



## COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

August 1, 2014

The Honorable Isiah Leggett  
Montgomery County Executive  
101 Monroe Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Rockville, MD 20850

The Honorable Craig Rice  
President, Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear County Executive Leggett and President Rice,

In 2013, the Montgomery County Commission on Children and Youth began a project designed to measure the critical needs of youth-serving organizations providing out-of-school time (OST) services to young people throughout Montgomery County. The attached report, entitled Critical Time, Critical Needs: 2013-2014 Survey of Out-of-School Time Service Providers, details the methodology and findings of this project.

Briefly stated, we discovered that there were three critical needs identified by almost every OST service provider that participated in our survey:

- 1) New **space** for programming and administration;
- 2) Additional safe and affordable **transportation**; and
- 3) Secure and stable **funding**.

In an effort to address these three critical needs, we offer a number of recommendations, each of which could meaningfully support the efforts of the many wonderful organizations providing OST programming to our County's youth. Because these needs are inescapably related to one another, some of our recommendations overlap and, therefore, provide opportunities to have an impact upon more than one need simultaneously.

It is no secret that dedicated space for youth programs and the organizations that provide them is expensive and hard to find in Montgomery County. This problem becomes more and more acute as commercial development continues throughout the County. Youth-serving organizations cannot deliver their programs, and certainly cannot expand them, if they are unable to find and afford dedicated space. We, therefore, recommend the following actions:

- 1) Re-commission old or under-utilized County Government buildings for use by youth-serving organizations.
- 2) Subsidize rents for other existing facilities.
- 3) Use Regional Service Centers to convene regular meetings of youth-serving organizations within their regions, during which common needs such as space requirements could be discussed and acted upon.

Department of Health and Human Services

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- 4) Encourage developers to include space for youth programs as “Public Benefits” of their projects.

In addition to affordable space, youth-serving organizations need to have affordable ways to transport young people and their families to and from their program location(s). Very few organizations can afford to operate their own vans and/or buses. They must, therefore, rely on public transportation, which can be difficult and expensive for struggling families. We, therefore, recommend the following actions:

- 1) Further expand Kids Ride Free and Youth Cruiser SmarTrip programs to include the families of qualified youth program participants.
- 2) Simplify the process of acquiring Youth Cruiser SmarTrip Cards by authorizing qualified youth-serving organizations to serve as direct distributors of these passes to their youth participants and families.
- 3) Set aside capital funds to contract with private firms and/or nonprofit service providers to supply bus and/or van transportation to and from youth program sites.

Finally, no organization can provide much-needed youth services without secure and stable funding. Funding is, of course, central to both the space and transportation issues we have identified. The Commission is grateful to your ongoing financial investment in OST programs through the County’s Positive Youth Development initiative. We do encourage you to explore possible corporate tax incentives that could be made available to businesses that provide funding, services, transportation and/or program space to youth-serving organizations in Montgomery County. We also recommend an examination of all current or future revenue-producing activities that might yield funds to support the needs of OST service providers.

Young people and their families in Montgomery County are fortunate to have a wide range of services provided to them by both government and private organizations, each of which is staffed by dedicated, hard-working and compassionate individuals. They are fortunate, as well, to have school and government officials who are committed to positive youth development and to the physical, social and emotional well-being of our youngest citizens. It is our hope that the recommendations we have made, based upon our Critical Time, Critical Needs report, will encourage meaningful dialogue and decisive actions on the part of all entities and individuals within our community who work toward a brighter future for our children.

Sincerely,



Dana Bell, LCSW-C  
Chair

cc: Uma Ahulwalia, Director, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services  
JoAnn Barnes, Chief, Children, Youth and Family Services, HHS  
Ginny Gong, Executive Director, Community Use of Public Facilities  
Montgomery County Board of Education  
Montgomery County Out-of-School Time Providers  
Lynn Sobolov, Excel Beyond the Bell Program Manager, Collaboration Council