About the Arlington Child Care Initiative (CCI)
Led by the Department of Human Services, the Child Care Initiative is a coalition of community partners established in 2017 to increase the accessibility, availability, and quality of child care in Arlington.

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A Message from Arlington County Board Member Katie Cristol

Since we launched the Child Care Initiative (CCI) in the fall of 2017, talented and dedicated community members, County staff, parents and guardians, child care providers, and other stakeholders have been working together to realize our shared goal: to increase the availability, accessibility, and quality of child care in Arlington.

This report provides a snapshot of our accomplishments to date. These include major County Code and Zoning Ordinance revisions that pave the way for more child care slots throughout Arlington. We’ve eliminated “red tape” that can be a barrier to opening or expanding child care centers and family day care homes. We’ve taken steps to ensure that providers have the necessary resources to provide a quality experience for every child. And, since one of the hallmarks of the CCI has been the use of data and analytics, we continue to update and collect new data to ensure that these efforts are bringing us closer to our goal.

Much of the work you’ll read about in the following pages is foundational. While we’re already starting to see changes to the child care landscape in Arlington, we believe the most significant results from these efforts are still ahead. As we shift into the next phase of our Action Plan, our focus will be on these important areas:

• Making child care more affordable for everyone by incentivizing child care programs to accept subsidies and exploring alternative spaces appropriate for child care facilities.
• Improving child care accessibility by exploring back-up child care arrangements.
• Eliminating barriers and promoting inclusion of children with special needs through enhanced training offerings and increased resources for providers and parents.
• Increasing the supply of child care workers by promoting and providing Child Development Associate credentialing programs and ESOL training.
• Growing the quality of our child care programs by boosting supports and incentives for program accreditation.

I am proud of what we have accomplished since the launch of the Child Care Initiative, and I’m excited about what the future holds. This has truly been a community-wide effort, and we’re grateful to everyone who has taken part: parents who have completed our surveys; providers who have participated in focus groups and spoken candidly about their challenges; and staff and partners who have maintained the momentum needed to advance such a big goal. Child care is an essential component of a thriving, diverse community, and Arlington County remains committed to a child care system that supports our families, our economy, and our youngest residents.

Sincerely,

Katie Cristol, Member
Arlington County Board
ANALYZING PRE-K ACCESSIBILITY

Access to a quality child care program prior to entering kindergarten (“a pre-k experience”) has a ripple effect throughout a child’s lifetime. This care contributes to socialization, school readiness, and educational progression, with the most pronounced positive outcomes among children from vulnerable groups.

The Child Care Initiative’s Demographic Overview of Arlington County was first published in late 2017 and fully updated in January 2019. This study found:

- Arlington only has enough known child care slots in its various child care facilities to serve roughly 55% of the County’s children under the age of five.
- From 2008-2018, an average of 87% of Arlington children entered kindergarten having had a pre-k experience.
- 2018 pre-k enrollment rates differed by more than 10% across populations with children of color, children from low-income families, and children with Limited English Proficiency enrolling at lower rates than their peers.

91% of total kindergarteners had a pre-k experience in 2018 (↑ from 89% in 2017)

95% of children who entered with disabilities (↓ from 96%)
86% of children of color (↑ from 85%)
85% of children facing economic disadvantages (↑ from 84%)
82% of children with Limited English Proficiency (↓ from 83%)

Up next: The Child Care Initiative recognizes it is important for all children to receive early exposure to the skills necessary to be successful learners. By identifying barriers to accessing care and developing strategies to address these barriers, the Child Care Initiative will help open the door for more Arlington children to receive this exposure.

CPHD Completes Land Use Study

- Child care centers and family day care homes operating in Arlington County must abide by local land use regulations (the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance), state licensing regulations, and local licensing regulations (County Code Chapters 52 and 59).
- The Child Care Land Use Research Report is a zoning study published by the Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development (CPHD) in December 2018, focused on amending the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance to eliminate or reduce land use barriers to opening, expanding, and operating child care programs in Arlington.
- This study was one of the Child Care Initiative’s short-term action items, and the content of the study informed the Zoning Ordinance changes adopted by the Arlington County Board in March and July 2019.

A COOPERATIVE RESPONSE

In cooperative preschools ("co-ops"), parents choose to work alongside professional staff for short period of time (typically 3-6 hours per month) to lower the cost of running the schools and be more directly involved in their children’s education.

In 2018, the Virginia Department of Social Services considered regulation changes that would have required parent volunteers to meet all staff requirements, including 36 hours of initial training and 20 hours of annual training. This amount of training could have dissuaded many working parents or parents with younger children from volunteering, increasing costs and endangering the viability of the co-op model.

Along with other stakeholders across Virginia, the Child Care Initiative advocated for the proposed changes to be reconsidered. In early 2019, the General Assembly passed a bill exempting co-ops from the revised regulations and required only four hours of training for parent volunteers, allowing co-ops to continue to thrive.

Did you know: In Arlington, four cooperative preschools provide more than 80 child care slots.

Encouraging Accreditation

Accreditation is a voluntary process by which a qualified organization (such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation Commission, the National Association for Family Child Care, the Association Montessori International/USA, and the American Montessori Society) assesses whether a child care program meets certain standards of excellence that go above and beyond minimum licensing requirements. Accrediting agencies review child care programs, including the teachers, environment, and curriculum.

In addition to accreditation, Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) exist in most states to help improve the quality of child care programs. In Virginia, this elective program is known as Virginia Quality.

As of January 1, 2019, 17% of Arlington’s child care slots were accredited or quality-rated, up from 13% the year before.

To help more Arlington child care programs become accredited or quality-rated, the Child Care Initiative advocated for increased state resources to assist programs in pursuing accreditation.

Up next: The Child Care Initiative will explore accreditation barriers and brainstorm potential solutions, such as models for incentivizing child care programs to pursue accreditation or participate in Virginia Quality.

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In the Child Care Initiative's 2018 Child Care Center Survey, 52% of respondents stated that recruiting staff was their biggest operational challenge when first opening, and 35% indicated parking was their biggest location-related challenge.

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County Revises Lead Teacher Qualifications for Centers

Instead of requiring at least two years of college, the revised requirements allow for Lead Teachers to hold a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. The CDA is the most widely recognized credential in early childhood education in the United States.

This change will increase the number of qualified lead teachers in Arlington, and it will make the field of early childhood education more accessible to individuals with specialized, non-college education.

Zoning Ordinance Changes Set to Remove Barriers

- In March and July 2019, the Arlington County Board adopted changes to the Zoning Ordinance.
- Changes to the Zoning Ordinance increased the maximum number of children permitted in a family day care home from 9 to 12.
- The revised Zoning Ordinance allows family day care homes serving nine or fewer children to operate by-right. For homes serving 10 to 12 children, a use permit is required.
- The parking requirements for child care centers were changed from one parking space per employee to one parking space for every 10 children. In addition, parking requirements for child care centers may now be reduced through the use permit process.

Did you know: Thanks to the visibility of the Child Care Initiative, Arlington received 7 requests to open new child care programs from January through August 2019, and as a result of the Zoning Ordinance and local child care Code changes, 26 family day care homes submitted requests to expand in July and August 2019.
Chapter 59 Trainings Reach Wide In-Home Provider Audience

In preparing providers to implement the changes made to Chapter 59, the County’s Child Care Services Office held trainings to explain what these changes mean for family day care homes. Two trainings were offered in May and June 2019.

- The trainings were four hours long, covering updated regulations on licensing, inspections, the operational responsibilities of the providers, and more. Approximately 85% of family day care homes attended.
- To minimize out-of-pocket expenses to the providers, and to ensure compliance with the revised Code, attendees were given necessary supplies, as well as easy-to-use templates for all required forms.
- Even though existing providers were eligible to apply for deferred compliance on new standards and policies, many began using the supplies and forms distributed at these trainings.

A Flyer on Affordable Child Care Spreads the Word

- The Child Care Initiative identified local programs that provide financial assistance or offer affordable care to qualifying families.
- These programs were compiled into an easily readable flyer, which was also translated into Spanish.
- The flyer was made available for partners and stakeholders to distribute at various events, such as Kindergarten Information Night and the Arlington County Fair, and is available on the Child Care Initiative website to be distributed in the future.
- See the full flyer in the Documents and Resources sidebar at https://commissions.arlingtonva.us/child-care-initiative/.

AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE IN ARLINGTON

- Pre-kindergarten program for 4 year olds
- Children must be 4 by Sept. 30
- Families must meet income eligibility requirements
- Program is free to all eligible students
- Applications accepted Feb. 1 – April 16

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CREATIVE PRESCHOOLERS PROGRAM
- Half-day program for ages 3 - 5 years
- Offered Sept. - May in five County community centers
- Five-day, three-day and two-day per week options available
- Fee reduction and financial hardship options available
- Registration opens in Feb., several locations have wait lists

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HEAD START & EARLY HEAD START
- Full-day, year-round program for ages 0 - 5 years
- Applications are accepted from earliest based on family income
- Applications accepted year-round
- Federally Funded, school readiness program

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In a community where Arlington Public Schools students speak at least 107 languages and hail from at least 146 countries, children are exposed to many different cultures from an early age. Child care programs have an important role to play in acknowledging, supporting, and respecting cultural differences among all children.

In November 2018, the Child Care Initiative surveyed programs on their cross-cultural needs. Respondents indicated that communication style, relationship between family and school, and food and drink were the areas where cross-cultural differences were most prevalent.

In June 2019, to address the needs identified in the survey, the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center offered two identical trainings to Arlington child care programs, covering topics such as cultural sensitivity and the complexities of identity and bias.
The accomplishments of the Child Care Initiative were possible due to our hard-working partners:

AHC Inc.
Rebecca Koons
Jasmine Rose
Haley Mixon

Alexandria/Arlington Regional Workforce Council
Daniel Gomez

Alliance for Early Success
Helene Stebbins

Arlington Community Foundation
Anne Vor der Bruegge

Arlington County Board
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Arlington County Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development
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Allison Cook
Anthony Fusarelli
Cliffon Hogan
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Molly O'Connell
Nick Rogers
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Katherine Garcia
Roxana Hernandez
Venus Burgess

Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families
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Arlington Public Library
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Arlington Public Schools
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Doorways for Women and Families
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Elibunny Family Child Care
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Infant/Toddler Family Day Care
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Kinhaven School
Amy Hitchcock

La Cocina
Daniela Hurtado
Paty Funegra

Little Ambassadors’ Academy
Caitlin Butt
Cissy Hart
Lauren Harris

My Little Shine Home Day Care
Ana Vasquez

Northern Virginia Association for the Education of Young Children
Rosemary Kendall

Northern Virginia Community College
Ivy Beringer

Northern Virginia Family Service
Halla Mohamed
Hilda Isham
Malinda Langford

Northern Virginia Health Foundation
Patricia Rodgers

Parents
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Paul Holland
Tenley Peterson

Virginia Department of Labor and Industry
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Voices for Virginia's Children
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