

Joint Committee on Children, Youth, and Families

Senator Mary L. Washington, Senate Chair

Delegate Ariana B. Kelly, House Chair

Thursday, December 16, 2021, 2:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

Agenda

- I. Call to Order and Chairs' Opening Remarks**
- II. Follow Up Presentation on Child Care Topics Discussed during the Joint Committee's November 10, 2021, Meeting**
 - Dr. Deann Collins, Deputy Superintendent, Teaching and Learning, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)
 - Steven Hicks, Assistant Superintendent, Early Childhood, MSDE
 - Justin Dayhoff, Assistant Superintendent, Financial Planning Operations, and Strategy, MSDE
 - Ary Amerikaner, Chief of Staff, MSDE
- III. Roundtable Discussion and Voting on the Joint Committee's Recommendations**
- IV. Closing Remarks and Adjournment**

A photograph of a classroom scene. A female teacher with long dark hair, wearing a white lab coat and a light blue surgical face mask, is leaning over a desk. She is looking down at a book held by a young girl. The girl is also wearing a white face mask and a striped shirt. They are both focused on the book. In the background, other students are visible, some also wearing face masks, and there are computer monitors on desks. The lighting is bright, suggesting a well-lit classroom.

Maryland's Child Care Scholarship Program and Early Childhood Workforce

Joint Committee on Children, Youth and Families
December 16, 2021

Presented By | The Maryland State
Department of Education

Overview and Agenda

Maryland's Child Care Scholarship Program and Early Childhood Workforce

- ☑ Overview of the Child Care Scholarship Program
- ☑ Improving Customer Service
- ☑ Next Steps
- ☑ Supports for the Early Childhood Workforce
- ☑ Stabilizing the Early Childhood System
- ☑ Questions and Comments

Overview of the Child Care Scholarship Program

Supporting Families in Paying for Child Care

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

Child Care Scholarship Program

Application Processing Timeline

Parent submits a **complete** application

- Vendor has **5 days** to pend the application.
- Vendor must approve or deny within **10 days**, if more than 10 days remain within the customer's 30-day processing window.

Parent submits an **incomplete** application – Scenario I

- Vendor has **5 days** to pend the application **and** issue Missing Documentation Letter.
- Parent submits missing information between **days 1-25**.
- Vendor must approve or deny the application, within 10 days, if 10 days remain within the month and **no later than day 30**.

Parent submits an **incomplete** application – Scenario II

- Vendor has **5 days** to pend the application **and** issue Missing Documentation Letter.
- Parent submits missing information between **days 26-30**.
- Vendor must approve or deny the application **no later than day 35**.

Overview of the Child Care Scholarship Program

Common Reasons for Application Denial

- The most common reason for denying the CCS Application is that the family does not meet the eligibility requirements or has not submitted the required documentation for a complete application.
- The top three reasons, from highest to lowest, that applications are denied are as follows:
 - 1) Missing Documents
 - 2) Proof of Child Support
 - 3) Over Income
- The top three missing documents, from highest to lowest, are as follows:
 - 1) Proof of Identify
 - 2) Proof of Income
 - 3) Proof of Residence.

Overview of the Child Care Scholarship Program

30 Day Time Frame to Complete an Application is Common among States

State	Length of Time to Complete Application	How to Apply	Initial Income Eligibility in Federal Poverty Levels (FPL)
California	30 days	In-person at Local Social Service Department	326% FPL
District of Columbia	30 days	In-person at the Department of Human Services or at the parent's Level II Child Care Provider's Facility	185% FPL
Maryland	30 days	By Mail, E-mail or FAX	282% FPL (65% SMI)
Massachusetts	30 days	In-person, mail, fax, email, phone	236% FPL
Virginia	30 days	In-person, mail, fax, online	185% FPL

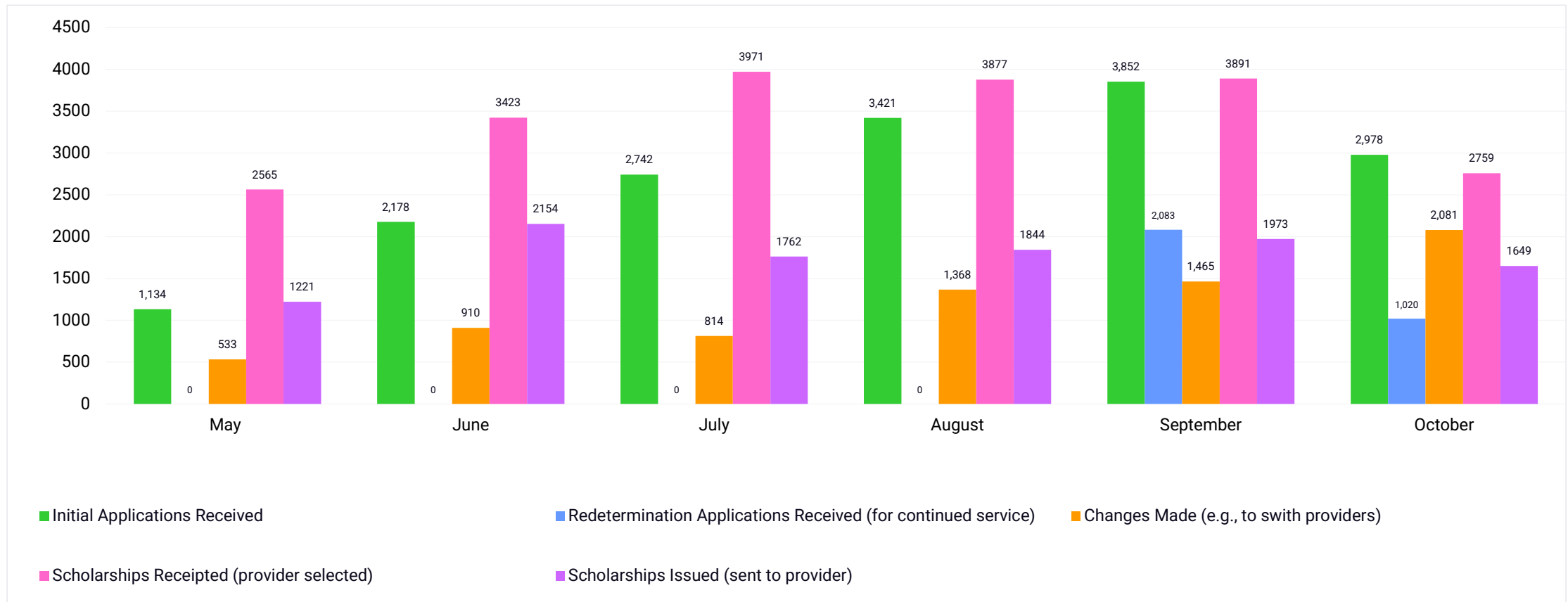
Overview of the Child Care Scholarship Program

Child Care Scholarship Application

- **Streamlining the application process**
 - MSDE reviews its application forms to ensure collection of the minimum required information needed to authorize eligibility.
 - We are committed to conducting regional and diverse focus groups to improve customer service.
- **Staff training and language support**
 - Staff are trained to walk a family through the application process, and documents are translated in the top 11 languages with interpreting services available.

Overview of the Child Care Scholarship Program

High volume of documents processed each month



Note: MSDE extended all redetermination May to August to ensure continuity of care during the beginning of the transition to a new vendor; parents did not need to submit paperwork.

Overview of the Child Care Scholarship Program

Invoices Paid to Participating Child Care Providers

- **Average length of time for a provider's to be paid for services**
 - Providers may submit invoices for payment the day after the end of a Service Period.
 - Correctly submitted invoices are processed by the vendor within 5 business days.
 - Payment requests are sent to the Comptroller to disperse funds.
 - Direct deposit payments are received by vendors in 7 - 10 business days.
 - Paper checks delivered through the postal service will add additional time, and delivery varies across the state.

Improving Customer Service

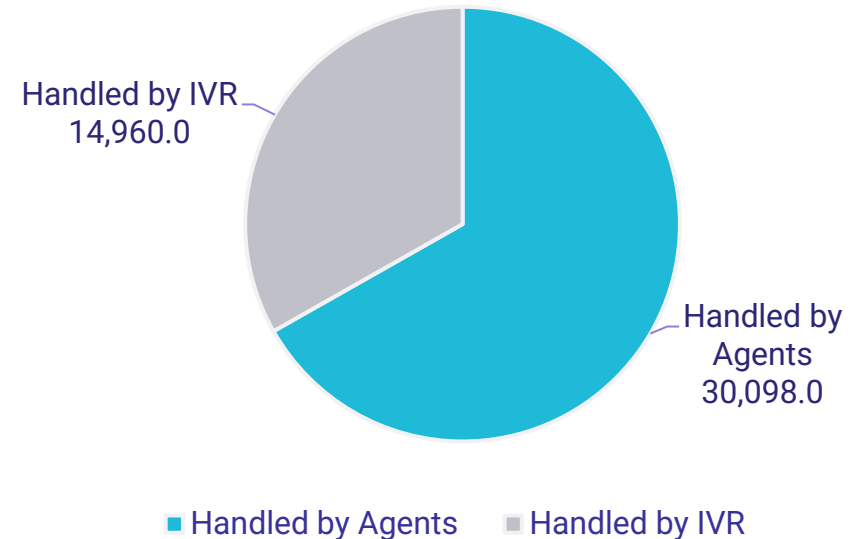
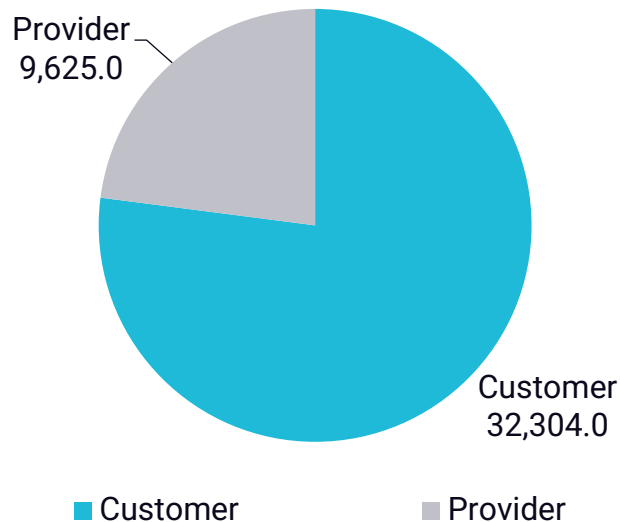
Current Practices

- **Providing up-to-date information**
 - Websites are updated, social media leveraged, the bi-weekly Tuesday Tidbits used.
- **Ensuring adequate staffing**
 - The vendor is required to ensure adequate staffing to handle increases in applications/invoices.
- **Minimizing duplication of efforts and lost paperwork**
 - The new paperless case management and provider payment processing system has minimized the loss of paperwork.

Improving Customer Service

Current Practices

- **Customer Service Calls**
 - A toll-free number and Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR) system are available.
 - Voicemails, e-mails, mail, and faxes received before 5:00 pm must be returned within three business days.
 - During the transition-in period, MSDE issues a Corrective Action if the vendor does not respond by the next business day.



October, 2021

Improving Customer Service

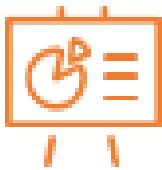
Current Practices

- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) page.**
 - MSDE updates posted and distributes FAQs when there are programmatic changes.
- **Human interaction for Child Care Scholarship Applications**
 - Parents receiving Temporary Cash Assistance may work with their local social service offices for in-person assistance.
 - Families participating in Head Start interact with their program, and the program liaison with MSDE.
- **“Use the Link” campaign**
 - This enables both parents and providers to submit their questions via an Inquiry Form.
- **Written explanations for reductions in benefits.**
 - If services are reduced or terminated, providers are given a 15-day prior notice, and parents are given a 45-day prior notice.

Next Steps

Application Process Improvement

- **Process Improvement**
 - MSDE is working to improve reporting and analysis capacity, enhance IVR, and automate filling form requests.

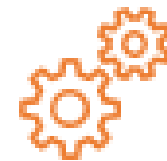


Improve reporting capabilities in order to analyze the customers reason for contact and verify accurate dispositions are selected.

Process Improvement Ideas: Pipeline



Enhance IVR to state the case status and expected response timeframe for each document type



Automate the process of sending customers requested Child Care Scholarship forms

Next Steps

Family Navigators, Portals, and Customer Satisfaction Surveys

- **Family Navigators**
 - Beginning in February, customers needing human interaction will be able to interact with Family Navigators located at Maryland's regional Child Care Resource Centers.
- **Family and Provider Portals**
 - The Portals will be launched in phases between March and September 2022, and the Family Portal will require customers to upload each document in order to submit an application.
- **Customer service surveys to child care businesses/providers/programs and families**
 - MSDE is currently developing provider and family surveys to assess customer experiences at various levels and make improvements.
 - We plan to deploy surveys monthly throughout the state and hold focus groups made up of diverse families and providers.

Supports for the Early Childhood Workforce

Financial Support, Staff Retention, and PreK Educator Qualifications

- **Financial support to earn degrees**
 - The Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund (CCCPDF) provides financial support to early childhood educators to earn an Associate's or Bachelor's degrees and cover the application and testing fees for the Child Development Associates (CDA) degree,.
- **Staff Retention**
 - The Child Care Credentialing program awards one-time or annual bonuses to early childhood educators as an incentive to reach higher qualifications.
 - Teachers in private child care settings that choose to participate in Maryland's public PreK program will earn comparable salary and benefits to school teachers.

Supports for the Early Childhood Workforce

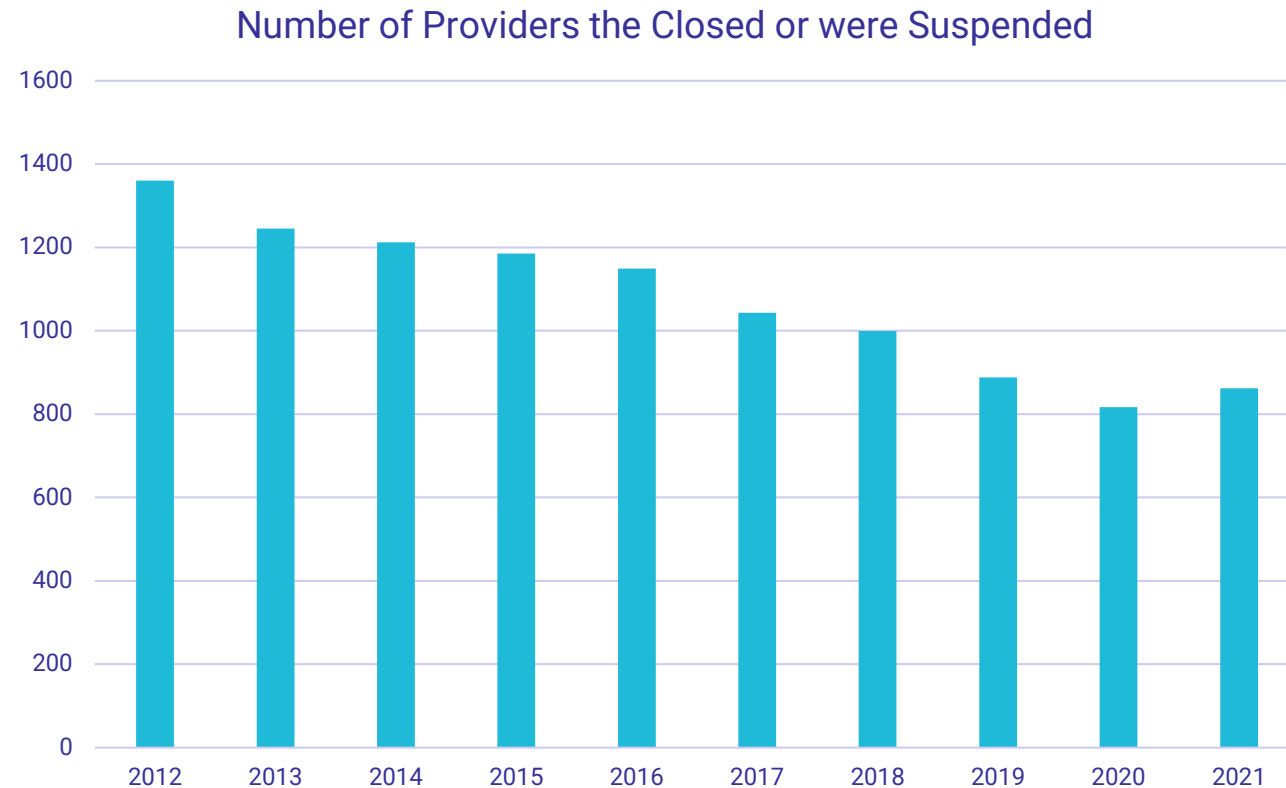
Financial Support, Staff Retention, and PreK Educator Qualifications

- **PreK educator qualifications**
 - The Prekindergarten Expansion Grant and the Maryland's State PreK programs require lead teachers to hold a P-3 certification.
 - Beginning in FY 2026, Assistant Teachers are required to hold a CDA or Associate's degree.
 - Teachers can be enrolled in an approved alternative certification program as they work to achieve a P-3 certification.
 - Blueprint for Maryland's Future does not allow a teacher to complete the practicum in a child care program unless it is a non-public school.

Stabilizing the Early Childhood System

Decline of Child Care Providers in Maryland

- Over the last 10 years, 10,828 providers closed or were suspended.
 - 9,326 were voluntary closures.
 - 546 were enforcement actions.



Overview of the Child Care Scholarship Program

Reasons for Voluntary Closure

- Of the 10,828 providers that “closed” over the last 10 years, providers marked a reason of:
 - Voluntary Closure - 9,326
 - Enforcement Action - 561
- Some of the reasons for voluntary closure include:
 - Retired from field;
 - Increase in requirements (ex. training, 8 point check CBC);
 - COVID (2020-2021);
 - Moved out of state;
 - Return to the workforce (ex. served as a family child care provider while her children are non-school-age); and
 - Low enrollment of children.

Stabilizing the Early Childhood System

\$158 Million Distributed in APRA funds to Child Care Providers

- Out of a total of 5,757 applications received, 5182 (90%) submissions were valid.
- All eligible child care providers who submitted an application were sent a grant payment.
- A reason an application was not approved is because the applicant –
 - submitted duplicate applications (one provider submitted 10 applications);
 - was not registered nor licensed prior to March 11, 2021 (as required by law);
 - surrendered the license with the OCC;
 - has never applied for a license with the OCC;
 - is in the applicant stage;
 - is an informal child care provider;
 - requested application be rescinded; or
 - is a Head Start program and therefore not eligible.

Thank you

Questions & Comments

Draft Recommendations and Discussion Points of the Joint Committee on Children, Youth, and Families

Mitigating Economic Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women and Families

In response to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately affected women and families, the State should take the following actions:

- Invest in programs that support the caregiving workforce, which is predominantly female and largely women of color, struggles with severe workforce shortages, and faces difficulty recruiting and retaining employees, including programs that improve access to health insurance, child care, and long-term care;
- Ensure local management boards (LMB) receive adequate State funding to provide supportive services and other programs to children and families.

Long-term Care

Understanding the widespread implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and what it has done to children and families in the State, the joint committee makes the following recommendations to strengthen long-term care, which is directly connected to nuclear and extended family well-being.

- Support legislation that aims to enhance the State's efforts to shift the balance of funding for long-term care services toward home- and community-based services and innovative payment models to support these services; and
- Support the continuation of Appendix K flexibilities that allowed family members to be paid as staff and allowed community providers to support people in their homes and other alternate locations.

Child Care

The State should take the following actions to improve and support child care in Maryland:

- Resolve the Child Care Scholarship (CCS) program payment delays affecting low-income families and child care providers;
- Require MSDE to modernize and streamline the CCS application process for families and providers by:
 - Creating a step-by-step video to explain the application process;
 - Creating a list of frequently asked questions in each language for which the CCS program application has been translated; and
 - Reducing processing delays by offering training to providers on the CCS application process so they can engage applicants that consent to having providers assist them.
- Fully explore the ability of states to allow for families to be presumed eligible for the CCS program, giving them the ability to immediately enroll their children in care while MSDE reviews their paperwork and a formal approval is pending;
- Expand categorical eligibility – with categorical eligibility, a recipient eligible for one benefit is deemed to be eligible for another benefit. Recipients of two benefits (Temporary Cash Assistance and Supplemental Security Income) are currently categorically eligible for CCS. Categorical eligibility should be expanded to other programs, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children benefits, rental/housing assistance, and Pell grants/other institutional aid;
- Establish a fund for child care providers who accept CCS vouchers to provide new hire and retention bonuses to their employees and a fund that would provide new hire assistance to child care providers.
- Support the Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot program, established in Chapters 437 and 438 of 2021, and provide additional funding to expand the pilot program statewide and distribute grants for local pilot programs quickly;
- Explore creative licensing flexibilities to expand access to child care services, including the establishment of child care centers at long-term care facilities, hospital, and retirement community campuses;

- Encourage partnerships between the business and child care communities, such as Montgomery Moving Forward and the Research in Action lab in Delaware;
- Expand the child care workforce by increasing State investment in training programs and quickly implementing Chapters 243 and 244 of 2021; and
- Support revising licensure requirements for organizations that provide child care to school-age children, such as the Boys and Girls Club or groups funded by LMB, that require an equivalent license to daycare providers to operate, but generally serve older children.