



Early Childhood Coalition
Anne Arundel County

Collective Agenda for Early Childhood

2023-2025



About ECC

Established in 2016 through an Executive Order by the County Executives Office, the Early Childhood Coalition of Anne Arundel County (ECC) is a volunteer-led commission dedicated to meeting the early learning needs of each and every child in Anne Arundel County.

The ECC works to bring together public and private partners in Anne Arundel County to meet the needs of and elevate a child's first five years to ensure all children have what they need to be successful in school and life.

Leadership Message

From ECC Co-Chairs



The first 5 years of life are the most critical time in brain development - there are only 1,825 days from birth to age 5. For us, as educators, community partners, agencies, and families, we have only 1,825 days to set our young children up for success in school and life. There may be no more important place for investment, innovation and coordinated effort than the critical early years of life.

Early learning benefits our families and children alike. Providing children with enriching, educational experiences allow parents and caregivers the opportunity to work or go to school to further their stability and success in life.

Every child deserves a healthy, safe, and smart start. By coordinating our county's many resources and working with our communities, we can create the right conditions for all children to play, learn, and grow to their full potential.



Dr. Pamela Brown,
ECC Co-Chair



Diana Taylor,
ECC Co-Chair

How We Created the Plan

As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become increasingly clear that our children suffered enormous learning loss and our early care and education providers were hit hard by the shutdown. Since then, we have seen fewer children enrolled in early learning programs, historically low investments in early childhood, and a sharp decline in early educators returning to the classroom – exacerbated by low wages. With county-level data in hand, we knew we must take action by creating a broadly-owned plan to guide the coordination of resources for early childhood initiatives in Anne Arundel County.

We engaged a wide variety of community voices in the development of the plan through the Early Childhood Summit, community survey, and listening sessions. The input we received helped inspire new, out-of-the-box thinking that will move us from ideas to action. Our collective efforts will allow **every child (prenatal to age 5) and their families in Anne Arundel County equitable access to excellent early childhood education and care that meets their unique developmental needs.**



Thank You!

We would like to thank the following groups for their input and energy in helping us create our **Collective Agenda for Early Childhood:**

- ECC Board Members
- 200+ Early Childhood Summit Attendees
- Members of the Annapolis, Brooklyn Park, South County, and West County Communities of Hope
- Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families Board and Guiding Coalition
- 282 Community Survey Respondents
- 3 Listening Session Groups

The Need in Anne Arundel County

Decreasing supply of childcare

+ Declining kindergarten readiness scores +

Inequity

= Opportunity Gap



Decreasing Supply of Childcare

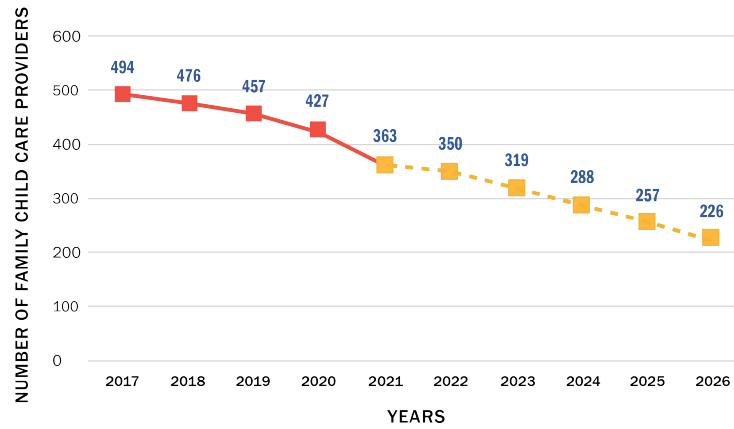
The availability of Family Child Care Providers is predicted to fall by 30% by 2026.



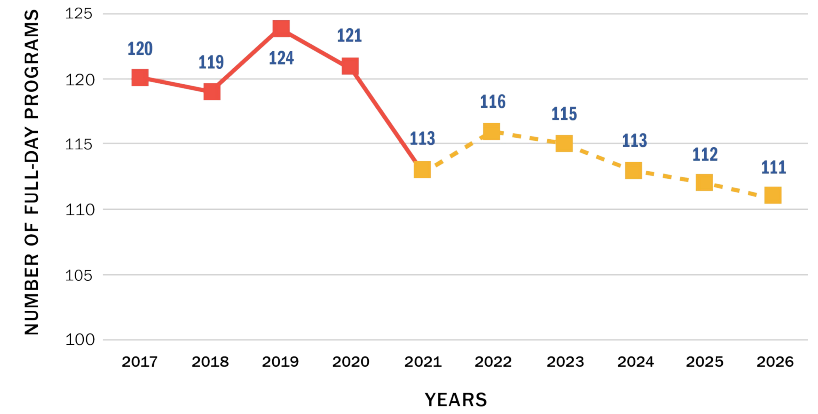
Inequity + Declining Kindergarten Readiness

Kindergarten readiness is declining for all students with stark drops for our Hispanic/Latino students.

Family Child Care Providers in Anne Arundel County 2017-2026



Center-based Programs in Anne Arundel County 2017-2026 Full-day (8-12 hours)



■ Actual Number of Family Child Care Providers ■ Predicted Number of Family Child Care Providers ■ Actual Number of Center-based Programs ■ Predicted Number of Center-based Programs

Anne Arundel County Public Schools Kindergarten Readiness 2017-2022 by Race/Ethnicity				
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2021-2022
African American	37%	40%	34%	31%
Hispanic/Latino	33%	29%	28%	19%
White	55%	57%	55%	51%
County Average	48%	48%	46%	40%
State Average	45%	47%	47%	40%

Early Childhood Matters

In the first few years of life,
more than

1 Million

new neural connections
are formed every second.

The brain is at its most flexible
and adaptable at this time
and is primed for learning.

The early years of a child's life are critical for later development and can help lay the foundation for future learning, health, and overall life success.

Brain development begins before birth, making prenatal care a critical part of early childhood development.

How the brain grows is strongly affected by a child's experiences with other people and the world. Children grow and learn best in a safe environment with plenty of opportunities to play and explore. Parents play an enormous role in early learning, as do childcare providers, pediatricians, preschools, and the broader community.

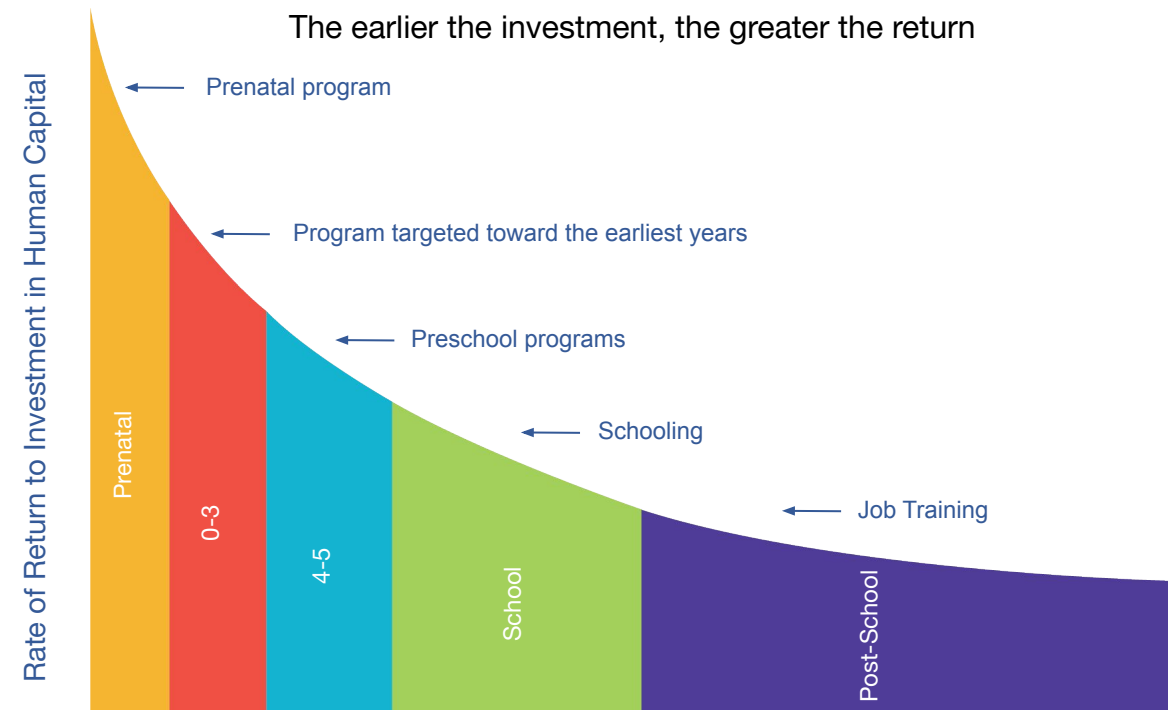


Early Childhood Investment is a Smart Investment

- **Early childhood education is often cited as the most powerful social intervention.**
- **Every \$1 invested** in early childhood typically yields **\$4 to \$12 in return on investment.**
- Children who attended early childhood programs:
 - **Were less likely to repeat a grade** and more likely to graduate from high school and pursue higher education;
 - **Were less likely to be suspended from school** or be involved in the criminal justice system as juveniles or adults; and,
 - **Experienced long-term health benefits**, including improved physical and mental health and reduced smoking.
- Effects are generally strongest for the most disadvantaged participants, making early childhood programs a powerful tool to reduce socioeconomic and racial/ethnic inequalities.

Early Childhood Development is a SMART INVESTMENT

The earlier the investment, the greater the return



ECC Priorities



Welcoming, child-friendly communities that supports all young children to grow, play and learn

Children thrive when their families know and can provide what their growing brains and bodies need at exactly the right time. That's why we are launching a community-wide education campaign to equip families with the tips, tools, and local resources they need to make the most of their child's early years.

Families feel welcome when their communities are built for them, with play spaces and greenspaces that are safe and accessible to all. To create the conditions for all children to grow, play, and learn, we are committed to improving neighborhood safety and environmental health, advocating for updates and renovations to existing amenities and family-focused planning for new projects.



Implement a holistic childcare model that is accessible and works for everyone (accessible, economically viable and serves the needs of children and families)

Our current childcare model is leaving too many families out. Collectively, we need to address the inequities in early childcare and education, including language barriers, cost, and transportation. By advocating for and funding an affordable, holistic system of in-home and center-based care, families won't have to choose between childcare and meeting their basic needs. With higher wages to attract and retain quality staff and increased support for start-up and maintenance costs, childcare providers can sustain and grow their businesses.

In addition to improving access, accessibility, and affordability, we are committed to achieving excellence through quality childcare. We will develop universal standards so **all centers are ready for all families.**

How We Will Measure Success

We'll know we are successful when all children in Anne Arundel County are entering school with the skills and experiences they need to succeed.

Motor Skills



Early Literacy and Numeracy Skills



Self-Care Skills



Social Skills





Vision

Every child (prenatal to age 5) and their families in Anne Arundel County has equitable access to excellent early childhood education and care that meets their unique developmental needs.

Mission

To bring together public and private partners in Anne Arundel County to meet the needs of and elevate a child's first five years to ensure all children have what they need to be successful in school and life.



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Goals



All children and their families have the resources they need to meet basic needs



Every child has a safe and accessible place to play outdoors



All families have affordable, high-quality early learning and care for their young children



All early educators are well-trained and earn a competitive wage in Anne Arundel County

Priorities And Strategies

Welcoming, child-friendly communities that supports all young children to grow, play and learn

- Launch a community-wide education campaign focused on the benefits and importance of early childhood and the value of early care and education
- Educate families about developmental milestones and when to access support services
- Model the importance of play as learning
- Analyze and improve neighborhood safety and the environmental health of physical spaces in neighborhoods
- Create standards for playgrounds and greenspaces in neighborhoods that ensure accessibility and promote connection
- Work with local officials to consider the needs of children (prenatal to age 5) in their planning, policies, and decision-making
- Engage partners in meeting the basic needs of families
- Provide support to families in intimate (home or community) settings whenever possible
- Increase the support for families who have immigrated to Anne Arundel County as well as foster/kinship families caring for young children
- Increase the mental health supports for families with young children and childcare providers

Implement a holistic childcare model that is accessible and works for everyone (accessible, economically viable and serves the needs of children and families)

- Assess the childcare model to identify what's working, gaps, and inequities
- Address the barriers and inequities families experience when accessing early childcare and education (language, transportation, etc.)
- Research innovative childcare models and create a holistic childcare system for Anne Arundel County
- Advocate for funding to finance a holistic childcare system and support the start-up and maintenance of childcare facilities
- Teach families what to ask when looking for childcare services and how to find childcare that meets their child's unique needs
- Build trusted relationships between early learning professionals and families
- Develop universal standards for all early learning programs
- Recruit, develop, retain, and reward early educators, elevating early learning professional as a career choice
- Make training easily accessible for early learning professionals
- Increase collaboration between childcare providers and county agencies

Result



All children enter school ready to learn and succeed

