

Audit Report

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**Maryland State Department of Education  
Division of Early Childhood**

March 2022

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DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES  
MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES  
OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE AUDITS  
MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Victoria L. Gruber  
Executive Director

Gregory A. Hook, CPA  
Legislative Auditor

March 14, 2022

Senator Clarence K. Lam, M.D., Senate Chair, Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee  
Delegate Carol L. Krimm, House Chair, Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee  
Members of Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee  
Annapolis, Maryland

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We have conducted a fiscal compliance audit of the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) of the Maryland Department of Education (MSDE) for the period beginning January 1, 2018 and ending June 30, 2021. DEC is responsible for all child care programs in the State, including licensing facilities, monitoring facility compliance with regulations, and taking enforcement actions related to child care facilities. DEC is also responsible for the Child Care Scholarship Program, which provides financial assistance to eligible families to meet their child care needs.

Our audit disclosed that DEC headquarters did not ensure that its regional offices were effectively monitoring regulated child care facilities. Specifically, DEC did not ensure that regional office staff finalized complaints within 35 days after receipt of a complaint regarding child care facilities or employees. According to DEC records, 1,041 of the 5,443 complaints received during the period January 1, 2018 to June 30, 2021 were not finalized until 36 to 668 days after receipt; including complaints involving conditions that could present an imminent danger to children.

In addition, DEC did not conduct a documented supervisory review to verify that regional offices investigated criminal background check alerts as required. Also, DEC did not always document the rationale for not taking available administrative action, such as license suspension or revocation, when inspection deficiencies were not corrected timely. For example, DEC did not document its rationale for not taking administrative action for one facility that did not correct 10 inspection deficiencies for conditions, such as a lack of staffing records to

verify required training and medical requirements, and children's health screenings. Finally, DEC did not always document that child care employees were properly recorded in its automated system, as required.

Our audit also included a review to determine the status of the four findings contained in our preceding audit report. While we determined that DEC had made improvement by satisfactorily addressing three of those prior findings, the fourth finding is repeated in this report.

MSDE's response to this audit, on behalf of DEC, is included as an appendix to this report. We reviewed the response to our findings and related recommendations, and have concluded that the corrective actions identified are sufficient to address all issues.

We wish to acknowledge the cooperation extended to us during the audit by DEC and its willingness to address the audit issues and implement appropriate corrective actions.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory A. Hook". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G".

Gregory A. Hook, CPA  
Legislative Auditor

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\* Denotes item repeated in full or part from preceding audit report

## **Background Information**

### **Agency Responsibilities**

The Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) Division of Early Childhood (DEC) is responsible for overseeing all child care programs in the State, including licensing child care facilities, and monitoring and enforcing facility compliance with regulations (such as health and safety standards and criminal background check requirements). DEC oversees these facilities through its 13 regional child care offices across the State. On March 26, 2020, the MSDE Superintendent ordered all licensed child care providers to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic health crisis. On March 30, 2020, the child care providers were authorized to reopen in order to provide care for children of essential personnel. According to State records, as of June 2021, the State's licensed child care facilities consisted of 4,744 family child care homes and 2,594 child care centers, which were licensed to serve approximately 193,000 children, which represents a decrease of 24,000 children served from our prior audit report.

DEC is also responsible for the Child Care Scholarship (formerly known as Child Care Subsidy) Program which provides financial assistance to eligible families to meet their child care needs. This program is primarily administered by a vendor, under contract with DEC, in conjunction with the State's 24 local departments of social services. During our audit period, eligibility for the scholarship program, which is primarily federally funded, was expanded to provide financial assistance to additional families. According to State records, during fiscal year 2020, child care scholarship program expenditures totaled approximately \$248.3 million (\$43.5 million in general funds, and \$204.8 million in federal funds, which included \$45.8 million in COVID-related funding).

DEC uses the automated Child Care Administration Tracking System (CCATS) to record, approve, and monitor child care facility licenses; to track individuals associated with those facilities and help ensure that all required criminal background checks are obtained; and to process scholarship-related eligibility, vouchers, and payments. CCATS is operated by a primary service provider, under a State of Maryland contract, which is responsible for system management and operations support, with related system hosting services being provided by a subcontractor.

According to the State's records, DEC's operating expenditures totaled approximately \$35.6 million during fiscal year 2020.

## Status of Findings From Preceding Audit Report

Our audit included a review to determine the status of the four findings contained in our preceding audit report dated September 6, 2019. As disclosed in Figure 1, we determined that the office satisfactorily addressed three of these findings. The remaining finding is repeated in this report.

**Figure 1**  
**Status of Preceding Findings**

<b>Preceding Finding</b>	<b>Finding Description</b>	<b>Implementation Status</b>
Finding 1	The Division of Early Childhood (DEC) headquarters did not provide sufficient oversight to ensure that regional offices were effectively monitoring child care facility compliance with criminal background check requirements.	Not repeated
Finding 2	DEC headquarters did not ensure that regional offices conducted comprehensive annual inspections of child care facilities, followed up with facilities regarding the correction of deficiencies, and took appropriate administrative action when facilities did not correct deficiencies.	<b>Repeated</b> (Current Finding 3)
Finding 3	DEC lacked sufficient procedures to effectively monitor subsidy program eligibility determinations and the related payments made by its vendor, certain of which could not be supported.	Not repeated
Finding 4	DEC lacked assurance that its Child Care Administration Tracking System was sufficiently protected against operational and security risks.	Not repeated

# Findings and Recommendations

## Child Care Facility Complaint Investigations

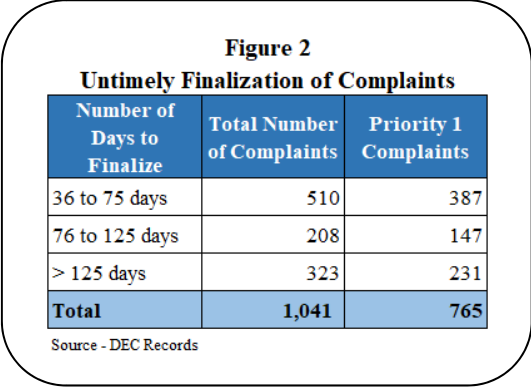
### Finding 1

**Division of Early Childhood (DEC) regional offices did not always finalize complaints within 35 days after being received, as required by its policy.**

### Analysis

Regional offices did not always finalize complaints within 35 days after being received, as required by DEC’s policy. DEC receives complaints, including those considered as possible imminent danger to children (such as abuse, and fire/health safety hazards), via telephone, email, and mail, and forwards the complaints to the appropriate regional office. DEC classifies complaints as either priority 1 complaints against licensed facilities or priority 2 complaints against unlicensed facilities. DEC policy requires each regional office to record the completion of its complaint investigation in the DEC Child Care Administration Tracking System (CCATS) within 30 days of its receipt of the complaint. The same policy also requires that a supervisory review, by an official at the applicable regional office, of the investigation must be documented within 5 days after the investigation was completed in CCATS, after which the complaint investigation is finalized. This review is intended to verify the propriety of the original investigations outcome (conclusions). According to DEC records, during fiscal year 2021, the regional offices received 1,071 complaints that were subject to investigation.

Our Data Analytics Unit obtained a data file from CCATS, which we deemed reliable for our purposes, of all 5,443 priority 1 and 2 complaints received during the period January 1, 2018 to June 30, 2021. Our analysis of these records determined that for 1,041 finalized complaints (19 percent), the required supervisory review was not recorded in CCATS until 36 to 668 days after receipt. For example, 765 priority 1 complaints were not finalized, in some cases for more than 125 days after initial receipt (see Figure 2). Furthermore, as of October 22, 2021, an additional 257 complaints had not been finalized according to CCATS even though the regional offices initiated a review on dates ranging from January 1, 2018 to May 28, 2021.



While it appears, based on CCATS data, that most of the related investigations for the 1,041 complaints were completed within 30 days, supervisory review of these



investigations had not been documented to officially finalize the complaint investigation outcomes. According to DEC policy, without a documented supervisory review, the compliant investigation is not considered finalized.

### **Recommendation 1**

**We recommend that DEC conduct a documented supervisory review to ensure that regional offices complete complaint investigations and related supervisory reviews timely, and record the results in CCATS within 35 days, as required.**

## **Criminal Background Check Alert Follow-up**

### **Finding 2**

**DEC did not verify the information recorded by its regional offices for criminal background check alerts received from the Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS), and did not review related documentation to ensure that the resultant investigations were completed in a timely manner.**

### **Analysis**

DEC headquarters did not verify the information recorded by the regional offices for criminal background check (CBC) alerts received from CJIS<sup>1</sup> and did not review related documentation to ensure that the investigations were completed in a timely manner. To facilitate DEC monitoring of the CBC requirements, licensed child care facilities are required to provide their respective DEC regional office with information on each new employee (such as name, address, date of birth, and social security number).

DEC headquarters receives weekly updates from CJIS on the results of the initial child care facility employee CBCs and alerts on any subsequent criminal activity for these employees. Headquarters records these alerts on a shared electronic file and emails the file to the appropriate regional office at that time. The regional offices are responsible for conducting an investigation and documenting the results on the file. DEC's policy requires an investigation be initiated by regional office staff within 5 business days of receiving a CJIS alert to determine if offenses identified are qualifying crimes that would preclude an individual from

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<sup>1</sup> Included in its responsibility for overseeing all child care programs in the State, DEC is responsible for ensuring that licensed child care facilities comply with CBC requirements. According to State and federal law, on or before the first day of employment at a licensed child care facility, all individuals who will have unsupervised access to children must apply for a CBC, which includes checks of federal and State criminal background databases and sex offender registries.

being a child care worker. The policy also requires that the investigation must be completed within 30 days after initiation of the investigation. According to DEC records, during fiscal year 2021 the regional offices received 2,067 CJIS alerts from headquarters that were subject to investigation.

Our test of 15 alerts received by DEC headquarters and forwarded to regional offices during the period February 2018 through June 2021, disclosed that according to the recordation on the electronic file, 3 investigations were completed 62, 177, and 642 days after initiation. For example, according to the file, the investigation for an alert for driving under the influence was not completed until 642 days after it was initiated. After we brought this example to DEC's attention, it provided us with additional documentation that indicated the investigation was completed timely, but the investigation was not accurately recorded on the file.

### **Recommendation 2**

**We recommend DEC perform a periodic documented supervisory review, at least on a test basis, of the CBC file to ensure that alert investigations are properly documented and completed in a timely manner.**

## **Child Care Facility Inspections**

### **Finding 3**

**DEC did not always document the rationale for not taking available administrative action when inspection deficiencies were not corrected timely by child care facilities. In addition, DEC did not always document that all individuals working at child care facilities were recorded in CCATS.**

### **Analysis**

DEC did not always document the rationale for not taking available administrative actions when inspection deficiencies were not corrected timely. In addition, inspection forms did not always include documentation that a verification was conducted to ensure that employees working at child care facilities were recorded in CCATS. State regulations require annual physical inspections of all licensed child care facilities for a number of attributes, including updated health records and proper employee training certifications. DEC procedures require its regional offices to follow up with facilities until all inspection report deficiencies are satisfactorily resolved. In accordance with State regulations, facilities that do not address deficiencies may be subject to administrative action (such as license suspension and revocation). According to DEC records during fiscal year 2021, the regional offices conducted 10,391 inspections of 7,004 licensed facilities.

Additionally, 6,039 of the 9,822 inspections performed during fiscal year 2020 had at least one or more unresolved deficiency as of September 2021.

- Our test of 79 deficiencies from inspections conducted during the period November 2019 through May 2021 for 10 facilities in 7 of the 13 separate regions disclosed that according to CCATS, as of September 2021, 25 deficiencies identified at 3 facilities had not been corrected. In addition, DEC did not take available administrative actions for these 3 facilities, and did not document its rationale for the lack of administrative actions. For example, one facility had not corrected 10 deficiencies for conditions such as a lack of staffing records to verify required training and medical requirements, and children's health screenings.

DEC advised us it will work with child care providers to resolve deficiencies that it determines do not result in an immediate risk to children, and State regulations allow DEC to have discretion with administrative actions. DEC reviewed the three facilities we identified and advised us that the inspection reports would be updated to reflect that deficiencies were corrected for two of the three facilities. According to DEC records, during the period July 15, 2020 through December 29, 2021, DEC initiated 221 enforcement actions, including 122 suspensions or revocations.

- Regional offices did not always document that they verified that all employees working at child care facilities were recorded in CCATS, as required, which would assist in monitoring of facility compliance with criminal background check requirements. Specifically, the inspections are required to include a verification that all employees on the facility's employment records are recorded in CCATS (which is used to monitor criminal background checks and follow up on related alerts). As a result, our test of inspections conducted between November 2020 and June 2021 for 10 facilities in 8 regions that employed 74 child care workers disclosed that inspections for 3 facilities lacked specific documentation, such as a comment field on the inspection form denoting the verification of CCATS employment recordation. Our test did disclose that the names of all 74 workers were recorded in CCATS.

Similar conditions regarding the lack of follow up on deficiencies noted during inspections, and documentation that facility employees were recorded in CCATS were commented upon in our preceding audit report and in our preceding audit reports of the Maryland State Department of Education dating back to February 2013.

**Recommendation 3**

**We recommend DEC headquarters ensure that regional offices**

- a. initiate administrative actions as deemed appropriate, or provide written justification for not taking actions, for facilities with continued non-compliance (repeat); and**
- b. document its verification that all employees working at the facilities are recorded in CCATS (repeat).**

## **Audit Scope, Objectives, and Methodology**

We have conducted a fiscal compliance audit of the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) for the period beginning January 1, 2018 and ending June 30, 2021. The audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

As prescribed by the State Government Article, Section 2-1221 of the Annotated Code of Maryland, the objectives of this audit were to examine DEC's financial transactions, records, and internal control, and to evaluate its compliance with applicable State laws, rules, and regulations.

In planning and conducting our audit, we focused on the major financial-related areas of operations based on assessments of significance and risk. The areas addressed by the audit included licensing and monitoring of child care facilities, criminal background checks and alerts of child care providers, the child care scholarship program, and information systems security and control. We also determined the status of the findings contained in our preceding audit report.

Our audit did not include support services provided to DEC by MSDE. These support services (including payroll processing, purchasing, maintenance of accounting records, federal fund recoveries, and related fiscal functions) are included within the scope of our audits of MSDE.

Our assessment of internal controls was based on agency procedures and controls in place at the time of our fieldwork. Our tests of transactions and other auditing procedures were generally focused on the transactions occurring during our audit period of January 1, 2018 to June 30, 2021, but may include transactions before or after this period as we considered necessary to achieve our audit objectives.

To accomplish our audit objectives, our audit procedures included inquiries of appropriate personnel, inspections of documents and records, tests of transactions, and to the extent practicable, observations of DEC's operations. Generally, transactions were selected for testing based on auditor judgment, which primarily considers risk, the timing or dollar amount of the transaction, or the significance of the transaction to the area of operation reviewed. As a matter of course, we do not normally use statistical sampling in our tests, so unless otherwise specifically

indicated, neither statistical nor non-statistical sampling was used to select the transactions tested. Therefore, unless sampling is specifically indicated in a finding, the results from any tests conducted or disclosed by us cannot be used to project those results to the entire population from which the test items were selected.

We also performed various data extracts of pertinent information from the State's Financial Management Information System (such as revenue and expenditure data). The extracts are performed as part of ongoing internal processes established by the Office of Legislative Audits and were subject to various tests to determine data reliability. We determined that the data extracted from this source were sufficiently reliable for the purposes the data were used during this audit.

We also extracted data from DEC's Child Care Administrative Tracking System (CCATS) for the purpose of testing child care facilities, providers, child care scholarships, and user access. We performed various tests of the relevant data and determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes the data were used during the audit. Finally, we performed other auditing procedures that we considered necessary to achieve our audit objectives. The reliability of data used in this report for background or informational purposes was not assessed.

DEC's management is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal control. Internal control is a process designed to provide reasonable assurance that objectives pertaining to the reliability of financial records; effectiveness and efficiency of operations, including safeguarding of assets; and compliance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations are achieved. As provided in *Government Auditing Standards*, there are five components of internal control: control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, and monitoring. Each of the five components, when significant to the audit objectives, and as applicable to DEC, were considered by us during the course of this audit.

Because of inherent limitations in internal control, errors or fraud may nevertheless occur and not be detected. Also, projections of any evaluation of internal control to future periods are subject to the risk that conditions may change or compliance with policies and procedures may deteriorate.

Our reports are designed to assist the Maryland General Assembly in exercising its legislative oversight function and to provide constructive recommendations for improving State operations. As a result, our reports generally do not address activities we reviewed that are functioning properly.

This report includes findings relating to conditions that we consider to be significant deficiencies in the design or operation of internal control that could adversely affect DEC's ability to maintain reliable financial records, operate effectively and efficiently, and/or comply with applicable laws, rules, and regulations. Our report also includes a finding regarding a significant instance of noncompliance with applicable laws, rules, or regulations. Other less significant findings were communicated to DEC that did not warrant inclusion in this report.

The response from the MSDE, on behalf of DEC, to our findings and recommendations is included as an appendix to this report. As prescribed in the State Government Article, Section 2-1224 of the Annotated Code of Maryland, we will advise MSDE regarding the results of our review of its response.

**APPENDIX**



**Mohammed Choudhury**  
State Superintendent of Schools

March 11, 2022

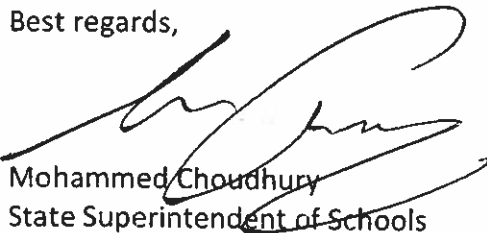
Mr. Gregory A. Hook, CPA  
Legislative Auditor  
Office of Legislative Audits  
The Warehouse at Camden Yards  
351 West Camden Street, Suite 400  
Baltimore, Maryland, 21201

Dear Mr. Hook:

Enclosed please find the Maryland State Department of Education response to the audit report of the Maryland State Department of Education – Division of Early Childhood for the period beginning January 1, 2018, and ending June 30, 2021. We greatly appreciate the efforts of your audit staff to help improve our controls and the cooperative relationship with your office.

Should you have any questions, please contact Ms. Channel Sumpter at 410-767-0104 or Mr. Richard McElroy at 410-767-8856.

Best regards,



Mohammed Choudhury  
State Superintendent of Schools

Enclosures

- c: Justin Dayhoff, Assistant Superintendent of Financial Planning, Operations and Strategy
- Deann Collins, Ed.D., Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning
- Channel Sumpter, Director of Audits
- Richard C. McElroy, Internal Auditor Supervisor



**Maryland State Department of Education  
Division of Early Childhood**

**Agency Response Form**

**Child Care Facility Complaint Investigations**

**Finding 1**

**Division of Early Childhood (DEC) regional offices did not always finalize complaints within 35 days after being received, as required by its policy.**

**We recommend that DEC conduct a documented supervisory review to ensure that regional offices complete complaint investigations and related supervisory reviews timely, and record the results in CCATS within 35 days, as required.**

<b>Agency Response</b>			
<b>Analysis</b>			
<b>Please provide additional comments as deemed necessary.</b>	The DEC has verified the facts in the Analysis Section and found that they were accurate.		
<b>Recommendation 1</b>	Agree	<b>Estimated Completion Date:</b>	Ongoing
<b>Please provide details of corrective action or explain disagreement.</b>	<p>As stated in the Analysis section, DEC procedures require each Regional Licensing Office to record the completion of its complaint investigation in the DEC Child Care Administration Tracking System (CCATS) within 30 days of its receipt. These procedures also require that a supervisory review, by an official at the applicable Regional Licensing Office of the investigation must be documented within five days after the investigation was completed in CCATS, after which the complaint investigation is finalized.</p> <p>As a result of the audit, during February 2022, the DEC headquarters commenced monitoring on a monthly basis the Regional Licensing Offices' compliance to completing and documenting investigations in CCATS within thirty days of the receipt date of a complaint. This monitoring will also provide assurance that a supervisory review of the investigation was performed and documented in CCATS within five days of the date when the investigation was recorded as completed in CCATS. DEC headquarters will notify the Regional Licensing Offices of any exceptions and will require the Regional Licensing Offices to explain the reason why the specified timelines were not met and will also require resolution on a timely basis. Finally, DEC headquarters will create and maintain documentation regarding utilization of the aforementioned monitoring process.</p>		

**Maryland State Department of Education  
Division of Early Childhood**

**Agency Response Form**

**Criminal Background Check Alert Follow-up**

**Finding 2**  
DEC did not verify the information recorded by its regional offices for criminal background check alerts received from the Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS), and did not review related documentation to ensure that the resultant investigations were completed in a timely manner.

We recommend DEC perform a periodic documented supervisory review, at least on a test basis, of the CBC file to ensure that alert investigations are properly documented and completed in a timely manner.

Agency Response			
<b>Analysis</b>			
<b>Please provide additional comments as deemed necessary.</b>	The DEC has verified the facts in the Analysis Section and found that they were accurate.		
<b>Recommendation 2</b>	Agree	<b>Estimated Completion Date:</b>	Ongoing
<b>Please provide details of corrective action or explain disagreement.</b>	<p>As a result of this audit, a Quarterly Alert Log Audit procedure was developed and implemented beginning January 31, 2022. This procedure will be used by DEC headquarters to monitor each Regional Licensing Office CBC Alert Log on a quarterly basis. In this regard, a comprehensive review of 20% of alerts will be performed which will include a review of the initiation and completion dates to determine whether the investigation was initiated and completed on a timely basis. Furthermore, the accuracy of the information recorded on the Alert Log spreadsheet and actions taken will be determined by review of all documentation obtained during the investigation of the alert. Subsequently, the Regional Licensing Offices will be notified of any alerts that were not investigated timely, accurately or completely and they will be requested to correct any information on the Alert Log on a timely basis. The quarterly reviews will be documented on a regional spreadsheet and a summary of the review will be shared with the Licensing Branch Chief. Furthermore, two other existing DEC procedures, Clearance Admin CJIS Alert Log Review Guidance and CJIS Alert Log Review Guidance, will be amended to include a verification as to whether alert investigations were completed on a timely basis.</p> <p>In view of the procedures mentioned above, the DEC would like to note that some alert investigations may exceed the required day time frames due to a pending court case or a case involving a Child Protective Services investigation which could impact the outcome of the agency’s decision and achieving the required investigation timeframes.</p>		

**Maryland State Department of Education  
Division of Early Childhood**

**Agency Response Form**

**Child Care Facility Inspections**

**Finding 3**  
**DEC did not always document the rationale for not taking available administrative action when inspection deficiencies were not corrected timely by child care facilities. In addition, DEC did not always document that all individuals working at child care facilities were recorded in CCATS.**

**We recommend DEC headquarters ensure that regional offices**

- a. initiate administrative actions as deemed appropriate, or provide written justification for not taking actions, for facilities with continued non-compliance (repeat); and**
- b. document its verification that all employees working at the facilities are recorded in CCATS (repeat).**

<b>Agency Response</b>			
<b>Analysis</b>			
<b>Please provide additional comments as deemed necessary.</b>	The DEC has verified the facts in the Analysis Section and found that they were accurate.		
<b>Recommendation 3a</b>	Agree	<b>Estimated Completion Date:</b>	June 1, 2022
<b>Please provide details of corrective action or explain disagreement.</b>	<p>The DEC will continue to follow its procedures on enforcements and initiate them as appropriate.</p> <p>As stated in the Analysis section, the DEC procedures require its Regional Licensing Offices to follow up with facilities until all inspection report deficiencies are satisfactorily resolved. Currently, the DEC’s “Closing Open Summary of Findings” guidance requires continued follow-up at 30, 60 and 90-day time frames including the issuance of reminder letters and emails requesting the corrections. If the corrections are not received after the 90-day time frame, then it is referred to the supervisor or manager at the Regional Licensing Office to determine the next course of action including possible enforcement action. As a result of this audit, these procedures will be amended and reviewed with all regional staff by June 1, 2022, to require that documentation be created and placed in the “Provider’s Notes” tab in CCATS which justifies the DEC’s decision to not take an enforcement action after the 90 day timeframe including those cases involving a facility with continued deficiencies.</p>		

**Maryland State Department of Education  
Division of Early Childhood**

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	<p>In addition, Regional Licensing Office supervisors and managers review the Open Summary Of Findings (SOF) report with the Licensing Specialists on at least a monthly basis to assist with obtaining corrections and compliance information. This guidance will be reviewed with all regional licensing staff by June 1, 2022.</p> <p>Finally, funding has been provided for a contractual position whose responsibilities will include following up on open deficiencies. In cases where a facility continues to have open deficiencies that have not been addressed, the Regional Licensing Office will be contacted to follow up on the status of the deficiencies.</p>		
<b>Recommendation 3b</b>	Agree	<b>Estimated Completion Date:</b>	Ongoing
<b>Please provide details of corrective action or explain disagreement.</b>	<p>The agency agrees that the Regional Licensing Offices do not consistently document during annual inspections the verification of all employees working in childcare facilities as required per Section II. B. 3. of guidance ‘Verifying Staff Employment in Child Care Facilities During Annual Inspections’. Consequently, in view of the OLA’s observation on March 1, 2022, the DEC headquarters reviewed this guidance with all Regional Licensing Office staff to enhance the Licensing Specialists’ awareness and understanding of the employee verification process, which is required to be performed and documented during annual inspections of childcare facilities.</p> <p>Also, supervisors or managers at Regional Licensing Offices are required to review all documentation during the two-year anniversary review of a child care facility to determine compliance to required procedures and documentation including the verification of staff. Finally, the DEC headquarters will further ensure that Regional Licensing Offices document its verification of all employees working at facilities and ensure they are recorded in the CCATS by conducting yearly audits where a sample of each Regional Licensing Office's inspection documentation will be checked to ensure they are complying with the prior referenced employee verification process. These audits will be completed and documented by the Deputy Branch Chief –Licensing during the annual regional report card reviews.</p> <p>The above actions will help to ensure that Regional Licensing Office Staff consistently document the verification that all employees working at the facilities are recorded in CCATS.</p>		

AUDIT TEAM

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