement action.

Intentional planning – The connection between observing a child's interests and development and planning for the provision of opportunities and experiences to support and expand that development.

Lead teacher – The individual who has overall program or classroom responsibility for children enrolled in the setting.

Learning – Learning is a change in behavior based on previous experience. It may involve processing different types of information. Learning functions can be performed by different brain processes which depend on dynamic mental capacities. Learning may occur as a result of habit, conditioning or as a result of more complex activities such as play.

Literacy Opportunities – A variety of activities offered to children throughout the day including such as reading, writing, music, drama, and listening.

Maryland Accreditation – Refers to the *MSDE Standards for Implementing Quality Early Childhood Programs* intended to define program standards across the various types of programs and transcend – but not replace – program specific licensing regulations. Since 1998, the standards have gradually leveled the playing field among early educators, provided greater focus on quality features of early learning and given the early childhood community in Maryland the opportunity to improve its services to customers and promote a child's school readiness skills.

Maryland Child Care Credential Program² (or *Maryland Credential Program*) – The program recognizes child care providers who go beyond the requirements of Maryland state licensing and registration regulations. There are six credential levels and four administrator levels, each one recognizing a child care provider’s achievement of a specified number of training hours, years of experience and professional activities. The Maryland Child Care Credential Program is regulated under [COMAR 13A.14.09](#).

Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) – An assessment and instructional system designed to provide parents, teachers, and early childhood providers with a common understanding of what children know and are able to do upon entering kindergarten. It incorporates professional development and research based practices in early childhood education in terms of instruction, assessment, family, community and continuity of education from birth to grade twelve for the purpose of promoting school readiness for all children.

Maryland Family Network – The organization that spearheads the development of a statewide, comprehensive system of support for pregnant women, children ages birth to five, and their families and caregivers. The Network includes LOCATE Child Care to help parents find quality child care options, Family Support Centers, training and e-learning services for early childhood professionals, and technical assistance for programs and individuals seeking to develop high quality programs for children.

Maryland State Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Development Office of Child Care - The Office of Child Care (OCC) within the Maryland State Department of Education’s Division of Early Childhood Development is responsible for licensing and monitoring all child care centers and family child care providers in Maryland. It also administers Maryland's subsidized child care program for working families and administers the state’s Child Care Credentialing System.

Media Policy – A program’s policy regarding the purpose, availability, and limitations related to the use of passive media primarily used for entertainment.

Mission statement – A formal, brief, written statement of the purpose of a program or organization. It guides the action of the organization, articulates its overall goal, and provides a sense of direction. A mission statement reveals what a program wants to be and whom it wants to serve. It is that “enduring” statement of purpose that distinguishes one organization from other similar enterprises.

² Participating providers seek to complete training in topic areas to develop the knowledge and skills needed to provide the highest quality care for the children and families they serve. Although the Maryland Child Care Credential is a voluntary program, all regulated family child care providers and child care center staff are eligible and encouraged to participate.

Modification(s) – Changes made to the program or child’s Individual Development Plan (IDP), Individual Education Program (IEP) or Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) by members of the team. This is generally done in a formal setting which includes members of the child’s family.

Nutrition/Obesity Prevention – A commitment to improve the nutrition and physical activity of all children; while the predisposition for obesity may begin before birth, the “roots” of obesity are often established between ages 2 and 5 years. The following terms identify where the body mass index (BMI) falls in relationship to the child.

- a. “Overweight” is defined as having a BMI greater than 85th percentile
- b. “Obese” is has a BMI greater than 95th percentile
- c. “Severe Obesity” has a BMI greater than 99th percentile

Observation Assessment Planning – Time allotted for planning children’s development and learning through observation, assessment and planning processes. Observation describes the process of watching the children in care with the intent to learn specific information. Assessment helps in analyzing observation. Planning starts with observing children in order to understand and consider their current interests, development and learning.

Observation Documentation – (a) Observe children to find out about their needs, what they are interested in and what they can do. (b) Note children's responses in different situations. (c) Analyze your observations and highlight children's achievements or their need for further support. (d) Note your observations. (e) Involve parents as part of the ongoing observation and assessment process.

Parent conferences – Opportunities for family members to connect with program staff and discuss children’s development, strengths, areas of concern and any other issues that parents/guardians or program staff want to address.

Parent/Family resource – A collection of books, articles and other materials that parents can access at the child care program; Examples include: articles, emails, newsletters, parent education workshop, and family programs. Resources may also include information on local organizations to which a parent may be referred when a need arises.

Parent Handbook – A handbook that includes program/center policies and procedures, teacher guidelines for children within the program/center, and general information about the program/center designed to assist children and their families.

Philosophy Statement – A philosophy statement is different from a mission statement in that it provides a clear, concise statement of the program’s beliefs, principles, or self-definition.

Professional Development Plan – A detailed outline articulating an individual’s intended progress towards completion and maintenance of an early child care credential, degree and/or necessary certification(s).

Professional Development Plan Form – The individualized professional development plan provides an overview of the educator’s academic intention and includes other professional training such as CPR and First Aid. The professional development form is created by MSDE and is completed by the individual owner/director or child care employee.

Program Goals – A specific set of defined objectives aligned with the children’s needs and the program’s mission that the program has set to achieve.

Portfolio – A purposeful collection of children’s work that illustrate children’s efforts, progress and achievement; an organized collection of artifacts or work samples that presents an individual’s educational progress.

Program Administration Scale (PAS) – A tool developed by Teri Talan and Paula Jorde Bloom at The McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership for measuring the overall quality of business and professional practices in center-based child care settings.

Provisional Licensing Period – An applicant may be issued a license or registration on a provisional basis when the applicant needs additional time to meet all applicable requirements for the Initial License or Registration and after determining that the health and safety of the children in care are not in imminent danger. A provisional licensing or registration period may be granted for up to 120 days.

Public Prekindergarten – [Prekindergarten](#) is a state-funded program for four-year-old children who are from families that are economically disadvantaged or homeless. The overall goal of prekindergarten is to provide learning experiences to help children develop and maintain the basic skills necessary to be successful in school. The Prekindergarten program provides appropriate experiences that address the literacy, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical needs of young children.

Publically funded child care/health insurance – Child Care Subsidy and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) provide both subsidized child care and health care to qualifying families.

Quality Improvement Goals – Specifically targeted goals identified by the QRIS Administrator used to inform a community as it relates to student/program achievement.

Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) – A voluntary set of standards used to evaluate the quality of an early childhood program.

Reduced Child Care Rates – A benefit offered to employees of an early care and education setting to provide full or partial financial support for attendance of the employees’ child(ren) at the setting.

Resources – Fiscal, human capital, activities and/or community services or offerings provided to a program or to families to assist in program development, child development, and/or strengthening families.

Resource Development (Maryland Resource & Referral Centers) – A network of centers located throughout the state that serve as vital links connecting parents, providers, businesses, and child care advocates. They provide parents with early care and education information and referrals and provide technical assistance, training, and resources to providers.

Retirement Plan – A benefit offered to employees of an early care and education setting to provide full or partial financial support to an employee after a pre-determined length of service and/or upon reaching a pre-determined age.

Schedule of activities – A listing of planned activities geared toward children, faculty/staff, and program improvement.

School Age Care (SAC) – Programs that operate as before- and after-school care programs including programs offering full-day child care for out-of-school days.

School Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS) – One of a series of standardized tools used to assess quality in group care programs for children of school age (ages 5-16). Aspects assessed include: space and furnishings, health and safety, activities, interactions, program structure, and staff development. The evaluation process involves a visit to the setting by a trained observer. The tool can highlight areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

Screen Time – The amount of time children are exposed to passive media primarily used for entertainment.

Self-assessment/Self-evaluation – A process of self-reflection to refine practices toward program improvement and the provision of high quality care.

Self-evaluation – see “Self-assessment”

Seven domains of learning – Categories of learning process are proposed and described such as motor skills, verbal information, intellectual skills, cognitive strategies, and attitudes. Research evidence on school learning suggests that generalizations about critical learning conditions and outcomes can be validly made within these categories, but not across them. They are:

- a) Personal and Social Development
- b) Language and Literacy
- c) Mathematical Thinking
- d) Scientific Thinking
- e) Social Studies
- f) The Arts
- g) Physical Development

Special Needs Student – A student 3 years old through the end of the school year in which the student turns 21 years old who, because of the impairment, needs special education and related services. A program is required to provide appropriate education that offers a child with disabilities and/or unique needs the opportunity for significant learning and meaningful progress. All children, with or without a diagnosed disability, need individualized planning.

Disabilities include: autism, deaf-blindness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment including deafness, intellectual disability, multiple disability, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury or visual impairment including blindness.

Staff handbook – A handbook that includes the policies and guidelines for staff members employed within the program.

Staff performance evaluation – An opportunity for a supervisor to meet with a staff member and provide written feedback on his/her job performance including areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

Tiered system – Tiered quality rating systems require participants and/or programs to satisfy all criteria of one step before advancing to the next step.

Transition – Change of mental or physical difference a child makes during the course of his/her educational session, day, program, and year. Children can transition from classroom to classroom, home to child care program, child care program to school.

Transition Plan – A physical plan for scheduled change of cognitive shift and/or physical difference a child makes during the course of his/her educational session, day, program, and year. Program transitions refer to the anticipated change from classroom to classroom or child care center/program to school.

Tuition Reimbursement – A benefit offered to employees of an early care and education setting to provide full or partial financial assistance when an employee pursues additional training and /or education opportunities.

Voluntary School Curriculum³ – Voluntary School Curriculum is now adopted as those approved by the state of Maryland as early child school curricula. As of April 2010, the curriculum is no longer voluntary.

³ Some curricula have been designated as having “historic significance and merit.” While these programs are not identified as state recommended programs, *High Scope*, *Montessori* and *Waldorf*, programs using these approaches are eligible to receive the same funds as programs that have selected to use state-recommended curricula.

Women, Infant and Children (WIC) – A national health program that provides access to supplemental nutrition for low-income pregnant and nursing women and their children (prenatal to age 5) who are at nutritional risk. The program provides some foods, health care referrals, and information on healthy eating.

Written daily communication – Communication between caregiver and family member that includes information about daily routines (eating, napping, toileting, etc.) and any additional pertinent information about the child’s day.

Written schedule of activities (Written daily schedule) – A predetermined schedule of events that are followed each day to provide consistency for children within the program.

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