



**FY 2024 ANNUAL
REPORT**

15 Years of
Making a
Difference

15 YEARS OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF MARYLAND'S CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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A MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LAURA WEELDREYER

"You can't really know where you're going until you know where you have been."

Maya Angelou

Back in 2009, as the nation struggled to recover from the Great Recession of 2008, something special was happening in Maryland, something that would grow much needed support for children and their caregivers across the state. Two leading nonprofits—Maryland Committee for Children and Friends of the Family—joined forces to form Maryland Family Network (MFN).

Over 15 years, MFN has reached hundreds of thousands of Maryland families. Today, MFN is the state's leading provider of services to the early childhood care community and a leader in building and expanding programs that help the whole family thrive. We are the state's lead agency for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention, the number one source for locating quality child care, and the leading advocate for early childhood policies and programs in Annapolis.

While our program areas and priorities have evolved, our core commitment to supporting young children and those who care for them has remained steadfast. We've worked hard to forge strong partnerships - bringing together parents, providers, advocates, government agencies, and community agencies and leaders.

The result? Stronger families and a stronger Maryland.

In this fiscal year 2024 annual report, we look back on what we've accomplished over the past 15 years, take stock of our achievements in FY 2024, and envision how MFN will build upon its legacy to make Maryland the greatest place in America to raise a young child. You'll hear from people across the state whose lives have been positively changed by MFN. Their voices tell the powerful story of our impact in a way that data alone cannot.

Finally, this annual report provides us with an opportunity to express our appreciation for the relationships we've built along the way. We couldn't do this work without *you*. Thank you for being an essential part of our community, for investing in Maryland's children, and for your desire to make lasting change in the lives of children and their families in Maryland.



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VISION

A Maryland where every child has a strong and equitable foundation to thrive in their first five years and beyond.

MISSION

We mobilize networks across Maryland to ensure our young children and those who care for them to have the resources and equitable opportunities to thrive

WHERE WE WORK

We work in every county across the state of Maryland and are a respected leader and thought partner to national organizations and public officials in innovating programs and policies.



ENSURING QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Quality child care is the backbone of every aspect of our nation's well-being. MFN has spent the last 15 years working to build the supply and quality of child care, grow the child care workforce, help families and businesses solve child care challenges, and deliver on-the-ground information and solutions.

Training, Coaching, and Development: *Maryland Child Care Resource Network*

We know that children are born ready to learn, and that the first few years of their lives are the foundation for everything that follows. That's why, through the Maryland Child Care Resource Network (MCCRN), MFN provides research-driven training and support to Maryland's child care professionals.



Did you know that MFN's Child Care Resource Centers are Maryland's largest child care training and coaching organization?

In a typical year, MFN's regional Child Care Resource Centers (CCRC), which make up the MCCRN, issue 25,000 training certificates annually, ensuring that child care providers and other early childhood educators are ready to meet the health and safety needs of young children as well as their social, emotional, and cognitive development. CCRCs offer coaching options, from group coaching to one-on-one intensive coaching.

Looking Back

In 1989, the Maryland Committee for Children established the Maryland Child Care Resource Network (MCCRN) to ensure that every child had the resources to learn and succeed. With the merger of the Maryland Committee for Children and Friends of the Family in 2009, MFN strengthened the MCCRN's positive imprint on child care in Maryland.

Over the last 15 years, MFN has focused on improving the efficiency and accessibility of training and coaching services at our network of Child Care Resource Centers. MFN has coordinated a Maryland Child Care Training Calendar, and supported the conversion of in-person training to eLearning and asynchronous training to ensure around the clock access to MSDE required training workshops. MFN added at least one new workshop per year, and developed critical training modules on topics like social-emotional foundations, supporting children with disabilities, conflict resolution, and school readiness. This was all done to ensure every child has the resources to learn and succeed.

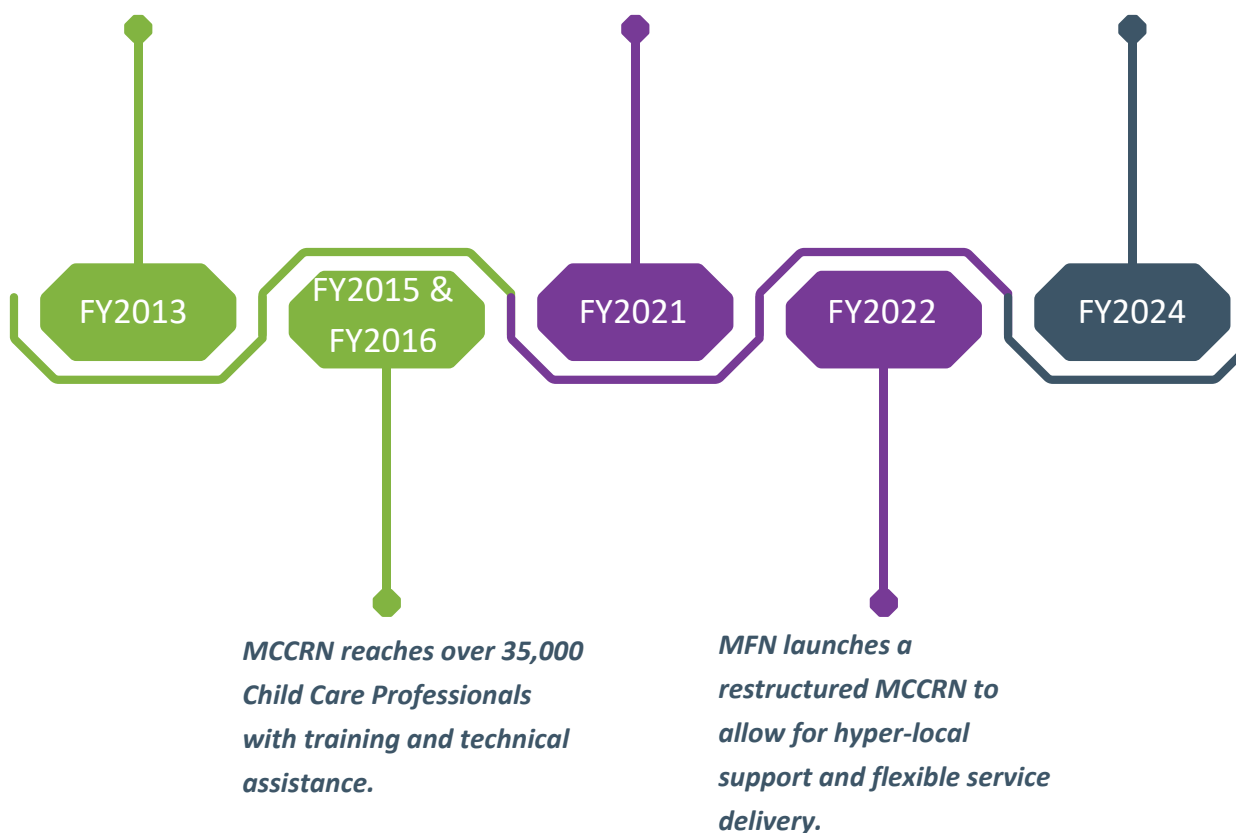
MARYLAND CHILD CARE RESOURCE NETWORK TIMELINE OF SUCCESS

MFN launched

Breakthrough Centers to improve the quality and capacity of early childhood programs. The network provided over 2,000 workshops to more than 27,000 participants.

MFN launches the Maryland Child Care BOOST program to provide family child care providers with the training and resources needed to grow their business knowledge for success.

Ninty-five percent of BOOST completers remain licensed and in operation, demonstrating the long term value of targeted business supports in stabilizing Maryland's child care sector.



FY 2024 Highlights

While the Network's structure has changed over the last 35 years, its core services and commitment to supporting child care providers have remained the same—ensuring **every** child care program has access to the professional development and coaching services needed to provide high-quality and accessible child care.

In FY 2024, thousands of providers received training and coaching. MCCRN provided nearly 1,500 training workshops and issued nearly 22,000 training certificates to educators. Child care professionals completed just over 4,511 training hours and MCCRN recorded over 17,000 individual contacts for support and assistance.

The Network's Family Resource Specialists routinely helped parents navigate the Child Care Scholarship application system and find additional resources for their families. In FY 2024, specialists assisted over 1,900 families in submitting more than 250 applications for the Child Care Scholarship program. They also helped over 100 families connect with resources such as food banks, homeless shelters, and employment offices.

Other FY 2024 Wins

In January 2024, the Maryland Child Care Resource Network hosted its first-ever Infant and Toddler Symposium, bringing together 119 family child care program owners and center staff educators to learn about topics such as engaging infants and toddlers through nature-based experiences and inclusive play for infants and toddlers. Participants also explored parenting practices from around the world and learned strategies to build stronger and more culturally responsive relationships with families. The event proved so successful that a second symposium, focused on recognizing and addressing biases in early childhood settings, is being held in 2025.

MFN collaborated with the Maryland State Department of Education to provide a free 45-hour training series, titled "Critical Competencies for Infant Toddler Caregivers." A total of 406 child care providers completed the training and are now well equipped to support the social-emotional, cognitive, and language development of infants and toddlers.

Throughout FY 2024, MFN was instrumental in helping hundreds of child care providers pursue their Child Development Associate credential, the most widely recognized credential in early childhood education and a vital part of professional development. MFN partnered with the Council for Professional Recognition and MSDE to ensure providers could apply for and access funding to cover credential application fees and resource books.



Helping Families Find Child Care: LOCATE: Child Care

New parents need advice when it comes to choosing child care. That's why MFN's *LOCATE: Child Care* helps over 20,000 parents and caregivers annually search for and find care. MFN's role in collecting, interpreting, and disseminating data on child care supply, demand, and cost across Maryland also directly informs policy makers as they consider budgetary questions and policy initiatives to support child care and its workforce.

Looking Back

In 1979, *LOCATE: Child Care* was created by MFN's legacy organization, Maryland Committee for Children. It began as a simple index card system of child care programs in Maryland that, over time, expanded to phone consultation services and online search tools. As *LOCATE: Child Care* expanded, MFN ensured that it was responsive to the changing environment. For example, in FY 2013, the platform began to enable child care providers to self-update their listings electronically. MFN also enhanced services for specific populations, such as military families and children with special needs, and implemented the Special Needs Enhanced Service to assist parents seeking inclusive care.

MFN launched a free mobile app in FY 2015 that included the LOCATE search function, and in FY 2022, Family Resource Specialists began a new service: helping parents understand, navigate, and submit applications for the Child Care Scholarship Program.

In FY 2023, MFN relaunched the LOCATE platform and introduced dynamic statewide maps for parents and policy makers, near real-time provider updates, and free websites for licensed providers, making it one of the most advanced search platforms of its kind in the country. By FY 2023, online searches through the LOCATE platform jumped to a record 71,475!

FY 2024 Highlights

In FY 2024, nearly 28,000 Maryland families used the LOCATE online platform. Over the years, parents surveyed about the usefulness of LOCATE have consistently shown high rates of satisfaction. FY 2024 was no different. Ninety-two percent rated the services as good or very good, and 91 percent found the informational materials provided to be useful.

Supporting Home-based Child Care Providers: GOFCC

In response to the critical shortage of home-based or family child care providers, particularly in underserved and rural areas of Maryland, especially Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore, MFN launched the Growing Opportunities in Family Child Care (GOFCC) program in 2021. GOFCC, initially established by five Child Care Resource Centers, helps recruit new family child care providers and supports them as they navigate the licensing and registration process.

The accelerated training program is creating hundreds of new child care slots across the state, fostering opportunities for predominantly female-operated small businesses and home language diversity in child care.

GOFCC grew significantly in FY 2024. The program was directly responsible for establishing 125 new family child care programs, bringing the total of new family child care programs opened to an impressive 172. The program expanded to include business training, and the average time to complete the GOFCC program remained at just an efficient 4-6 months. It now operates in 21 of Maryland's 23 counties. Over the course of just two years, GOFCC programming has resulted in the ability to provide care for 1,490 children across the state. The success of GOFCC means increased access to child care in high-poverty and rural areas, which in turn provides more job opportunities and financial stability for families.

In Their Own Words

Meet Mia Pascale (Damascus, Maryland)

In 2015, I lost my job at a bank and relocated to Maryland to live with family. I drove an Uber while just trying to pay my bills and keep my head above water. Then I learned about the possibility of working at a child care center. I started as an aide at a home-based program owned by one of my neighbors.

I just fell in love with the work—with the families, with the children, with everything. I realized that I had found my real calling in life. So I worked my way up to being a head teacher and committed myself to learning everything there was to learn about the child care business. And in 2019, I opened my own program called Chez Miss Pascale. I felt empowered and proud, but at the same time, starting and owning my own business was very demanding. I was working long hours by myself. I needed help.



Mia Pascale speaking at First Years 2024.

One day, I heard about Maryland Family Network's GOFCC [Growing Opportunities for Family Child Care] program, and I immediately applied. During my interview, I was so excited because MFN explained that GOFCC would equip me with the tools needed to run a healthier business. And they did. MFN helped me with accounting—things like knowing how much I make, understanding why a budget is so important, and what my cost per child should be in order to be profitable. With GOFCC, I learned so much about how to teach children and how to run my business so it will last as long as I want it and need it to.

I have also become an advocate for home-based child care, and am helping other women open their own businesses—encouraging them, and giving them the advice that I was given.

And I've gained so much respect from my friends and family. Everybody used to think that I was just a glorified babysitter. Child care is not babysitting. I am a teacher and a business owner. When they saw what I could accomplish with the business I built, everybody was just in awe. I went from being unemployed and unsure of my future to being happy and fulfilled. I do what I love, and I love what I do. Every morning is a new day, and I wake up excited. I even have a hard time going to sleep because I'm thinking about what to do with the children the next day. It shows in my work. The families who have worked with me have stayed with me and request to hold a spot for their upcoming babies. Families come to me through word of mouth and because of my reputation as a quality provider.

I'm so grateful for MFN and the GOFCC program. They delivered on the promise of equipping me to own and operate my own business. Thank you, MFN!

Looking Forward - A Conversation with Lacey Eidman, Director of The Child Care Resource Center Network (CCRCN)

From your perspective, what are the challenges and needs around ensuring quality learning environments?

Simply put, this country's child care system isn't working well for everyone. It's not easy to find and afford quality child care. Nearly 85% of primary caregivers say that problems with child care are having a negative impact on their efforts and time commitment to work.

For those who are working in child care, earning a living wage is a problem. They often end up leaving child care in search of better-paying jobs. Child care programs struggle to stay open, and if they close, there are fewer child care slots for children. Solving Maryland's child care challenges is going to take targeted and sustained efforts at the federal, state, and community levels.

Ideally, we want Maryland to have a comprehensive system that can offer any Maryland family, wherever they are, programs that can help families work, support children's healthy development and learning, and keep our economy growing.

This is the work we are already doing every day. We want to be sure that we are well-resourced in the future so that we can continue this work.

Can you paint a picture of what you'd like the future of MFN's work to look like?

I think it's going to be critical to maintain the momentum of GOFCC and to continue meeting the growing demand for child care services—especially in underserved areas. Family child care remains a vital component of Maryland's early childhood education system, and securing the resources to allow GOFCC to grow to all 23 counties of Maryland will ensure that we can further empower providers and enhance accessibility for all families.

I also think coaching is a key part of how you create change, and it's going to continue to be important for so many people in the field of child care as we move forward. So we want to be sure that our resource centers have the funding they need to provide the coaching, like coaching on all things involved with running a small business, that child care providers need. Coaching and training needs change as society changes, and we want to be able to be nimble and responsive to needs that are out there.

In an ideal world, we'd also have more folks and funding for family and referral services. We make a big impact with what we have, but we would be able to increase our reach with additional resources.

Together, MFN and the Child Care Resource Centers are committed to building a resilient and thriving family child care network that can adapt to the evolving needs of our communities.

What's something you want people to know about MFN?

We're not just doing the same thing year in and year out. We're committed to being responsive and innovative to changes in the environment. We learn and adjust year to year to make sure our work continues to be effective.

Any last words?

When child care is strong, everyone is stronger.



WORKING ACROSS GENERATIONS TO BUILD STRONGER FAMILIES

The well-being of children and their parents is interconnected and interdependent. MFN focuses on both parents *and* children to create a legacy of educational success and economic prosperity that spans generations. This is known as a two-generation approach. Taken together, our Family Support "Patty" Center Network and Early Head Start Network help thousands of parents each year finish their education, train for employment, and develop the skills to build strong families. At the same time, their young children are in a high-quality early care and education setting. This strong start puts these children on a course for success socially, emotionally, academically, and professionally and strengthens the entire family.

Early Head Start (EHS)

MFN coordinates Maryland's largest network of EHS programs. Every year, we serve hundreds of children and their families, providing a flexible and integrated set of supports for infants, toddlers, and families.

Research shows that children who participate in EHS programs experience better physical, social, emotional, and intellectual outcomes than children without access to these life-changing programs.

"River loves the staff, and her face lights up when she enters the building. The staff is always there to create and develop differentiated instruction tailored to each child, with the understanding that every child is different and learns differently. I love that they advocate for River to make sure she gets all the support she needs, such as speech therapy, structured-based learning, etc., to help with her growth and development."

Sherice S. Stern, Arts Center – St. Vincent de Paul Early Head Start

Looking Back

In 1995, Friends of the Family, one of MFN's legacy organizations, began offering EHS services to infants, toddlers, and their families in Baltimore City and Caroline County through both center and home-based services. Over the next nine years, EHS expanded to six different locations in Maryland, serving 258 children. In 2015, MFN was awarded a \$1.5 million grant for the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership, which provided expanded, full-day services. As a result, EHS grew to serve an additional 275 children in Baltimore City. By FY 2018, EHS was serving 621 children in Maryland.

In response to communities expressing a need for more infant/toddler child care centers, MFN shifted its focus from home-based EHS services to 100% Center-based programming. By FY 2023, EHS had 19 centers across Maryland.



MFN's EHS program underwent an unannounced federal review and received special recognition for our management systems, training, technical assistance, and parent engagement. Because of the exceptional quality of our EHS programs, MFN became the sole EHS grantee for Baltimore City starting in 2014.

FY 2024 Highlights Leading National Averages

During FY 2024, MFN's EHS Centers served 458 children across Maryland. We were once again ahead of national EHS averages in percentages of children covered by health insurance and up to date on recommended immunization, parents with primary care providers, children with chronic medical conditions receiving medical treatment, homeless children housed, and more. This is no accident. MFN ensures that children who don't have active health care coverage when they enroll in EHS will soon get coverage. We work closely with families to make sure that enrolled children remain current with immunizations, dental visits, and well-child checks. We assist with everything from navigating bureaucratic systems to obtaining copies of any necessary documents. We even schedule some medical appointments on site at EHS— making things easier for families.

During FY 24 our Early Head Start Centers served 458 children. By the end of FY 24:	Percentages below are the FY 24 Nationwide EHS statistics for comparison.
97.2% of children had health insurance.	96.2%
Almost all parents (97.6%) confirm that they had a primary health care provider.	95.1%
92.6% of children were up to date on their recommended immunizations.	90.7%
93.9% of children had a dental home.	79.8%
87.1% of children diagnosed with a chronic medical condition received medical treatment. Of these asthma was the most common diagnosed condition.	71.4%
14.4% of children enrolled had an IEP or IFSP.	14.4%
8% children enrolled in MFN's EHS programs experienced homelessness during their enrollment period. Of those, 27% acquired housing during FY 24.	8.71% and 24.6%

Training and Coaching

FY 2024 also saw a focus on mentoring and training for EHS staff. MFN developed a set of 6 self-paced learning modules to support staff in their daily classroom practices with children and to clearly define MFN's expectations for staff, including health and safety policies and procedures.

Spotlight on TLC/Everyone Needs a Little TLC!

In FY 2024, MFN kicked off their TLC Coaching Sessions. These sessions video-recorded EHS teachers on the job and then created a safe, positive environment for participants to view, followed by individual coaching and skill-building sessions. [Hear](#) firsthand from participants about the transformative impact of this coaching or scan the QR code to watch now.



In Their Own Words

Ryan Servant, EHS Parent

Ryan Servant and his wife are foster parents to two children, ages 1 and 3, both of whom have developmental delays. One recently graduated from an EHS program and is now in a Head Start program. The other is currently enrolled at the Early Head Start Center in Baltimore City.

How has EHS helped your family? What positive changes have you noticed in your children since they began attending EHS?

Finding quality, affordable child care is an issue for foster parents! EHS has expanded our kids' skill sets, putting them on a more standard development track. We enrolled my 1-year-old at an EHS when she was four- and a half months old, and being at EHS has been incredibly helpful in her educational and social development.

The biggest gain we've seen is in her occupational skills. It may sound small but seeing her being able to use a spoon and wash her hands is huge! The daily interaction and learning that comes from being in an EHS program can make an enormous difference for kids who are not neurotypical.

Many people don't think of EHS as education in the same sense as K – 12. They think of it as babysitting. What is your experience?

EHS is not simply child care. EHS gives a child, even one with developmental or cognitive delays, the support that he or she needs so that they are prepared for the transition to their next phase of schooling. It gives kids as many skills and developmental resources as possible so that they have the best chance of succeeding when they move on to a Head Start or Pre-K program. Having that transition to their next phase go smoothly is key not only for kids, but for their families, too.



Ryan Servant and family.

If you could tell your legislators one or two things to convince them that EHS is important to communities, what would you say?

I'd tell our legislators that if they want to see successful schools, better testing numbers and productive adults, the earlier we can start kids in structured learning environments like EHS, the better. More broadly I'd ask people: What kind of community do you want? What kind of schools do you want? I think most of us hope for communities full of skilled, productive and competent citizens. We need to give kids the support they need in order to have these types of communities.

The truth is, not all kids are starting from the same point. They don't all have the same background, support, or skills. It's not a level playing field, but EHS is a program that does its best to level the playing field.



FAMILY SUPPORT CENTERS

MFN's Family Support "Patty" Center Network offers free services for young children up to three years old and their caregivers. The 17 Centers, spread across the state, help parents and expecting parents every year finish their education, learn job readiness skills, build solid social networks, access resources, and improve their parenting skills. While parents receive the support they need, their children are also at the center, learning and growing in a state-of-the-art early care and education setting that helps them build foundational skills and reach their full potential.

Looking Back

The Family Support Movement began in 1985 in response to rising rates of infant mortality, teen pregnancy, reports of child abuse, and foster care placement. Early versions of Family Support Centers (FSC) were created in 1986 and managed by Friends of the Family. When MFN was formed in 2009 through the merger of Friends of the Family and the MD Committee for Children, MFN assumed responsibility for supporting the FSCs.

By FY 2010, FSCs had been established across Maryland. By FY 2016, the FSC network had grown to help over 3,000 adults complete their high school education, learn job readiness skills, strengthen social networks, and/or improve parenting skills.

In 2021, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, a plan that focused on equitable early education opportunities. As part of the Blueprint, MFN began laying the groundwork for an expanded Family Support Network, awarding contracts for new centers and planning for more to ensure a broader reach and increased support for families across the state.

FY 2024 Highlights

MFN continued our work towards expanding the Family Support Network as outlined in the Blueprint for Maryland's Children. While no new Family Support Patty Centers opened in FY24, we dedicated time and energy to making sure that Centers that had opened in FY 2023 got off to a strong start. We're also pleased to report that MSDE awarded MFN with almost \$2 million in supplemental grant funding. This made it possible for our centers to purchase and replace materials and offer additional learning experiences like field trips to parents and children that they would not have had access to without that funding.

During the year, nine Family Support Centers took field trips to either the Port Discovery Children's Museum or the Delaware Children's Museum. This was an opportunity to network with other parents and allow children a chance to experience an enriching new play environment.

We asked FSC parents for their honest feedback about our centers. We asked what they like best about our centers and here's what we heard:

- The environment is warm and nurturing.
- Communication is respectful, thorough, and timely.
- Learning activities are individualized to address my child's development and needs.

Rock-a-bye Baby - Spotlight: The Lullaby Project

The Lullaby Project provided teen moms with the incredible opportunity to work side by side with Grammy-winning songwriters Cathy Fink and Marcy Marxer, writing personal lullabies for their babies. With support from MFN, six Family Support Centers had a chance to participate in the project. Scan the QR code to listen to lullabies written and performed by parents our Family Support Centers in Annapolis, Essex, Frederick, Odenton, and Rockville.



In Their Own Words

Kymora McGowans (Annapolis)

Kymora and her 4-year-old son, Karmello, attended the Annapolis Family Support Center's Teen Parent Education Program in 2022. Kymora then returned to the center to work as a Child Development Assistant in August 2023 after completing her required Child Development hours.

I had my son, Karmello, in June of 2021 when I was 17 and still in high school. I heard about the Annapolis Family Support Center (FSC) from my guidance counselor, and I started their Teen Parent Education Program (TPEP) a couple of months after my son was born, in August 2021.

The center staff was so supportive. I felt like I could open up and talk to anyone there. I still feel that way! It was a no-judgment zone. That was really important to me because I was a young mom, still in high school, but no one judged me. And the group of girls in TPEP with me were in the same situation as me, which also helped me feel comfortable.



Kymora, and her son, Karmello,.

As a new mom, it can be nerve-wracking to leave your baby in someone else's care. But I felt comfortable pretty much right away, leaving my son in the child care at the Center. I think it's because of the love they give each child—it's truly heartwarming. I knew my child was safe, that I could drop him off and not have to worry. My son hit his milestones at the FSC, and his development was on track.

The other thing that was amazing was that the Center provided so many things! There was formula, diapers, milk, snacks. For the first year of Karmello's life, I hardly had to spend money on any of those things, which was so helpful. At Christmas time, they even sent us home with a big bag of toys! Honestly, whatever you needed or wanted, the Center had you covered. I always told the staff, "You can't get rid of me, I'll be back!" And I was serious—I knew I was coming back! The Center really gives you the skills that you need to find a job, so I knew I would be in a good position to come back down the road. After graduating from high school, I worked at Old Navy and then started working at a child care center.

I have a soft spot for working with children and knew the Annapolis FSC was where I wanted to be. I completed my training hours and got a job at the FSC in 2023. I'm currently a teacher in the All Stars Classroom and am trained to lead Parent Cafes. I also oversee our Baby Pantry, which distributes diapers and baby wipes. Helping young mothers who are in the same position I was in has been really meaningful. They can relate to me, and I can relate to them.

I've come full circle. I started my journey as a mom here, and now I'm helping other moms on their journey. Being a teen mother definitely gave me a different outlook on things. I moved out and got my own place right after high school graduation. But I also realized that I needed support. There were things like my taxes that I didn't know how to do, and the Center was always there to help. Not everyone has people in their lives who can help with those kinds of things, so having a place like the Center can be so important!

We take care of everyone here, and everyone feels accepted, welcomed, and supported. Families get what they need and are set up to move on to the next stage of their lives.

I'm going to start a degree program in social work at Bowie State University. But that doesn't mean I'll be leaving FSC anytime soon!

"The Family Center of Queen Anne's County has come alongside me and lovingly facilitated opportunities for me to have a deeper connection with myself, my children, and my spouse while building an intimate community. As my last child makes her way through the program, I realized that I have become an integral part of this community and that even as my children age out of the program at the Family Center, the relationships developed will remain. The impact the Family Center has goes beyond the walls of their building and far outlasts your window of time there."

Sarah Brainer, Family Center of Queen Anne's County

Strengthening Families

MFN is the state's lead agency for Strengthening Families Maryland, working to prevent child abuse and neglect. When parents have the resources they need to thrive, children and communities thrive as well.

In FY 2016, MFN initiated a formal focus on two programs designed to build strong families: the Parent Leadership Institute and Parent Cafés, both of which are integrated into our FSC network.

MFN's Parent Leadership Institute helps parents grow as leaders, build support networks, and strengthen their families and communities. Throughout two engaging two-day sessions – one in the winter and one in the spring - parents come from all over Maryland to learn and grow together. A partnership with Be Strong Families, Parent Cafés provides a welcoming and supportive safe space where parents and caregivers can connect, share experiences, and learn from one another. These structured get-togethers engage parents and other caring adults in conversations about what matters most to families with young children, placing an emphasis on building protective factors at home and in early childhood settings.

FY 2024 Highlights

In FY 2024, 57 parents completed the Parent Leadership Institute, and FSCs held 24 Parent Cafés across the state. The 2024 Parent Leadership Institute focused on advocacy, promoting the Five Parenting Protective Factors and wellbeing, engaging families in children's mathematical development, peer networking, and fellowship. The Institute focused on advocacy, promoting the five protective factors and wellbeing, engaging families in children's mathematical development, and fostering peer networking, fellowship, and fun -- all of which are delivered in English as well as any other languages represented by the parents who attend. Two new features of the Parent Leadership Institute were virtual meetings before and after the in-person events to engage as many parents as possible and further solidify continuity. The provision of on-site child care for the first time allowed parents to be fully present at the conference, without worrying about picking up their children from care. Through individual deep inspired, energized, and self-reflection and peer-to-peer learning, participants leave excited to put into practice what they've learned.

Strong Families and Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) grantees continued to implement child abuse and neglect prevention-focused programming. In FY 2024, preliminary results of the Protective Factors Survey conducted by grantees indicated that over half of parents showed growth in their families' protective factors including family functioning, resiliency, nurturing and attachment, caregiver/practitioner relationships, and social supports.



Over 80 percent of parents in the FSC and EHS Networks said services strengthened their relationship with their child.

"Parent Cafes are a place where parents can come to take a break - a time to be themselves and debrief with other parents. All parents need that kind of break. It's a safe zone that also teaches resilience and listening skills."

Kymora McGowans, Annapolis Family Support Center

"This year, I got my certificate for attending the Parent Leadership Conference. There, I learned about how to bury the fear of 'I can't.' [At the conference] I decided to look for a job and put into practice everything I had learned. The employment preparedness sessions at the Family Support Center helped me apply for a job at school as a teacher's aide. I had my resume and cover letter, and I knew how to answer the interview questions. A few weeks passed, and I was hired for the full-time job. Before, my fear of the 'I can't' kept me locked up. Now I look in the mirror and tell myself I will be successful! I can and I will move forward! I also started studying for the GED preparation classes at Prince George's Community College, fulfilling my dream of continuing my education."

Yessica Molina, Family Support Center Prince George's County



Special Events

April is Strengthening Families Month and in April 2024, MFN was there to celebrate! The Strengthening Families Kick Off Event was a community fair full of resources, food, fun, and giveaways. The month was highlighted on four segments of MFN's weekly radio series, *The First 5 Years*.

"From distributing Chromebooks, helping with set up, coordinating the vendors, busting a move with the African Drummers and marching band, being the first in the Zorb ball to get children excited, popping popcorn, serving food, chasing items we didn't know could fly with the strong winds...together, we created an unforgettable experience!"

Rochetta Gordon, MFN Training Director

MFN hosted its second annual "Every Day I Stand for Children" conference to support parents and practitioners, with nearly seventy participants. The keynote speaker was Dr. Brenda Jones Harden, a leader in the field of prevention science, early childhood wellbeing, and family systems.

Looking Forward - A Conversation with our EHS, Family Support Center, and Strong Families Teams

When it comes to building strong families, what are MFN's goals down the road?

Faith Miller, MNF EHS Director: Our ultimate goal is to help families achieve self-sufficiency and move out of poverty. We need to grow the reach of EHS and be able to serve more of the eligible population. For example, right now we only serve 5-10% of the eligible children in Baltimore City. We want to see this number grow but that takes more funding at the Federal level.

Another issue that we are tackling is that it's not always easy to staff EHS centers. We clearly need to grow the early childhood field so that we have an available pool of teachers. And part of that is ensuring that we are paying early childcare professionals a living wage. These are areas we and EHS advocates across the country are continually focused on.

Dori Yorks, MFN Assistant Director, Family Support Network: We'd love to see greater integration and recognition of our Family Support Centers for the preventative work they do. We support children and families from the very beginning to have the toolbox they need to succeed. This saves families the difficulty of navigating the child welfare system and saves taxpayers a lot of money. Family support is research-based and proven to work. I want to see it truly recognized as the protective and preventive measure that it is.

ADVOCATING FOR MARYLAND'S FAMILIES

Advocacy is a cornerstone of MFN's work. Each year, we lead the charge to protect and advance investments, policies, and programs that expand opportunities for young children and all those who care for them - parents, child care providers, advocates, and community leaders.



Did you know polls show that American voters want greater public investment in the quality and availability of early care and education? Research proves that such investments greatly benefit a child's future and the government's bottom line. For every \$1 investment in early care and education, \$7 is returned in savings.

Looking Back

In 1945, Maryland Committee for Children, MFN's legacy organization, was created to advocate for high-quality child care. The Committee was a vocal proponent for federal funding for child care programs, and MFN has continued to pursue public policies that improve the quality of life for Maryland's children and families.

Over the past 15 years, MFN has:

- Championed the expansion of pre-K;
- Fought to sustain critical investments in child care, early education, and family supports;
- Lead the effort to pass the Time to Care Act, bringing about one of the nation's strongest and most comprehensive family and medical leave insurance programs;
- Spearheaded the consolidation of early care and education programs in the Maryland State Department of Education; and
- Successfully fought to raise the floor for Child Care Scholarship eligibility and benefits to their current, historically high levels.

MFN was also invited to serve on the Kirwan Commission, the panel of experts that made recommendations incorporated in the "Blueprint for Maryland's Future," including the most significant investments in early childhood education in Maryland's history.



In 2018, a landmark victory saw MFN champion legislation that increased and established a floor for Child Care Subsidy rates, described as the most significant victory for early care and education in more than a decade.

PUBLIC POLICY

FY 2024 Highlights

In FY 2024, MFN and our partners scored key victories in Annapolis.

Unprecedented Investments in Child Care for Working Families

The Moore Administration committed new State funds of \$218 million for FY 2024 and \$270 million FY2025 for the Child Care Scholarship Program (CCS). Each of these funding increases alone dwarfs the State's largest prior single-year allocation, raising the FY 2025 CCS budget to \$328.5 million in State funds and \$412.4 million from all sources. The Governor's historic commitment to CCS validates and elevates the advocacy that MFN and our allies have conducted for decades.

Protecting Families from New Child Care Costs and Wait Lists

Legislation championed by MFN in 2023 provided critical safeguards against future CCS cost-cutting. Nonetheless, a proposal emerged in early January to reimpose copayments, which can be quite onerous in some cases, on families participating in CCS. A second measure would have permitted the Administration to institute a CCS enrollment freeze and establish a wait list without input from the General Assembly—in effect repealing last year's legislation. MFN spearheaded the opposition to both proposals and prevailed.

Lowering Barriers for Child Care Participation in Pre-K

A cornerstone of pre-K expansion is “mixed delivery,” the principle that publicly funded pre-K should be offered not solely in public schools. High-quality providers already established in their communities, such as child care programs, can receive public funds to educate pre-K students, provided that the quality of the education is equivalent to what those pupils would receive in a public school classroom. MFN has championed legislation advancing this concept for nearly two decades. Yet, the public-private partnerships needed for mixed delivery to work have been hindered by certification barriers that prevent most high-quality child care programs from participating. Drafted with significant input from MFN and its allies, HB 1441 established viable alternative pathways to certification that recognize experience-based criteria and build on the strengths of providers. The bill also introduced “hubs” to support professional development and provider participation. A model of collaboration, the legislation represents a game changer for mixed delivery, and it reached final passage at the end of the 2024 legislative session.

Growing Opportunities for Family Child Care (GOFCC)

GOFCC, an MFN pilot program established in 2021, works to support the opening and sustained success of new family child care providers, whose numbers have experienced a sharp decline. A key committee briefing organized by MFN early in the Session documented GOFCC's outstanding results. Subsequent budget action and parallel legislation won funding for this vital program for an additional two years. For more detail, see MFN's 2024 Legislative Scorecard.

Looking Forward - A Conversation with Beth Morrow, MFN's Director of Public Policy

Why is advocacy important?

Advocacy has the power to shape policy. Our role as a trusted advocate who keeps the interests of young children and families in mind at all times, especially when decisions made in Washington threaten to negatively impact Maryland families, is vital. Effective policy has the potential to change every child's life. We also know that public policy is a long game and that change doesn't happen overnight.

What does the road ahead look like?

MFN achieved significant legislative victories in FY 2024, but we still have plenty of work ahead.

The current overall funding for early childhood won't be able to equitably provide high-quality affordable programs for all children. Too many families struggle to meet their children's early care and education needs, and too many early education programs face insurmountable challenges in achieving and maintaining the quality that all families deserve.

It's essential to note that the State has made substantial investments in early childhood education, providing critical support to children and families before they arrive at kindergarten. Early childhood education is a core pillar of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, and the State continues to grow investments in the Child Care Scholarship Program. MFN continues to inform policy making in these areas and others, and we will continue this work.

In the years ahead, we will continue to urge State leaders to prioritize the importance of the early years and sustain critical investments that support our youngest learners. We will also enhance our efforts to elevate the perspectives of those directly impacted by policies and elevate their recommendations for solutions.

We will advocate for child care quality and affordability and for broad access to public pre-k. We will champion policies that support early educators and policies that support families, including paid family leave, home visiting, and early childhood mental health services. Throughout this process, we will work in coalition with partners and ground our advocacy in research and data.

The bottom line is that MFN stands prepared to protect the needs and advance the interests of Maryland's young children and all those who care for them.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!

I have served on the Board of MFN for twenty years and have seen firsthand the impact that MFN has on families and the community. Every time someone shares a story of how MFN made a difference in their life, it recommits me to the purpose. Witnessing these personal stories of transformation and growth reaffirms my belief in MFN's mission and the positive change it brings to the lives of those it touches.

Brian Eakes, long-time donor and MFN board member

MFN'S 8TH ANNUAL FIRST YEARS FUNDRAISING EVENT: OCTOBER 24, 2024

"I don't know how you measure success at your job, but I feel like I'm successfully doing very important work when I've got a whole room of children telling me they love me."

- Olivia Gillis, owner of Olivia's Little Learners in Denton

Over the years, MFN's *First Years* annual fundraiser has grown from a modest breakfast gathering to an evening event with a thrilling auction and dynamic speakers who help illustrate the impact of our work. 2024's *First Years* fundraiser drew 200 guests and spotlighted the voices of two child care providers who have succeeded in opening up their own businesses, thanks to MFN's Growing Opportunities for Family Child Care (GOFCC) program.

First Years is a critical part of our annual fundraising efforts. Our sponsors, auction donors, board members, table hosts, and guests helped us raise **close to \$198,000**, surpassing the amount raised at the event in FY 2023.

Thank you for investing in our community and for growing opportunities for Maryland families. We are immensely grateful for your support and partnership. Special thanks to our corporate sponsors!



Olivia Gillis speaking at First Years 2024.

Meet MFN donors and past board chairs of MFN Kesha-Simone Jones and Brian Eakes.

Why is philanthropy important to you?

Brian: I believe in the principle that "Of those to whom much is given, much is expected." My wife Denise and I have been fortunate to receive many blessings in our lives, and we feel a strong obligation to help others whenever possible. And we hope that our support has a multiplier effect - that it empowers those we support to support others down the road.

Kesha: Philanthropy strengthens our communities. My parents taught me to deeply value two things: the importance of education and the responsibility of serving others. I feel that each of us has a responsibility to give back to our community.

There are so many competing needs in the world today, and so many organizations that need support. What spoke to you about MFN's mission and drove you to get involved with the organization?

Brian: I have always been drawn to MFN's mission of supporting young children. And supporting children by supporting the environment and caregivers that surround them just makes sense.

As most of us grow up, we start to make our own choices and take accountability for the outcomes of these choices. But children, especially very young children, are not in the position to make choices about their situation or circumstances. By focusing on strengthening the environment in which children live and grow, MFN has the greatest chance of helping children thrive and grow.

Kesha: One of the many reasons I got involved with MFN is because of their incredible mission. As a parent, I know the importance of the first five years of a child's life. Not all parents have the resources they need during these first five years, and this is where MFN steps in. I always say that it takes a village, and I see MFN as part of that village.

What would you tell others if you were trying to convince them to support MFN?

Brian: Simple - I would ask them, "What's more important than helping a child succeed in life?"

Kesha: The impact of the work that MFN does goes well beyond the first five years of a child's life. By supporting MFN, you are strengthening families and creating life-changing opportunities for our children.



Guests enjoying First Years 2024.



June 30, 2024 and 2023

	<u>ASSETS</u>	
	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 6,337,092	\$ 3,208,848
Accounts receivable:		
Grants and contracts	10,351,531	10,050,812
Pledges receivable, net	281,082	332,076
Other	35,561	15,316
Prepaid expenses and other assets	<u>71,505</u>	<u>89,818</u>
Total current assets	17,076,771	13,696,870
SOFTWARE, NET	516,686	-
OPERATING LEASE ROU, NET	<u>1,594,443</u>	<u>-</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>\$ 19,187,900</u>	<u>\$ 13,696,870</u>
<u>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</u>		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	\$ 1,334,325	\$ 529,566
Accrued expenses	753,999	156,470
Accrued vacation	181,178	142,674
Operating lease liability - current portion	104,149	-
Deferred revenue	15,000	89,600
Grants payable	8,796,849	6,668,371
Other liabilities	<u>73,148</u>	<u>41,599</u>
Total current liabilities	11,258,648	7,628,280
OPERATING LEASE LIABILITY - LONG TERM	<u>1,628,210</u>	<u>-</u>
Total liabilities	<u>12,886,858</u>	<u>7,628,280</u>
NET ASSETS		
Without donor restriction	5,698,628	5,408,533
With donor restriction	<u>602,414</u>	<u>660,057</u>
Total net assets	<u>6,301,042</u>	<u>6,068,590</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	<u>\$ 19,187,900</u>	<u>\$ 13,696,870</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.



A. SUMMARY OF AUDITORS' RESULTS

1. The auditors' report expresses an unmodified opinion on the general purpose financial statements of Maryland Family Network, Inc.
2. No significant deficiencies relating to the audit of the financial statements are reported in the Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting and on Compliance and Other Matters Based on an Audit of Financial Statements Performed in Accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*.
3. No instances of noncompliance material to the financial statements of Maryland Family Network, Inc. were disclosed during the audit.
4. No significant deficiencies relating to the audit of internal control over major federal award programs are reported in the Report on Compliance for Each Major Federal Program; Report on Internal Control over Compliance Required by the Uniform Guidance.
5. The auditors' report on compliance for the major federal award programs for Maryland Family Network, Inc. expresses an unmodified opinion on all major federal programs.
6. There were no audit findings relative to major federal award programs for Maryland Family Network, Inc. to be reported in Part C of this schedule.
7. The program tested as a major program was:

Head Start Cluster # 93.600
8. The threshold for distinguishing Type A and B programs was \$759,264.
9. Maryland Family Network, Inc. qualified as a low-risk auditee.

B. FINDINGS - FINANCIAL STATEMENT AUDIT

NONE

C. FINDINGS AND QUESTIONED COSTS – MAJOR FEDERAL AWARD PROGRAMS AUDIT

NONE

INVESTORS IN TOMORROW

CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN

Champions for Children, our multi-year giving society, is dedicated to improving the lives and opportunities of Maryland's youngest children, their families, and early care professionals across the state. Our esteemed Champions not only ensure the organization's financial sustainability for many years to come but also ensure that we remain the state's preeminent voice for the youngest, most vulnerable children regardless of the latest trends or political climate.

Become a Champion for Children by pledging to donate \$1,000 or more annually for the next five years. If you are interested in becoming a Champion for Children, please contact Development Director Jennifer Andiorio at jandiorio@marylandfamilynetwork.org.

Champions

(Annual commitments of \$25,000+)

Denise and Brian M. Eakes

Lucy and Kevin Haus

Melodie and Dana Jackson

Kesha-Simone and James Jones

Wynette Jones

Bess Keller and Michael Terrin

Nicole Kozlowski

Betsy Krieger and David Kandell

Lee Lawler

Erin and Whit Levering

Erika and Tim Lewis

Jill and Brian Lizzi

Carolyn and Michael Maloney

Merritt Companies

Heidi and Dan Moylan

Sharon and Joe Nathanson

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(Annual commitments of \$10,000 – 24,999)

Margaret Allen and Phil Perkins

Dixon Harvey, Jr.

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(Annual commitments of \$1,000 – 9,999)

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Drs. Robert E. and Maureen Black

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Stephanie and Jerry Bryant

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Build the Nest Society

A special group of donors who have made significant foundational gifts to Maryland Family Network, many of them for more than five consecutive years.

Anonymous

The Damela Gift Fund

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THANK YOU!

We are grateful to the following individuals, organizations, and businesses who made contributions to support Maryland Family Network between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024.

\$30,000 AND ABOVE

Alliance for Early Success

Baltimore Community Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation

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Maryland State Department of Education

Our American Future Foundation

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MEMBERS

Maryland Family Network members are important to our success. We benefit from your expertise and your voices in our advocacy efforts, while you benefit from being a part of a larger body of providers across the state. Thank you for your support!

Alexis Adams ---- Alexis Adams Family Child Care
Kay Allen -- Kids In His Care Early Learning Center LLC
Lori Alleva
William Astrove -- The Arc Montgomery County
Miranda Ayala
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Grace Jenkins -- Grace Jenkins Family Child Care
LaDawn Jones --Taylor's Daycare
Arby Khan
Beena Kumarie -- Beena Kumarie Family Child Care
Sandy Kursey -- Sandra Kursey Family Child Care
Sarah Leatherwood
Donna Lorber -- Providence Child Care and Learning Center
Jaeanna Luecke -- Frederick Co Corp for Quality Child Care Stepping Stone Ctrs
Holli Mathison -- Friendship Montessori School
Jesamen McFetridge -- Zam Learning Center
Kathleen McNamara -- Kathleen McNamara Family Child Care
Denisse Mendoza -- Denisse Mendoza Family Child Care
Sivonne Michel -- Sivonne Michel Family Child Care
LaMonica Belk Monroe
Jacquece Moore-Law
Ammara Muddesser -- Excellent Start Infant & Child Care Center
Rhoann Munro -- Quantum Learning Center
Deborah Odum-Price -- Little Queens & Kings Child Care Center
Tracey Proctor --Tracey's Home Daycare
Golden Quarcoopome -- Golden Quarcoopome Family Child Care

Members continued

Sandra Ratnayake -- Nelu's Day Care
 Bridget Roberts -- All About Kids Learning Center, LLC
 Magali Rocha
 Jennifer Rodriguez-Aguilar -- Ariana's Little Star Family Child Care
 Anahid Salour -- Nouri Child Care Center
 Azadeh Salour
 Valya Savage
 Chander Sharma -- Chander Sharma Family Child Care
 Laura Smith
 Cardene Sterling
 Jet Stevenson
 Dorothy Stewart -- Frederick Co Corp for Quality Child Care Stepping Stone Ctrs
 Rebeka Sultan -- YMCA Child Development
 Theresa Swayne -- Swayne Daycare
 Brittany Townsend -- Pearl's Childcare Learning Center
 Kimberlyn Waterman
 Tinika Williams -- Tinika Williams Family Child Care
 Laura Willoughby -- The Manor Discovery Center, Inc.
 Nedra Womack -- Little People Big Love Child Care, LLC
 Netsanet Worago
 Mary Ellen Young -- Young Care Family Child Care
 Asim Yousafzai -- Frontiers Family Childcare

FINAL WORDS

Every child is born with great potential. Yet they are also vulnerable and need protection, access to the right resources, and the opportunity to fly when the time is right. MFN's networks are threaded together to be a strong support for young children and those who care for them, woven together by research-based best practices, experienced and educated teachers, and time-tested policies.

MFN is here to surround children and their families when they need our comfort and support. We will continue to stand next to them when they need to lean on us for strength and to be an ally.

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- Find us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

Support families with young children in Maryland by donating today at marylandfamilynetwork.org.



