



PROJECT LAUNCH

Maryland LAUNCH

Cohort 4, Funding Period 2012–2017

Grantee Overview

Through the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Behavioral Health Administration, Maryland Project LAUNCH develops and implements an early childhood system of care that promotes the social-emotional and behavioral well-being of children ages birth to eight and their families. Maryland LAUNCH strives to create healthy and supportive environments so that children can live, play, and grow and enter school ready to learn and prepared to succeed. In the pilot community of Prince George's County, Maryland LAUNCH provides services that are developmentally appropriate, seamlessly integrated, community based, child centered, family driven, and culturally sensitive.

Project Milestones

All [Project LAUNCH](#) grantees implement five promotion and prevention strategies intended to increase access to high-quality prevention and promotion services for children and families. In Maryland LAUNCH, these five strategies are implemented through the following activities:

- **Screening and Assessment:** Maryland LAUNCH coordinates state and local efforts in order to encourage and increase the use of developmental screenings. Maryland LAUNCH expands the [Prince George's County Special Needs Identification Physician Support Program](#) (PG SNIPS), which assists primary care providers in implementing developmental screenings at regular well-child visits and making referrals to appropriate medical and early intervention practitioners. Maryland LAUNCH's partners from PG SNIPS, [Infants and Toddlers](#) and [One World Center for Autism](#), conducted more than 35 visits to primary care physicians. During these visits, the PG SNIPS staff provided resources and information on mental health, autism, and specific referral patterns and enrolled physicians in the program.
- **Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation:** In efforts to promote social-emotional growth and reduce challenging behaviors in children, Maryland LAUNCH hired four early childhood mental health (ECMH) consultants. The consultants support early care and education programs in employing positive discipline, implementing developmental screenings, and communicating and utilizing screening results with families. In addition, they assist early childhood teachers with promoting prosocial and emotional development and child learning and development. Two consultants working with [Community Counseling and Mentoring Services](#) (CCMS) serve ten schools located in the [Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative](#) (TNI) areas of Prince George's County. The other two consultants are assigned to the [Prince George's Child Resource Center](#), addressing the mental health needs of children ages birth to five enrolled in child care programs within the TNI neighborhoods. As a result of ECMH consultation efforts, there were significant improvements in teacher behaviors with managing transitions, teaching young children about feelings and problem solving, and implementing individualized and developmentally appropriate

instruction in the classrooms. ECMH consultants participated in professional development opportunities jointly with home visiting staff, receiving Level I and Level II training in the [Fussy Baby's Network Facilitating Attuned Interactions \(FAN\) approach](#) that emphasizes the importance and application of reflective practice when working with children and families.

- **Enhanced Home Visiting:** Maryland LAUNCH provides home visitors and home visitor supervisors with training and coaching in social, emotional, and behavioral health. The programs that received training and coaching included [Healthy Families America](#), [Early Head Start](#), Maryland Infants and Toddlers, and [Healthy Start](#). Faculty and staff from the University Maryland School of Medicine, Taghi Modarressi Center for Infant Study, provide training and coaching as part of the infant and early childhood mental health training for home visitors. Phase Two of the infant and early childhood mental health training focused on skills home visitors could use to improve their work with families—mindfulness and reflective practice. In addition to the training and coaching provided by the University of Maryland Center for Infant Study, the Promise Resource Center provided a two-day training to home visitors on the use of Social Emotional Activity Kits or “SEA-KITS,” which include specific activities designed to promote early childhood social-emotional development. The Fussy Baby’s Network FAN Level I and Level II trainings were completed with home visitors and home visitor supervisors as well. Maryland LAUNCH also facilitated a cross training for participating mental health consultants who attended the SEA Kit training and Fussy Baby’s Network FAN trainings. Mental health consultants found that the trainings were enriching to their work, providing the opportunity to practice mindfulness and awareness when working with teachers, parents, and other stakeholders.
- **Integrating Behavioral Health into Primary Care:** Maryland LAUNCH identifies and supports opportunities for primary care providers in Prince George’s County to access [Maryland’s Behavior Health Integration in Pediatric Primary Care](#) (B-HIPP), a program that helps primary care providers assess and manage their patients’ behavioral health concerns. Additionally, Maryland LAUNCH supports B-HIPP in engaging primary care providers in the county. For example, Maryland LAUNCH promoted B-HIPP by mailing informational program pamphlets and attending quarterly physician organization meetings. Through these efforts, there are more than 28 physicians currently enrolled in B-HIPP within the county. Physicians have also reached out to a mental health specialist over the telephone for support about addressing their patients’ behavioral health concerns. To further integrate behavioral health into primary care, Maryland LAUNCH collaborated with Johns Hopkins University to hold a spring CHECKUp (Children’s Health and Emotional Care Learning Community for Primary Care Providers, focused on early childhood mental health), a free training event for physicians and mental health professionals.
- **Family Strengthening:** Maryland LAUNCH improves the ability of parents with young children to provide healthy, safe, and secure family environments for their children to learn and grow. In partnership with CCMS, Maryland LAUNCH implements the 14-week [Strengthening Families Program](#) (SFP) for families with children ages three to eight, with a special focus on those who are involved with Prince George’s County Department of Social Services. In 2015, two cohorts of families participated in SFP, with 14 families completing the entire series, and numerous families

“Supervisors reported that the home visitors were actively listening and integrating new practices with their families and for themselves (e.g., paying more attention to self-care).”

attended the one-day Family Leadership Institute offered by the Maryland Coalition of Families. Maryland LAUNCH also completed two Dynamic Dads events with Fatherhood Buzz and The National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse.

Systems Integration

Project LAUNCH is intended to improve coordination and collaboration across systems that serve young children and their families. The overall goals are to establish and maintain state and local Young Child Wellness Councils to address infrastructure development, agency workforce development, public awareness, and continuous quality improvement. In efforts to develop the workforce, Maryland LAUNCH encouraged its ECMH consultants to attend the Preschool Mental Health Climate Scale training, complete the Social Emotional Foundations of Early Learning modules and leadership training, review the Georgetown Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation online learning modules, and participate in the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Certificate Program at the University of Maryland. Maryland LAUNCH also works to inform the public and key organizations in understanding their work, including goals and priorities. For example, the Local Young Child Wellness Councils of Maryland LAUNCH shares information on the significance of early childhood development, quality child care, and cross-collaborative work among various key child-serving agencies, such as child welfare, mental health, juvenile justice, and education. Maryland LAUNCH continues to work with state-wide initiatives to discuss early childhood topics including reducing toxic stress and using reflective practice. In addition, Maryland LAUNCH hosted a literacy campaign in June 2015, distributing more than 540 books to children transitioning to kindergarten in ten of their Transforming Neighborhoods schools. Along with the books, parents received a one-page handout on the importance of social-emotional development. Maryland LAUNCH also participates in the *Children's Mental Health Matters!* campaign of Prince George's County every year; Prince George's County is the largest school and partner participating in the state of Maryland. In particular, Maryland LAUNCH hosts a series of activities during the first week of May for *Children's Mental Health Matters!* week. Partner organizations of Maryland LAUNCH have planned a director's coffee hour to discuss children's mental health with community members. In partnership with Maryland LAUNCH, CCMS was featured on the local public television network for a segment on children's mental health awareness.

Grantee Events and Materials

Click on the following links to access information about grantee-developed resources.

- Maryland LAUNCH and partner organizations developed handouts and tip sheets on a variety of children's mental health topics to share with consultants and other community mental health stakeholders for the *Children's Mental Health Matters!* campaign in Prince George's County.
 - [10 Things Children Learn While Playing with Blocks](#)
 - [Things Parents Should Know About Play](#)
 - [Building Strong Children in Prince George's County](#)
 - [Children with Challenging Behaviors](#)
 - [Facts About Challenging Behaviors](#)
 - Positive Parenting Tips: Things you can do to help your [baby](#), [toddler](#), [older toddler](#), [preschooler](#), and [school-age child](#)



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