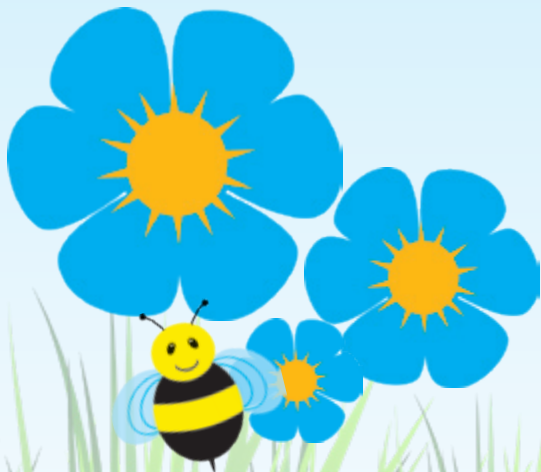


# HEALTHY GINNINGS

## 2025-2026

**HEALTHY BEGINNINGS**  
**A CALENDAR FOR MARYLAND PARENTS & FAMILIES**



# A Calendar for Maryland Families

## **Congratulations!**

You have an awesome job ahead of you! Being a parent is exciting and full of joyful opportunities. It can also be challenging! And, of course, babies don't come with instructions. Being aware of how your child is likely to grow and develop—and where you can get that information can help make raising your child easier.

As your child's needs change with age, use the information in this calendar to help you make choices during the early years of your child's life. It's a valuable resource to easily access all things related to child care and early education in Maryland!

Each month highlights a different child-related topic and lets you know how to get more details. Parenting tips and activities are also offered throughout the calendar—providing information on health, safety, growth, and learning. Here's what you will find in the calendar...

- Child care scholarships to pay for care and early education
- Child care options
- Finding child care
- Family services
- Preschool programs and school options
- Child development tips
- And more...

Sincerely,  
Dr. Shayna Cook  
Assistant State Superintendent  
Division of Early Childhood



# COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY



## **FAMILY RESOURCES** **MARYLAND WIC**

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) provides healthy supplemental foods and nutrition counseling to pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and children under age five. All WIC services are free to those who qualify.

800-242-4942

[MDWIC.org](http://MDWIC.org)

## **MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Find emergency and homeless services and help with rent, utility bills, and buying a home.

800-756-0119

[dhcd.maryland.gov](http://dhcd.maryland.gov)

## **MARYLAND CHILDREN'S HEALTH PROGRAM (MCHP)**

Provides full health benefits for children up to age 19.

855-642-8572

[MarylandHealthConnection.gov](http://MarylandHealthConnection.gov)

## **PARENTING SUPPORT**

Parenting is a tough job! Find tips, resources, and support in your community and online at [marylandfamilynetwork.org/for-parents](http://marylandfamilynetwork.org/for-parents)

## **CHILD CARE**

### **LOCATE: CHILD CARE**

A free and confidential referral service that will help you find the best child care for your family.

877-261-0060

[marylandfamilynetwork.org/  
programs-services/locate](http://marylandfamilynetwork.org/programs-services/locate)

### **MARYLAND EXCELS**

Maryland's quality rating system that awards ratings from 1 to 5 to child care and early education programs.

[MarylandEXCELS.org](http://MarylandEXCELS.org)

### **CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

Provides financial assistance (scholarships) with child care costs to eligible working families in Maryland.

[Money4ChildCare.com](http://Money4ChildCare.com)

## **CHILD SUPPORT**

### **MARYLAND CHILD SUPPORT ADMINISTRATION**

[dhs.maryland.gov/child-support-services](http://dhs.maryland.gov/child-support-services)

## **DIAL 2-1-1**

Wherever you live in Maryland, you can dial 2-1-1 or visit [211md.org](http://211md.org) to find information about resources in your local community. 2-1-1 is the number to call when you don't know who to call.

## **CHILD DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION**

### **HEALTHY BEGINNINGS**

Information on how children grow and develop and how to support your child's learning and well-being.

<https://marylandchild.org/development>

### **MARYLAND INFANTS AND TODDLERS PROGRAM**

A family-centered system of early intervention services for young children with developmental delays and disabilities and their families.

[referral.mditp.org](http://referral.mditp.org)

## **MENTAL & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**

### **CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!**

Information and resources to support your child in their social and emotional wellness.

[childrensmentalhealthmatters.org](http://childrensmentalhealthmatters.org)

## **JOB MARYLAND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

Find workforce development information, job search resources, and training programs.

[dhs.maryland.gov/workforce-development](http://dhs.maryland.gov/workforce-development)



# WATCH YOUR BABY GROW

**Babies learn and develop quickly during their first year. To help you track your child's development, here are timeframes when new skills are expected to emerge.**

## BIRTH TO 2 MONTHS

- Calms down when spoken to or picked up
- Looks at your face
- Seems happy to see you when you walk up to her
- Smiles when you talk to or smile at her
- Makes sounds other than crying
- Reacts to loud sounds
- Watches as you move
- Looks at a toy for several seconds

## 3 TO 4 MONTHS

- Smiles on his own to get your attention
- Chuckles (not yet a full laugh) when you try to make him laugh
- Looks at you, moves, or makes sounds to get or keep your attention
- Makes sounds like "oooo" or "aahh" (cooing)
- Makes sounds when you talk to him
- Turns head toward the sound of your voice
- If hungry, opens mouth when she sees breast or bottle
- Looks at her hands with interest
- Holds head steady without support when you are holding him
- Holds a toy when you put it in his hand
- Uses his arm to swing at toys
- Brings hands to mouth
- Pushes up onto elbows/forearms when on tummy

## 5 TO 6 MONTHS

- Knows familiar people
- Likes to look at self in a mirror
- Laughs
- Takes turns making sounds with you
- Blows "raspberries" (sticks tongue out and blows)

- Makes squealing noises
- Puts things in her mouth to explore them
- Reaches to grab a toy she wants
- Closes lips to show she doesn't want more food
- Rolls from tummy to back
- Pushes up with straight arms when on tummy
- Leans on hands to support herself when sitting

## 7 TO 9 MONTHS

- Is shy, clingy, or fearful around strangers
- Shows several facial expressions like happy, sad, angry, and surprised
- Looks when you call her name
- Reacts when you leave (looks, reaches for you, or cries)
- Smiles or laughs when you play peek-a-boo
- Makes a lot of different sounds like "mamamama" or "bababababa"
- Lifts arms to be picked up
- Looks for objects when dropped out of sight (like his spoon or toy)
- Bangs two things together
- Gets to a sitting position by herself
- Moves things from one hand to her other hand
- Uses fingers to "rake" food toward himself
- Sits without support

## 10 TO 12 MONTHS

- Plays games with you like pat-a-cake
- Waves "bye-bye"
- Calls a parent "mama," "dada," or another special name
- Understands "no" (pauses briefly or stops when you say it)
- Puts something in a container like a block in a cup
- Looks for things he sees you hide like a toy under a blanket

- Pulls up to stand
- Walks holding on to furniture
- Drinks from a cup without a lid as you hold it
- Picks things up between thumb and pointer finger like small bits of food

## 13 TO 15 MONTHS

- Copies other children while playing like taking toys out of a container when another child does
- Shows you an object she likes
- Claps when excited
- Hugs stuffed doll or another toy
- Shows you affection (hugs, cuddles, or kisses you)
- Tries to say one or two words besides "mama" or "dada," like "ba" for ball or "da" for dog
- Looks at a familiar object when you name it
- Follows directions given with both a gesture and words. For example, he gives you a toy when you hold out your hand and say, "Give me the toy."
- Points to ask for something or to get help
- Tries to use things the right way like a phone, cup, or book
- Stacks at least two small objects like blocks
- Takes a few steps on his own
- Uses fingers to feed herself some food

## 16 TO 18 MONTHS

- Moves away from you but looks to make sure you are close by
- Points to show you something interesting
- Puts hands out for you to wash them
- Looks at a few pages in a book with you
- Helps you dress him by pushing an arm through sleeve or lifting up a foot



**Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control Milestone Moments  
found at <https://www.cdc.gov/milestones>**



- Tries to say three or more words besides “mama” or “dada”
- Follows one-step directions without any gestures like giving you the toy when you say, “Give it to me.”
- Copies you doing chores like sweeping with a broom
- Plays with toys in a simple way like pushing a toy car
- Walks without holding on to anyone or anything
- Scribbles
- Drinks from a cup without a lid and may spill sometimes
- Feeds himself with his fingers
- Tries to use a spoon
- Climbs on and off a couch or chair without help

### 19 TO 24 MONTHS

- Notices when others are hurt or upset like pausing or looking sad when someone is crying
- Looks at your face to see how you react in a new situation
- Points to things in a book when you ask, like “Where is the bear?”
- Says at least two words together, like “More milk.”
- Points to at least two body parts when you ask him to show you
- Uses more gestures than just waving and pointing like blowing a kiss or nodding yes
- Holds something in one hand while using the other hand; for example, holding a container and taking the lid off
- Tries to use switches, knobs, or buttons on a toy
- Plays with more than one toy at the same time like putting toy food on a toy plate

### 25 TO 30 MONTHS

- Plays next to other children and sometimes plays with them
- Shows you what she can do by saying, “Look at me!”
- Follows simple rules when told like helping to pick up toys when you say, “It’s clean-up time.”
- Says about 50 words
- Says two or more words together, with one action word, like “Doggie run”
- Names things in a book when you point and ask, “What is this?”
- Says words like “I,” “me,” or “we”
- Uses things to pretend like feeding a block to a doll as if it were food
- Shows simple problem-solving skills like standing on a small stool to reach something
- Follows two-step instructions like “Put the toy down and close the door.”
- Shows he knows at least one color like pointing to a red crayon when you ask, “Which one is red?”
- Uses hands to twist things like turning doorknobs or unscrewing lids
- Takes some clothes off by himself like loose pants or an open jacket
- Jumps off the ground with both feet
- Turns book pages, one at a time, when you read to her

### 31 TO 36 MONTHS

- Calms down within 10 minutes after you leave her, like at a child care drop off
- Notices other children and joins them to play
- Talks with you in conversation using at least two back-and-forth exchanges
- Asks “who,” “what,” “where,” or “why” questions, like “Where is mommy/

- daddy?”
- Says what action is happening in a picture or book when asked, like “running,” “eating,” or “playing”
- Says first name when asked
- Talks well enough for others to understand most of the time
- Draws a circle when you show him how
- Avoids touching hot objects, like a stove, when you warn her
- Strings items together like large beads or macaroni
- Puts on some clothes by himself like loose pants or a jacket
- Uses a fork

### 3 TO 4 YEARS

- Pretends to be something else during play (teacher, superhero, dog)
- Asks to go play with children if none are around, like “Can I play with Alex?”
- Comforts others who are hurt or sad like hugging a crying friend
- Avoids danger like not jumping from tall heights at the playground
- Likes to be a “helper”
- Changes behavior based on where she is (place of worship, library, playground)
- Says sentences with four or more words
- Says some words from a song, story, or nursery rhyme
- Talks about at least one thing that happened during her day, like “I played soccer.”
- Answers simple questions like “What is a coat for?” or “What is a crayon for?”
- Names a few colors of items
- Tells what comes next in a well-known story
- Draws a person with three or more body parts

- Catches a large ball most of the time
- Serves herself food or pours water with adult supervision
- Unbuttons some buttons
- Holds crayons or pencil between fingers and thumb (not a fist)

### 4 TO 5 YEARS


- Follows rules or takes turns when playing games with other children
- Sings, dances, or acts for you
- Does simple chores at home like matching socks or clearing the table after eating
- Tells a story she heard or made up with at least two events. For example, a cat was stuck in a tree, and a firefighter saved it
- Answers simple questions about a book or story after you read or tell it to him
- Keeps a conversation going with more than three back-and-forth exchanges
- Uses or recognizes simple rhymes (bat-cat, ball-tall)
- Counts to 10
- Names some numbers between 1 and 5 when you point to them
- Uses words about time, like “yesterday,” “tomorrow,” “morning,” or “night”
- Pays attention for 5 to 10 minutes during activities. For example, during story time or making arts and crafts (screen time does not count)
- Writes some letters in her name
- Names some letters when you point to them
- Buttons some buttons
- Hops on one foot



**Download the CDC’s Milestone Tracker App for helpful features to help you keep track of your child’s milestones:**

**<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones-app.html>**

# PARENTING TIPS



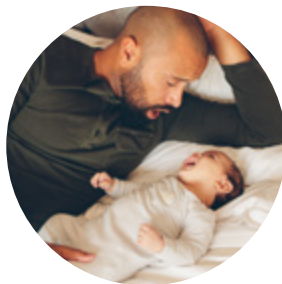
When a baby becomes part of your family, it is time to make sure that your home is a safe and loving place. Look around your home for things that could be dangerous to your baby. As a parent, it is your job to ensure that you create a safe home to spend time playing, singing, reading, and talking to your child. Use these practices to help your child stay healthy, be safe, and grow emotionally, behaviorally, mentally, and socially:

- Do not shake your baby—ever! Babies have very weak neck muscles that are not yet able to support their heads. If you shake your baby, you can hurt his brain or even cause his death.
- Make sure you always put your baby to sleep on her back to prevent sudden infant death syndrome (commonly known as SIDS).
- Protect your baby and family from secondhand smoke. Do not allow anyone to smoke in your home.
- Place your baby in a rear-facing car seat in the back seat while he is riding in a car. This is recommended by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
- Prevent your baby from choking by cutting her food into small bites. Also, don't let her play with small toys or other things that might be easy for her to swallow.
- Don't allow your baby to play with anything that might cover her face.
- Never carry hot liquids or foods near your baby or while holding him.
- Vaccines (shots) are important to protect your child's health and safety. Because children can get serious diseases, it is important that your child get the right shots at the right time. Talk with your child's doctor to make sure that your child is up-to-date on her shots.

**HEALTHY GROWTH MEANS HAVING A CHILD'S SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND EDUCATIONAL NEEDS MET. BE SURE TO...**



Respond to your child's needs



Show warmth and kindness



Have routines and house rules



Use fitting punishment with fairness



Support health and safety



## BABIES NEED:

- Loving parents or caregivers who respond to their cries or noises;
- To feel safe and at ease;
- To hear and make sounds;
- To move around;
- To be able to play in safe areas; and
- To play with safe toys.



## TODDLERS NEED:

- To do things that allow them to use their muscles;
- To use and feel their senses and develop speaking skills;
- To work with their hands;
- To learn to do things on their own;
- To play with other children;
- To continue to learn about how their body moves;
- To learn new words;
- To learn about things around them; and
- Chances to make choices within limits that you set.

**DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES** are things most children can do by a certain age. Skills such as crawling, walking, smiling for the first time, and waving “bye-bye” are examples of developmental milestones. Children reach milestones in how they play, learn, talk, behave, and move. Each child develops at his or her own pace, so it’s impossible to tell exactly when a child will learn a given skill. However, the developmental milestones give a general idea of the changes to expect as a child gets older.

Parents, grandparents, child care providers, and other caregivers can watch how your child grows and changes over time and whether your child meets the typical developmental milestones.

You know your child best. If your child is not meeting the milestones for his or her age, or if you think there could be a problem with your child’s development, talk with your child’s doctor and share your concerns. Don’t wait.



Subscribe to Maryland Messenger on MarylandChild.org to get a monthly email packed with parenting tips and activities.

Adapted from the U.S. Department of Education Parent Power:

Build the Bridge to Success found at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED513862.pdf>.

# YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION BEGINS AT BIRTH!



## STORY TIME

Read a book or tell a story to your baby every day beginning at birth. It doesn't matter how young your child is; even newborn babies are learning when their parents read with them.



## PEEK

Look right into your baby's eyes! Infants recognize faces early on – and yours is the most important! Each time he or she stares at you, they're building memory.



## FUNNY FACES

Stick out your tongue! Studies show that newborns as young as 2 days old can imitate simple facial movements – it's a sign of very early problem solving.



## TOUCH & TALK

Your touch and voice help your baby learn. Your loving touch combined with this back-and-forth “baby language” are the first steps in talking.



## SING ABOUT IT

Sing a favorite song over and over. Singing the same song can help your baby feel calm and safe. Your baby loves to hear your voice even if you think you can't sing! The sound of your voice is comforting to your baby.

**FIND MORE WAYS TO INTERACT  
WITH YOUR BABY AT  
MARYLANDFAMILIESENGAGE.ORG**



Adapted from the Center for Disease Control Milestone Moments found at <https://www.cdc.gov/milestones>.



# 2025 JANUARY

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

**Reading aloud is the single most important thing you can do to help a child prepare for learning and reading!**

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# **MILESTONES CAN OCCUR AT DIFFERENT RATES AND STAGES IN A CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT. IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE GROWTH OR DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR CHILD...**

**Talk about your concerns with your baby's child care provider and doctor. Tell the doctor what you have seen (or not seen) in as much detail as you can.**



**If there is a special health condition, a disability, or a developmental delay that may lead to non-typical development, contact Maryland's Infants and Toddlers Program (MITP).**

The MITP assists families of children with developmental delays and disabilities during the first four years of the child's developmental journey. Parents are welcome to refer to MITP themselves. They do not have to wait for a doctor. All services are provided at no cost to Maryland families. Scan the QR code to visit the MITP site.

**<https://referral.mditp.org>**



# 2025 FEBRUARY

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

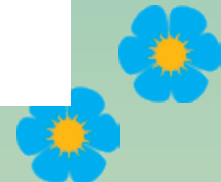
FRIDAY

SATURDAY

**Most babies reach certain milestones at similar ages. It's not unusual for a healthy baby to fall behind in some areas or race ahead in others.**

**No two babies are exactly alike. Your baby will develop at her own pace.**

2	3	4	5	6	7	1
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23	24	25	26	27	28	22



# YOU HAVE CHOICES, PICK ONE!

**Finding the right child care is key to a child's development and to get them ready for school.**

**All licensed child care in Maryland is overseen by the Maryland State Department of Education's Office of Child Care.**

**Maryland has two kinds of child care facilities:  
child care centers and family child care homes.**

**1**

## CHILD CARE CENTER

- Operated by professional caregivers within a licensed business facility.
- Usually serves large groups of children.

**2**

## FAMILY CHILD CARE

- Operated by professional caregivers within a provider's home.
- Cannot be more than eight children present for care in the family child care home at one time and not more than 12 in a large family child care home.



**More info is available at [MarylandChild.org](http://MarylandChild.org)**

State-funded Pre-K options are also available for children who are three or four years old.



# 2025 MARCH

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

**Regulated care means the caregiver has been licensed by Maryland's Office of Child Care. In order to be licensed, child care providers must meet minimum health, safety, and program requirements.**

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16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					



# QUALITY CHILD CARE MATTERS!

If you are like most parents, you will decide who will care for your child while you are at work or school. This means that at one point or another you have to put your child in the hands of another adult.

High-quality child care in the early years can make a positive difference for the future of your child. Making a thoughtful decision now will help your child develop the skills needed to be successful in school and life.



## APPROPRIATE

Learning opportunities are developmentally appropriate, interactive, and plentiful.



## SAFE

Health, safety, and welfare are top priorities.



## RESPONSIVE

The child care providers are responsive to the needs of each child.



## ENGAGING

Families are encouraged to engage in all aspects of the program.



## WARM

Interactions between providers and children are warm and positive.

**Maryland EXCELS** rates the quality of child care and early learning programs in Maryland. Programs are rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest rating.

FIND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT QUALITY CHILD CARE AT  
[MARYLANDEXCELS.ORG](http://MARYLANDEXCELS.ORG)

**MARYLANDEXCELS**  
CHECK FOR QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD  
AND SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMS



# 2025 APRIL

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY



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27	28	29	30			

**April is Autism Awareness Month!**  
The behaviors of autism spectrum disorder usually become clear during early childhood. As part of a well-baby/child visit, your child's doctor should perform a "developmental screening."

# When you choose licensed child care, you have several rights that are protected under Maryland law.

## YOU:

- Have the right to expect that the care your child receives meets the requirements set by Maryland child care regulations.
- Have the right to visit the facility any time your child is in care without making an appointment.
- Have the right to see the rooms and outside play area where care is provided during program hours.
- Are to be notified if someone in the family child care home smokes. In child care centers, smoking is not allowed.
- Have the right to receive advance notice when a substitute will be caring for your child in a family child care home for more than two (2) hours at a time.
- Must give written permission before a provider or teacher may take your child swimming, wading, or on field trips.
- Are to be notified immediately of any serious injury or accident. If your child has a non-serious injury or accident, you must be notified on the same day.
- May file a complaint with the Office of Child Care if you believe that the provider or teacher is violating child care regulations. Any complaint you make about the child care facility or the care being provided there (whether it involves your child or not) will be promptly investigated. Your complaint may be filed verbally or in writing. You should address it to the Office of Child Care Regional Licensing Office that has jurisdiction over the area where the facility is located, since that is the office that will conduct the investigation. Once the investigation of the complaint is complete, the Regional Licensing Office must, at your request, inform you about the results of the investigation.
- Have the right to review, at the Office of Child Care Regional Licensing Office, the public portion of the licensing or registration file on the child care facility where your child is or was enrolled, or where you are considering enrolling your child.



# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS





# 2025 MAY

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY






**Work out arrangements with the provider before your child begins the program. Signing a contract or service agreement helps to make the arrangements you need for you and your child.**


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11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

# MONEY FOR CHILD CARE


**The Child Care Scholarship (CCS) Program provides financial assistance (scholarships) with child care costs to eligible working families in Maryland.**

## TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE CCS PROGRAM, YOU MUST BE:

-  A Maryland resident.
-  Within CCS income guidelines (see chart).
-  Working/employed in an approved training program or attending school.
-  Willing to provide proof that each child needing child care is a citizen of the U.S. or a qualified alien.
-  Willing to have your child immunized to Maryland standards or provide documentation to support Exemption from Immunization.



Family Size	Maximum Annual Income*
Family of 2	\$76,117
Family of 3	\$94,026
Family of 4	\$111,936
Family of 5	\$129,846
Family of 6	\$147,756
Family of 7	\$151,114
Family of 8	\$154,472
Family of 9	\$157,830
Family of 10	\$161,188
Family of 11	\$164,546
Family of 12	\$167,904



**Money4ChildCare.com**

\*Income guidelines as of December 15, 2024

Please check the website for updates



# 2025 JUNE

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

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8 9 10 11 12 13 14

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22 23 24 25 26 27 28

29 30






**When choosing child care and early education programs, cost and convenience are important considerations. However, the ultimate value a program can offer you and your child is the quality of the care and education it provides.**



# NO ONE KNOWS YOUR CHILD LIKE YOU DO...

This puts you in the best position to recognize and fulfill your child's needs. Parents who give lots of loving care and attention to their children help their babies develop a strong attachment. Affection energizes your child to grow, learn, connect with others, and enjoy life.

## HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO BOND WITH YOUR CHILD:

-  Respond when your baby cries. Try to understand what he or she is saying to you. You can't "spoil" babies with too much attention—they need and benefit from a parent's loving care even when they seem upset.
-  Hold and touch your baby as much as possible. You can keep him close with baby slings, pouches, or backpacks (for older babies).
-  Use feeding and diapering times to look into your baby's eyes, smile, and talk to your baby.
-  Read, sing, and play peek-a-boo. Babies love to hear human voices and will try to imitate your voice and the sounds you make.
-  As your baby gets a little older, try simple games and toys. Once your baby can sit up, plan on spending lots of time on the floor with your baby with toys, puzzles, and books.



**The best gift you can give your baby is YOU. The love and attention you give your baby now will stay with him or her forever, and will help your baby grow into a healthier and happier child and adult.**

Adapted from the U.S. Department of Education Parent Power: Build the Bridge to Success found at <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/kindergartentipsproviders.pdf>



# 2025 JULY

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY








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20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

**Regular mealtimes and snack times can give your child a routine. Avoid letting your child continuously eat or drink during the day.**

# GET READY – TIME TO TRANSITION!

**Once you have selected a program, it is time to prepare your child for this new experience:**

-  If your child spends most of his time with you, plan to have him spend some time with other caregivers (friends, neighbors, family) without you there. It's important for your child to understand that there are other loving adults who will care for him even when you are not there.
-  Visit the program you have selected with your child. Let your child explore the space and begin to meet the child care providers and the other children.
-  Read books together about young children going to child care. Your public library can be a resource for easy-to-read books that you can share with your child.
-  Find some items your child can bring to the child care program for comfort: a photo of you or your family, a favorite blanket for naptime.
-  If your child is already speaking, he or she may express some worries or fears about going to the program. Listen, comfort, and talk about times you have been worried about something.



**You may also feel some anxiety as your child's first day approaches. All the ways to prepare your child that we have listed here are about being connected with your child and letting him or her know that you will be going through this experience together. In taking these steps, you may also find that these preparations help you.**

Learn more about helping your child make a transition at [marylandfamiliesengage.org](https://marylandfamiliesengage.org).

# 2025 AUGUST

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

**August is Get Ready for Kindergarten Month! Helping your child get excited for the transition to kindergarten is an important step you can take together.**




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# LOCATE THE CARE YOU NEED FOR YOUR CHILD!



**Maryland Family Network's LOCATE: Child Care** is a free referral service with detailed information on all licensed child care in Maryland. **LOCATE: Child Care** program counselors provide specialized help for families.

## The **LOCATE: Child Care Counselor** will discuss:

-  Location, cost, and other factors
-  Services or accommodations needed while in child care
-  Child care programs that meet your child's needs



Call: 1.877.261.0060





# 2025 SEPTEMBER

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

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**Finding an available provider in your area may take time. Begin looking at least a few months before your child will need care.**

# GET A HEAD START FOR YOUR BABY



Early Head Start serves pregnant women, infants, and toddlers. These programs help families care for their infants and toddlers through a wide range of early care services until a child turns 3 years old and is ready to go into Head Start or another Pre-K program.

Head Start programs provide low-income children and their families with health, food, social, and other services. Programs build relationships with families that support positive parent-child bonds, family health, and connections with other parents and the community. Head Start encourages the role of parents as their child's first and most important teachers.



Visit [marylandchild.org](http://marylandchild.org) or scan the QR code below for Head Start locations and contact information.

*Early childhood programs—including known and licensed child care, Head Start, preschool, Pre-K, and other early learning programs—fall under the definition of “schools” in Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) regulations.*

# 2025 OCTOBER

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

**October is Head Start Awareness Month!**  
Through Head Start programs, parents and families are supported in achieving their own goals, such as stable housing, education, and financial security.

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# SCREEN SAVERS... CHOOSE PLAYTIME OVER SCREEN TIME!

Most of your baby's brain development will happen in the first two years of life. It's important for babies and toddlers to explore the things around them and experience natural sights, sounds, tastes, and textures. Interacting and playing with others helps children learn about the world around them.

For that reason, limit the amount of time your baby spends in front of a screen. Despite what you may have heard, there is no research studying a connection between tablets or smartphones and infant learning.



## HERE ARE THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCREEN TIME FOR BABIES AND TODDLERS:

-  Children under age 2 should have **NO** screen time.
-  Limit screen time to 1 to 2 hours a day for children over age 2.



**Remember, screen time includes all forms of electronics: TVs, movies, video games, computers, tablets, and cell phones. Basically, anything with a screen.**

**Learn more about screen time recommendations and choosing play at [marylandfamiliesengage.org](https://marylandfamiliesengage.org)**

# 2025 NOVEMBER

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

Several studies have linked excessive screen time to lowered literacy rates for children of all ages. Scientists have also found language delays among children younger than age 2 who are exposed to too much screen time.

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Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, Office of Educational Technology.  
<https://www.aappublications.org/news/2017/05/04/PASScreenTime050417>



# LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

Children are learning all the time, especially when they are playing. Play also helps children learn to share, listen to others, and wait their turn. Just as you would help a child learn to recognize their name or colors, you can help infants and toddlers learn skills to express thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in socially appropriate ways.

**DON'T WAIT!** Kindergarten may be too late for children to start learning these skills. Through care and nurturing, you can nurture these skills in infants and toddlers to help them take control of their thinking and their feelings.

**SAY WHAT YOU THINK YOUR BABY IS FEELING.** For example, say, "You look so sad. Let's see if we can make you feel better." Your baby will learn that you are paying attention to her needs and want to be there for her.

**HELP YOUR BABY LEARN TO CALM HIMSELF AND PRAISE HIM FOR DOING IT.** It's okay for him or her to suck on his fingers or fist; sucking helps babies self-soothe and is a first step to managing emotions.

**LEARN TO READ YOUR BABY'S MOODS.** He or she can feel a range of emotions at a very early age. Paying attention to what his behavior is indicating will help you feel more confident about how to respond.

**SHOW CHILDREN APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR AND HOW TO ACHIEVE IT.** From the very beginning, your baby learns by watching you. Responding calmly to situations, expressing joy, and letting your child know that you love them helps them learn how to behave and what to expect from future relationships.

**RESPOND ALOUD WHEN YOUR CHILD IS ENGAGED IN POSITIVE BEHAVIOR, SUPPORT HER AS SHE LEARNS TO MANAGE HER THOUGHTS, BEHAVIORS, AND FEELINGS, AND GRADUALLY REMOVE YOUR ASSISTANCE.** For example, praise your child when he or she comforts a friend, puts a toy away, or follows a simple direction.



Adapted from the Fostering Healthy Social and Emotional Development in Young Children found at <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/kindergartentipsproviders.pdf>

# 2025 DECEMBER

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

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**Children may “act up” or “act out” because something isn’t right. They are trying to express a feeling, or their needs are not being met.**

# FAMILY FIRST! SERVICES FOR THE PARENTS & CHILDREN!

Judith P. Hoyer Early Learning Hubs, also known as “Judy Centers,” offer a wide range of services for low-income families with children aged birth through five. The goal of Judy Centers is to get children ready to learn in school.

## SOME OF THE SERVICES JUDY CENTERS OFFER INCLUDE:

Play Groups



Family Activities



Adult Education



Parenting Classes



Case Management



Developmental & Health Screenings



Child Care Assistance



What makes Judy Centers special is that their services are offered under one roof. Judy Centers address the many factors that can impact a young child being ready to learn in school.

Visit [marylandjudycenters.org](http://marylandjudycenters.org) or scan the QR code for Judy Center locations.



# 2026 JANUARY

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

Being ready for school means more than your child knowing their ABCs and 123s, colors and shapes. Social skills like knowing how to play with others and understanding and controlling their own emotions play a big part in children entering kindergarten ready to learn.

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# IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY... TO THINK ABOUT SCHOOL!



It's never too early to start providing the kinds of experiences that will help your child enter school ready to succeed.

As a parent, you are the most important person in your child's life. Throughout the early learning years, you can do many simple things to help your children grow, develop, and have fun learning.

## HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO:

- Play with your child. Through play, babies and toddlers explore and make sense of the world around them. Play promotes a love for learning by stimulating and supporting children in their development of skills, concepts, language, communication, and concentration.
- Read aloud to your child daily. This gives your child a chance to learn about language, enjoy the sound of your voice, and be close to you.
- Encourage your children to try new things.
- Listen to your child. This is the best way to learn what's on his mind, what he knows and doesn't know, and how he thinks and learns.
- Provide healthy foods, safe places to play, regular medical care, and a regular sleep schedule for your child.
- Teach your child to get along with others, to share, and to take turns.
- Set a good example for your children. They will copy what you do.
- Teach your child to feel good about herself and be confident that she can succeed.
- Set limits for your child. This is a sign of love that your child appreciates, even if he or she may argue against them.
- Be generous with your praise. Always compliment your children for their efforts.

High-quality child care programs get children ready to start prekindergarten (Pre-K) at age 4. They build a solid foundation for achieving academic, health, and social results that help families. Children who attend these programs are more likely to do well in school, find good jobs, and succeed in their careers than those who don't. Scan the QR code to learn more about Pre-K.





# 2026 FEBRUARY




SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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**February is Dental Health Month! Children need healthy teeth to chew, speak, learn, and socialize.**

# WHAT'S THE PLAN?

**Holiday, severe weather, and emergency closing policies vary from one child care program to the next. Quality child care programs have written policies and procedures that explain how the program handles different types of closings.**

**Emergencies such as natural disasters may cause child care programs to close down temporarily. An emergency closure can take place while your child is in care.**

-  How will you be notified of closures and the plan to reopen?
-  Is the provider able to adequately care for your child if you are unable to reach him or her for several hours or even days?
-  If the facility must be evacuated because of an emergency, do you know where to pick up your child?

**All these questions should be addressed in a written emergency plan. This plan may be a part of the policies and procedures, or it may be a separate document.**

**SCHOOL  
CLOSED**

**Be sure you are able to see in writing which days the program plans to be closed.** You'll want to know if the program closes for holidays that you have to work. It's also important to know how the provider will let you know if there are unplanned closures for things like bad weather.

Learn more about child care contracts at <https://childcare.gov>.

Source: <https://www.childcare.gov/consumer-education/understanding-child-care-policies-and-contracts>

## **TIP:**

Days the program may be closed and whether payment is required for those days should be in your child care contract.

# 2026 MARCH

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

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**March is National Reading Month! Literacy skills begin at birth. As a child's first teacher, parents and families play an important role in developing children's early reading skills. Maryland public libraries offer programs, events, and materials for children year-round.**

Find your local library at <https://www.marylandlibraries.org/>

# PLACES TO GET SUPPORT & SERVICES

Maryland has a network of 24 Patty Centers, formerly known as Family Support Centers, in 14 counties that offer free educational and health-related services to parents and their children ages birth through three.

## THE CENTERS OFFER A RANGE OF SERVICES INCLUDING:



Quality infant/toddler care and assessment while parents are on site

Parent education

Parent-to-parent support

Adult education, family literacy, and job readiness training

Health education and referral for services

Home visits for some services

Service coordination between agencies

To locate the Patty Center near you, visit [marylandchild.org](http://marylandchild.org) or scan the QR code.



# 2026 APRIL

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

**The most important thing you can do for your child is to love them unconditionally and provide an emotionally safe environment.**

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# YOU'VE GOT SKILLS!

As a parent, you want to help your child to do well and succeed in school. You want them to grow up and have good jobs and happy lives. Research shows that by teaching them a few skills before they even get to prekindergarten or kindergarten, you can help your young child to do well in school and life.

Exactly what should you be teaching your young child so he/she will be 'ready to learn?' Most parents believe they need to focus on helping children learn their ABCs, how to count to 20, or identify shapes and colors. These skills are important for young children to learn.

However, there are other key skills a child needs to have in order to be ready to learn. These are called social and emotional skills.

They allow kids to work well with others and share their needs, wants, and feelings. Some examples are:

- sharing
- being patient
- helping others
- following directions
- staying focused
- knowing right from wrong

Loving relationships with you and other adults are the best thing you can do to get your children ready for school. Children are more likely to develop good social and emotional skills when they have safe, secure, and nurturing relationships with other people.

Your help to nurture social-emotional skills will help your child to enter school ready to make and keep friends and learn new things.

If you are worried about your child's emotional growth or behavior, visit [marylandchild.org/parenting](https://marylandchild.org/parenting) or scan the QR code.

Sources: Child Development Basics found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/index.html> and Social and Emotional Development found at: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/effective-practice-guides/social-emotional-development>.





# 2026 MAY

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

Starting from birth, babies are learning who they are by how they are treated. This greatly shapes who they will become.

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# ON TIME EVERY DAY!



**Showing up ON TIME EVERY DAY is important to your child's success and learning from the time they enter child care, preschool and moving forward.**

## **Missing one or two days every few weeks can:**

- Make it harder to develop early reading skills.
- Make it harder to get ready for kindergarten and first grade.
- Develop a poor attendance pattern that's hard to break.



**High-quality child care and preschool programs have many benefits for your child. The routines your child develops in child care and preschool will continue throughout school. You can make the most of preschool by ensuring your child attends every day!**

# 2026 JUNE

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

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# Why Families Choose Different Types of Child Care

**Every family has different child care needs and preferences. Families choose providers and types of child care based on their own needs:**



Many families choose **family child care homes** because they like the family environment and the smaller number of children. Home-based programs provide a consistent caregiver for your child and may offer flexible hours if you need care in the evenings or weekends. Families with multiple children also like that siblings are cared for together rather than separated into different age groups. Family child care homes are often less expensive than center-based child care programs, but rates within your community may vary.

Many families choose **child care centers** because of the more structured, classroom-like environment. Families may like that their children are cared for in groups with other children the same age. They may also appreciate the greater number of adults present in the building. Families often like child care centers because of the larger groups of children present and a greater variety of equipment, supplies, and activities.

Many families choose **Head Start** because of the free high-quality comprehensive early childhood services. Families may like that their children are cared for in groups with other children the same age. They may also appreciate the additional federal requirements that Head Start programs must meet.



Families who select a **preschool program** usually don't need full-day, full-year care but are looking for a program that focuses on getting children ready for kindergarten.

Families may choose to use care in their **own home** because they believe their children will feel more secure in their own home. Some families find this type of care more convenient, especially if parents are working different hours such as second or third shift or have to be at work before other types of care settings open.

This type of care may be more flexible and may be a good fit for families that don't need child care on a full-time or regular basis.

If there are several children in the family, this type of child care may be more affordable than other types of care.

Families who choose **family, friend, and neighbor care** report that they know and trust the caregiver. Families may like the flexibility in scheduling and transportation. It is often the least expensive type of care available.



# FIVE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS: WORK AND FAMILY LIFE

**These five basic questions will help you determine whether potential child care programs will work for your family.**

Questions	Yes	No
1. Is the program open when you need it to be?		
2. Is the program conveniently located for your family?		
3. Does the program provide transportation that could help you get your child to and from the program?		
4. Can your family afford this program?		
5. Does the program offer any discounts or participate in the Child Care Scholarship Program?		

The Child Care Scholarship (CCS) Program provides financial assistance with child care costs to eligible working families in Maryland. Eligibility requirements for the CCS Program are available at [Money4ChildCare.com](https://Money4ChildCare.com) and in the June 2025 pages of this calendar.

Make time to visit several programs to spend time watching what happens in the program and to ask lots of questions.




Adapted from **Selecting a Child Care Program: Visiting and Asking Questions** available at <https://childcare.gov/consumer-education/selecting-a-child-care-program-visiting-and-asking-questions>

# RECOMMENDED IMMUNIZATIONS FOR CHILDREN FROM BIRTH THROUGH 6 YEARS OLD

Get OFFICIAL  
immunization records for  
your family without going  
to the doctor.  
Visit [myirmobile.com/  
maryland-sign-in](http://myirmobile.com/maryland-sign-in) online to  
get records for child care



Birth	1 month	2 months	4 months	6 months	12 months	15 months	18 months	19-23 months	2-3 years	4-6 years
HepB	HepB			HepB						
		RV	RV	RV						
<div>Get OFFICIAL immunization records for your family without going to the doctor. <a href="https://myirmobile.com/">myirmobile.com/</a> and sign-in online to upload records for child care</div> 		DTaP	DTaP	DTaP		DTaP				DTaP
		Hib	Hib	Hib	Hib					
		PCV13	PCV13	PCV13	PCV13					
		IPV	IPV	IPV						IPV
					Flu (Yearly)*					
<div></div>	Shaded boxes indicate the vaccine can be given during shown age range.				MMR					MMR
					Varicella					Varicella
					HepA§					

Shaded boxes indicate  
the vaccine can be given  
during shown age range.

**NOTE:** If your child misses a shot, you don't need to start over. Just go back to your child's doctor for the next shot.  
Talk with your child's doctor if you have any questions about vaccines.

## FOOTNOTES:

\* Two doses given at least four weeks apart are recommended for children age 6 months through 8 years of age who are getting a flu vaccine for the first time and for some other children in this age group.

§ Two doses of HepA vaccine are needed for lasting protection. The first dose of HepA vaccine should be given between 12 months and 23 months of age. The second dose should be given 6 months after the last dose. HepA vaccination may be given to any child 12 months and older to protect against hepatitis A. Children and adolescents who did not receive the HepA vaccine and are at high risk should be vaccinated against hepatitis A.

If your child has any medical conditions that put him or her at risk for infection or is traveling outside the United States, talk to your child's doctor about additional vaccines that he or she may need.



# VACCINE PREVENTABLE DISEASES AND THE VACCINES THAT PREVENT THEM

Disease	Vaccine	Disease spread by	Disease symptoms	Disease complications
Chickenpox	Varicella vaccine protects against chickenpox.	Air, direct contact	Rash, tiredness, headache, fever	Infected blisters, bleeding disorders, encephalitis (brain swelling), pneumonia (infection in the lungs)
Diphtheria	DTaP* vaccine protects against diphtheria.	Air, direct contact	Sore throat, mild fever, weakness, swollen glands in neck	Swelling of the heart muscle, heart failure, coma, paralysis, death
Hib	Hib vaccine protects against Haemophilus influenzae type B.	Air, direct contact	May be no symptoms unless bacteria enter the blood	Meningitis (infection of the covering around the brain and spinal cord), intellectual disability, epiglottitis (life-threatening infection that can block the windpipe and lead to serious breathing problems), pneumonia (infection in the lungs), death
Hepatitis A	HepA vaccine protects against hepatitis A.	Direct contact, contaminated food or water	May be no symptoms, fever, stomach pain, loss of appetite, fatigue, vomiting, jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes), dark urine	Liver failure, arthralgia (joint pain), kidney, pancreatic, and blood disorders
Hepatitis B	HepB vaccine protects against hepatitis B.	Contact with blood or body fluids	May be no symptoms, fever, headache, weakness, vomiting, jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes), joint pain	Chronic liver infection, liver failure, liver cancer
Influenza (Flu)	Flu vaccine protects against influenza.	Air, direct contact	Fever, muscle pain, sore throat, cough, extreme fatigue	Pneumonia (infection in the lungs)
Measles	MMR** vaccine protects against measles.	Air, direct contact	Rash, fever, cough, runny nose, pink eye	Encephalitis (brain swelling), pneumonia (infection in the lungs), death
Mumps	MMR** vaccine protects against mumps.	Air, direct contact	Swollen salivary glands (under the jaw), fever, headache, tiredness, muscle pain	Meningitis (infection of the covering around the brain and spinal cord), encephalitis (brain swelling), inflammation of testicles or ovaries, deafness
Pertussis	DTaP* vaccine protects against pertussis (whooping cough).	Air, direct contact	Severe cough, runny nose, apnea (a pause in breathing in infants)	Pneumonia (infection in the lungs), death
Polio	IPV vaccine protects against polio.	Air, direct contact, through the mouth	May be no symptoms, sore throat, fever, nausea, headache	Paralysis, death
Pneumococcal	PCV13 vaccine protects against pneumococcus.	Air, direct contact	May be no symptoms, pneumonia (infection in the lungs)	Bacteremia (blood infection), meningitis (infection of the covering around the brain and spinal cord), death
Rotavirus	RV vaccine protects against rotavirus.	Through the mouth	Diarrhea, fever, vomiting	Severe diarrhea, dehydration
Rubella	MMR** vaccine protects against rubella.	Air, direct contact	Sometimes rash, fever, swollen lymph nodes	Very serious in pregnant women—can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery, birth defects
Tetanus	DTaP* vaccine protects against tetanus.	Exposure through cuts in skin	Stiffness in neck and abdominal muscles, difficulty swallowing, muscle spasms, fever	Broken bones, breathing difficulty, death

\* DTaP combines protection against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis. \*\* MMR combines protection against measles, mumps, and rubella.

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/easy-to-read/child-easyread.html>



**Maryland**

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Maryland State Department of Education  
Division of Early Childhood  
200 West Baltimore Street, 10th Floor  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

For more tips and resources throughout the year, visit [www.marylandchild.org](http://www.marylandchild.org).