COORDINATED ENROLLMENT INFORMATION SHEET

Virginia's Current Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Landscape
Virginia's current ECCE landscape is characterized by several different types of providers, including Head Start, VPI, child care centers, family day homes, religious-exempt programs, early childhood special education (ECSE), and early intervention services, among others. In many ways, this diversity is a strength of the ECCE system in that it allows providers to develop targeted approaches for serving children, and it allows families to choose providers that meet their needs and preferences. However, this diversity also creates enrollment challenges both for providers and families. Broadly, these challenges relate to informational resources, child eligibility, application processes, and waitlists.

Challenges for Families
Some of the challenges families face when enrolling their children in ECCE programs relate to:
- *Information*. Families may have trouble finding information about programs, including information about program quality, cost, and eligibility. Families often have to navigate disparate websites and visit numerous sites. These challenges may be particularly pronounced for families of Virginia' most vulnerable children.
- *Eligibility*. Programs have different eligibility requirements, including financial or disability requirements, and children may be eligible for multiple programs. These requirements can make it difficult for families to ensure children are placed in the programs that best meet their needs.
- *Applications*. Families often have to complete separate applications for each program, even though many applications require similar information, which can be time-consuming and redundant. Often, these applications have different timelines, which poses further challenges for families.
- *Waitlists*. Waitlist processes are stressful for families since they often do not know where they sit on the waitlist and may be on multiple waitlists at the same time.

Challenges for Providers
ECCE providers may also face enrollment challenges in these same areas, including:
- *Information*. Having to manage information campaigns, maintain websites, and plan outreach events can be time consuming, particularly for programs without personnel dedicated to these tasks.
- *Eligibility.* Requesting and maintaining relevant child eligibility records can create administrative burdens for programs, which may be especially onerous for smaller programs.
- *Applications.* Creating, reviewing, and responding to family applications is time-consuming for providers. Further, providers have no way of knowing if families have enrolled their children elsewhere, and so this time spent reviewing applications may yield no returns.
- *Waitlists.* Since families may be on multiple waitlists, there is inherent instability in the waitlist for any single provider, which makes it difficult to plan for enrollment.

Coordinated Enrollment
To alleviate some of these challenges for families and providers alike, the state is requesting that all publicly-funded programs and sites participate in Coordinated Enrollment initiatives. Coordinated Enrollment seeks to establish regional ECCE community strategies that can simplify enrollment processes and benefit families and providers. Some benefits of Coordinated Enrollment include:
- Greater availability of information for families.
- Clarity in program requirements and ease of program comparison for families.

- Planned, purposeful inclusion of children with delays and disabilities.
- Less duplication of efforts and reduced administrative burdens for programs.
- More stability for programs, which allows for efficient longer-term planning.

As part of the federal requirements for PDG, grant recipients will test strategies that facilitate family choice and knowledge regarding ECCE. This Coordinated Enrollment initiative represents Virginia's approach to accomplishing this goal that will benefit families and providers while ensuring communities have autonomy in creating processes that best suit their contexts.

All PDG communities must complete a self-assessment regarding enrollment efforts in 2018-2019 for the 2019-2020 school year. There are no consequences associated with this self-assessment and there are no wrong answers. Rather, the state will use data from these self-assessments to refine a strategy for supporting local providers, improving parental choice, and increasing access to early childhood programs. Additionally, these results may inform future funding opportunities and guide allocation of resources to support community needs.

Coordinated Enrollment Self-Assessment Tool Overview
The Coordinated Enrollment Self-Assessment Tool will help the state understand how early childhood providers in your community coordinate across the following five areas:
- *Informational Resources*. Creating community-level resources, including websites, flyers, or brochures, that inform families about various publicly-funded ECCE programs serving children birth to five.
- *Information Campaigns*. Facilitating events and/or outreach efforts to inform families about the availability of publicly-funded ECCE programs serving children birth to five.
- *Eligibility Determination*. Coordinating eligibility criteria and processes across programs to ensure that families are efficiently referred to publicly-funded ECCE programs for which they may be eligible.
- *Application Processes*. Using a common or shared application within a community to make it easier for families to apply to ECCE programs and indicate their program choices.
- *Waitlists*. Coordinating waitlists to provide clarity to families, measure unmet demand, prevent duplication, and ensure all slots within a community are filled.

Each community should submit one unified response to the Coordinated Enrollment self-assessment. To do so, communities should convene a session (lasting approximately 90-120 minutes) with as many program partners as possible, including at least one family day home, child care director, Head Start director/regional coordinator, school-based (e.g. VPI) principal or coordinator, and ECSE program representative at minimum. Communities are encouraged to include other community partners, such as early intervention providers, family advocates, pediatricians, or other organizations as appropriate.

Communities should convene this session and complete the self-assessment by **September 1, 2019**. Additionally, by **June 30, 2019**, communities should set a date and location to complete the self-assessment that accommodates multiple providers in the community. The date and location of the session as well as the completed self-assessment should be sent to Lucy Mitzner (lucy@vecf.org) by the dates listed above. Any questions regarding coordinated enrollment should be sent to Eric Ekholm (eric.ekholm@doe.virginia.gov). Additional guidance on convening the session and completing the self-assessment can be found in the tool itself as well as in the FAQ.