



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

EMPOWERMENT • OPPORTUNITY • INCLUSION

Joint Committee on Children, Youth and Families
October 5, 2016
Maryland DD Councilⁱ testimony about Quality Child Care
Child Care Subsidy Program

The Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP) provides financial assistance with child care costs to eligible families in Maryland. The eligible family will receive a voucher to use to purchase child care directly from the provider of their choice. Services are provided to eligible families based on an established categories and priorities. Within in each category, eligible families experiencing homelessness and eligible families of children with disabilities are given first priority.

Programs must provide children with disabilities and their families an equal opportunity to participate in the child care program and services by providing reasonable modifications, accommodations, and provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services needed for effective communication.ⁱⁱ Some of these additional accommodations may be costly. In recognition of that, **Maryland law allows for increased CCSP reimbursement rates to a child care provider for the additional costs of providing one-time or ongoing accommodations to a child with a disability – up to 15% above the traditional reimbursement rates or more if approved by MSDE.**ⁱⁱⁱ

The possibility of an increased reimbursement rate presents a welcomed opportunity for child care providers to access additional funding if needed to provide appropriate support to children with disabilities as required by state and federal law. In fact, the majority of child care providers want to support children with disabilities but need assistance to do so. And would help the families of children with disabilities who are still struggling to find and keep high quality child care where their children with disabilities can learn and play alongside their peers without disabilities. However, it is our understanding that this “special disability rate” has not been utilized since SFY1998.^{iv}

The State already supports child care providers with higher reimbursement rates - child care programs participating at Level 3 through 5 in Maryland EXCELS, the quality rating and improvement system receive a higher tiered reimbursement rate. Maryland EXCELS includes standards that specifically address a child care program’s role in providing opportunities for children with disabilities and their families and all facilities serving children in the CCSP must participate. **Ensuring child care providers are aware of and have access to the “special disability rate” is another critical step to increase access to high quality, inclusive child care and increase the ability of the program to create an environment that welcomes and provides appropriate services and supports to all children.**

The FY 2017 budget for MSDE’s Division of Early Childhood Development increased funds for the CSSP which was a one small step to address the chronic underfunding of the program, but more must be done to ensure families have the ability to work while their children have access to high quality,

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inclusive child care. This is especially important for families of children with disabilities who are losing jobs, losing income and facing financial challenges and not getting the support they need to ensure their children with disabilities are cared for in appropriate programs. As a result:

- **Only 19% of young children with disabilities entered kindergarten fully ready to learn compared to 47% of their peers without disabilities.**^v
- **64% of all families report lost income due to a lack of child care for their child with a disability.**^{vi}

Without adequate funding, it is difficult for Maryland to meet its obligations under state and federal law to ensure young children with disabilities receive the services and supports they need to succeed.

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ⁱ The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) is an independent, public policy organization that works for the inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life.

ⁱⁱ Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 U.S.C. § 12101 (2009).

ⁱⁱⁱ COMAR 13A.14.06.11(E)(5).

^{iv} *Maryland Family Network Public Policy Handbook 2016-2017*, Appendix B.

^v *Readiness Matters! The 2015-2016 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Report*, MSDE, March 2016.

^{vi} *Barriers to Quality Child Care and Out of School Time Activities in Maryland*. Maryland DD Council, November 2012.