

WHEREAS, Recent neurological research strongly supports the proposition that young children's social and emotional development before they enter school is an essential foundation to young children's learning skills and later school success; and

WHEREAS, The National Academy of Sciences has concluded that enhancement of social and emotional development is as important in early childhood as enhancement of linguistic and cognitive competence and has recommended that resources similar to those focused on literacy and numerical skills should be devoted to promoting young children's social and emotional development; and

WHEREAS, Few early childhood programs have sufficient capacity to address the emotional and social developmental needs of eligible children and their families with prevention and early intervention services; and

WHEREAS, Various early childhood mental health initiatives, such as those in Anne Arundel County and Montgomery County, and services provided throughout the State by the Abilities Network have shown very promising results for young children and their families; and

WHEREAS, There will be significant cost savings in future years in the areas of child welfare placements, juvenile justice placements, special education placements, and psychiatric residential treatment centers; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article - Health - General

SUBTITLE 15. EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES PILOT PROGRAM.

10-1501.

THERE IS AN EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES PILOT PROGRAM IN BALTIMORE CITY AND THE EASTERN SHORE.

10-1502.

(A) THE PILOT PROGRAM SHALL PROVIDE MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING AND CONSULTATION SERVICES:

(1) FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 6 YEARS WHO ARE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS OR IN LICENSED OR REGISTERED CHILD CARE FACILITIES; AND

(2) TO LICENSED OR REGISTERED CHILD CARE PROVIDERS.

(B) THE PILOT PROGRAM MAY INCLUDE:

(1) FORMAL TRAINING OF CHILD CARE PROVIDERS IN THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD;

(2) MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTATION FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS;