Meeting focuses on care gaps for kids, families

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Western Maryland Whole Family Regional Convening at Allegany College of Maryland, October 28, 2026. Photo: Maryland Community Action Partnership.

CUMBERLAND — About 40 leaders from Allegany, Garrett, Washington and Frederick counties joined together for a meeting Wednesday that focused on gaps in care for children and families.

The Maryland Community Action Project held the Western Maryland Whole Family Regional Convening at Allegany College of Maryland.

“Western Maryland is really one of the pioneers of TwoGen in Maryland, and it’s important for us,” said Angela Martin, CEO of Maryland Community Action Partnership.

TwoGen is an approach utilized by MCAP that focuses on providing support for both children and adults.

“What has happened in Western Maryland has been very successful, and we’re looking at successful models to scale across the state,” Martin said. “So, it’s important that we pull out the promising practices, the lessons learned from this region.”

The meeting kicked off with background information on state programs already in place, and a panel discussion with Western Maryland leaders.

The panel was moderated by Duayne Yoder. Panelists included Chris Mullett, Garrett County Community Action president; Michelle Spottswood, Frederick County Human Services case manager; Tim Fischer, CEO of Washington County Community Action Council; and Wendolyn McKenzie, executive director of Allegany County’s Human Resources Development Commission.

Mullett said support is relevant and important from “cradle to grave,” and the need for support goes beyond two generations and spans all ages.

“There’s still a little bit of a mistrust. We’re still building that rapport, and I don’t think you get there indefinitely,” McKenzie said.

“I think it’s something that’s continuously done and you have to show that you’re genuinely interested in helping and you’re sincere.”

Participants divided into groups to discuss questions regarding what gaps in care are prevalent within their communities and what solutions could be implemented.

Many participants agreed that the ENOUGH act, a state initiative signed into law in 2024, has been helpful since implementation at supporting children and families experiencing poverty.

Some of the primary barriers discussed among groups to best assist community members included housing, transportation, costs of living, funding, family trust, collaboration amongst groups and lack of support on a county level.

Each Allegany County group specifically placed a large emphasis on the need for transportation and workforce development.

One idea for a potential improvement to better serve communities included working with faith-based networks as well as working with each other across counties and organizations.

Other proposed solutions included educating government officials on these issues, developing a universal family support plan, recovery or poverty simulations for employees or officials, service hubs for each county and collaboration amongst groups.

Similar discussions across the state will continue over the coming weeks to create solutions to better serve Maryland residents.

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