



DATE: February 24, 2022 **COMMITTEE:** House Way and Means
BILL NO: House Bill 664
BILL TITLE: Child Care Programs – Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program – Information and Assistance
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports House Bill 664 - Child Care Programs – Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program – Information and Assistance

Bill Summary:

Beginning July 1, 2023, at least once every calendar year, a childcare program will provide parents and guardians information about the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program. At the request of the parent or guardian, the child care center will assist in scheduling a time and convenient location for the Infant and Toddlers program to provide the appropriate screening.

Background:

At Kennedy Krieger Institute, we have multiple, high impact programs in early childhood education serving “at risk” and medically complex children.

Our Programs include:

PACT: Helping Children with Special Needs, Inc., the only child care centers in the Baltimore Metropolitan area for 85 young children who are medically fragile and infants and toddlers who are homeless.

World of Care Medical Child Care: age’s birth to five needing daily nursing care and specialized equipment. Includes comprehensive services such as daily skilled nursing care/interventions, occupational, physical and speech therapy.

Therapeutic Nursery for Homeless Infants and Toddlers: only early Head Start in Baltimore providing specialized attachment-based, trauma-informed care and education for infants and toddlers whose families are currently living in homeless shelters or transitioning back to the community. Also provide mental Health Services for parents using research-based interventions.

Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD): a multi-faceted, interdisciplinary center serving individuals from infancy into adulthood with, and at elevated likelihood for developing ASD, their families, and professionals in the ASD community. CARD combines research, clinical services, and training programs to unlock the potential of children with ASD, enrich their life experiences, empower parents and promote the well-being of families through evidence-based practices.

One of our major endeavors is developing innovative models and procedures for early detection of (ASD, communication delays, mental health challenges, and other behavioral and physical health challenges), and treatments for ASD and related challenges. Our highly trained triage team works with families to plan the assessment(s) needed to create a path forward that will lead to improved outcomes and quality of life.

Individualized intervention(s) are provided, including behavioral, occupational therapy, speech-language therapy, cognitive-behavioral, augmentative communication, social skills, medical management, job skills, and family support services.

Rationale:

Early in development, the brain is the most malleable, representing a formative period of neurodevelopment. During this time, the brain is growing, sculpting connections that are not needed, and strengthening needed connections within and across brain regions. When this set of processes occurs in enriching environments with exposures to appropriate inputs and without interference, it enhances a child's ability to learn at their greatest potential, and to achieve to the greatest possible level of success.

To thrive optimally, children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other disorders of the developing nervous system need to be in such enriching environments without interference and with specific forms of quality input, opportunities, and social-emotional milieus.

The literature has clearly shown that early delays in development, particularly when language is delayed, persist into later childhood and are associated with later deficits in literacy, social-emotional, behavioral, and school functioning (McKean et al., 2017; Suggate, Schaughency, McAnally, & Reese, 2018).

By providing parent's with information for the Infants and Toddler's program, parents and guardians having concerns about their child's development will have access to screenings that will improve early detection of delays, permitting access to early intervention which can significantly improve a child's developmental outcomes.

Kennedy Krieger Institute requests a favorable report on House Bill 664.