

Illinois Early Learning Council Annual Report

July 1, 2018 – December 31, 2019



Governor's Office of
Early Childhood Development
Illinois Early Learning Council

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Letter from the Leadership

Dear Governor JB Pritzker and General Assembly,

The goal of the Early Learning Council (ELC) is to fulfill the vision of a statewide, high-quality, accessible, and comprehensive early learning system to benefit all young children whose parents choose it. P. A. 93-380 requires the ELC to annually report to the Governor and General Assembly on the Council's progress towards its goals and objectives. This Annual Report highlights the goals, accomplishments, and challenges of the Council's standing Committees and Subcommittees. In addition, highlights from the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD) are included.

Racial equity has and continues to be a priority for the ELC and GOECD. The ELC Executive Committee, working with the Illinois BUILD State Team, continues its work to ensure the membership, governance, and work of the ELC reflects and advances racial equity. The ELC also continues its effort to create a structure that will serve as a platform that includes family voice at the state level. This year, an [Illinois Racial Equity Leadership Demonstration Project Evaluation Report](#) was completed. The results of the project showed significant promise for ongoing professional development and learning for leaders in relation to a racial equity agenda. The ELC will continue to address the inequities in our early care and education system.

Home visits are an effective method to support families, particularly when they are part of a comprehensive and coordinated system of services. Illinois has long valued home visiting programs and has received federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) funding since the program's inception in 2010. Over the last five years, Illinois MIECHV has been awarded over \$46 million dollars to support the delivery of coordinated, comprehensive, and high-quality evidence-based home visiting services to eligible families in thirteen at-risk communities.

This Annual Report represents varied work that is made possible through the ELC's public/private partnerships and cross-system collaboration. The expertise of our membership is critical to the sustainability of the ELC. The work is not without its challenges, which include minimum resources for statewide family engagement, limited data capacity, and structural barriers faced by priority populations.

We are grateful for the contributions of our members and remain committed to our vision as we move forward during these uncertain times. Thank you for your continued support of our efforts and of Illinois' children and families.

In service,

Phyllis Glink
Executive Director
Irving Harris Foundation
Co-Chair, Early Learning Council

Jesse Ruiz
Deputy Governor for Education
Office of the Governor
Co-Chair, Early Learning Council



Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development

The Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD) staffs the Illinois Early Learning Council (ELC) and leads the State's initiative to create an integrated system of quality early learning and development programs to support Illinois' vision:

We envision Illinois as a place where every young child — regardless of race, ethnicity, income, language, geography, ability, immigration status, or other circumstance — receives the strongest possible start to life so they grow up safe, healthy, happy, ready to succeed, and eager to learn.

Major accomplishments between July 1, 2018 – December 31, 2019 include:

Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5)

Goals:

To analyze the current landscape of the Illinois early childhood care and education (ECCE) system and to conduct in-depth strategic planning to maximize the availability of high-quality ECCE services. Specifically, the PDG B-5 initiative includes the following activities: (1) conducting a

statewide Needs Assessment; (2) developing a statewide Strategic Plan; (3) increasing opportunities for parent choice and knowledge about high-quality ECCE; (4) sharing best practices among early childhood service providers; and (5) improving the overall quality of ECCE services. Through these activities, Illinois will create plans to facilitate collaboration and coordination among existing ECCE programs in the State's mixed-delivery system. The ultimate purpose is to encourage partnerships to improve coordination, program quality, and delivery of services to children from birth to age five.

Activity One — Needs Assessment

Goals:

To assess the availability and quality of existing early childhood education and care programs in Illinois along with their infrastructure and support systems.

GOECD worked with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to develop Illinois' statewide Needs Assessment using three key methods: 1) a review of Illinois' existing ECCE Needs Assessments; (2) a literature review on targeted needs assessment domains; and (3) stakeholder focus group interviews.

Needs Assessment Findings:

- Access to high-quality ECCE services is not uniform across the State or across a range of social, economic, racial, and ethnic groups.
- Lack of consistency in data reporting and collection is a challenge to system integration and interagency collaboration.
- Access to high-quality ECCE services is not uniform, and no standard definition is used for quality across the full range of ECCE services serving children prenatal to age five — and their families — in the system.
- Attracting and retaining qualified staff, as well as providing more extensive training, professional development, and preparation to educators and providers is needed to improve quality and racial equity.

Accomplishments:

- This Needs Assessment included the most expansive iteration of the Early Childhood Matching Project, which incorporated Home Visiting, Early Intervention, and Early Childhood Special Education for

the first time.

- The Needs Assessment also included Illinois' first model of the cost of providing high-quality early childhood services statewide.

Challenges:

While the Needs Assessment presents recent relevant analyses of components of Illinois' early childhood system, time and capacity constraints limited the ability to synthesize and gain consensus on items such as the definition of terms, measurable indicators of progress, and the quality and availability of care across the entire early childhood system.

Activity Two — Strategic Plan

Goals:

To develop a Strategic Plan for Illinois that will support our goal to coordinate Illinois' mixed delivery system so that all children and families have access to the services they need to thrive and help meet our objectives for: (1) increased coordination and collaboration, which will



lead to (2) increased and equitable access and (3) improved quality of ECCE services.

The ELC, supported by GOECD and in collaboration with AIR, created a strategic framework to guide the State's ECCE system improvements. This initiative offers the opportunity to build on the ELC's foundational strategic framework, as well as several other system improvement efforts across the State. The process of developing a statewide Strategic Plan included five major activities: (1) findings from the statewide Needs Assessment; (2) input from the ELC Ad Hoc Strategic Plan Workgroup; (3) input from GOECD's focal planning workgroups; (4) review of existing statewide Strategic Plans; and (5) input from constituents and stakeholders.

Illinois has prioritized (23) strategic goals that are categorized in four domains: (1) Access: Expanding Equitable Access to ECCE Services; (2) Coordination: Enhancing Coordination and Collaboration Across Multiple Types of ECCE Services; (3) Quality: Improving the Quality of ECCE Services; and (4) Workforce: Addressing Recruitment, Retention, Compensation, Equity, and Professional Development of the ECCE Workforce.

Challenges:

The challenges identified for the Needs Assessment were the same as those that impacted the Strategic Plan.

Activity Three — Maximizing Parental Choice & Knowledge

Goals:

To increase parents' ability to make informed decisions about their children's care and education, formalize family representation on the ELC, conduct Parent Cafés to support parents in their child's development, increase supports for families of children with disabilities, increase supports for families experiencing homelessness, and update public-facing websites to better respond to the needs of families.

Accomplishments:

- Established Family Advisory Committee (FAC) membership guidelines, including a structure for onboarding and orientation to the ELC.

- Forty-eight applicants were received for Parent Café Leadership Trainings. Twenty applicants were accepted, and twenty parent leaders were trained in parent café facilitation.
- Fifty-five parents participated in two Parent Cafés hosted in Mount Vernon and Chicago. Through self-reflection and peer-to-peer learning, participants explored strengths and learned about the Protective Factors. Parents were able to discuss challenges and successes related to the importance of school attendance and the impact of chronic absenteeism.
- What parents who participated in the Parent Cafés reported enjoying the most:
 - “The People.”*
 - “Being able to share and not feel alone.”*
 - “Learning different ways to succeed in making sure my children get a good education.”*
 - “Made me feel comfortable even with social anxiety.”*
 - “Sharing experiences.”*
 - “Loved there was no judgment.”*
 - “The weight lifted knowing I’m not the only one.”*
- The Illinois Early Learning Project (IEL), in collaboration with GOECD, developed a toolkit to support families experiencing homelessness. The resources are available to the public and are being utilized by the Illinois State Board of Education’s (ISBE) McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons.

Activity Four — Sharing Best Practices

Goals:

To share best practices with the field by coordinating professional development across the State, enhancing training for Family, Friend and Neighbor providers, creating a database to facilitate cross-system use of early childhood mental health consultation, supporting site-based continuous quality improvement, and engaging community voice through a Community System Portal.

Accomplishments:

- One hundred twelve home visitors, in partnership with Erikson Institute, participated in (Facilitating Attuned iNteractions) FAN Communities of Practice (CoP). Attendees stated they attend CoP meetings to refresh skills, for the supportive and reflective atmosphere, and to improve the quality of their work by looking at topics from different perspectives.
- Fifty Family Friends & Neighbor Providers, in partnership with Illinois Action for Children, participated across six focus groups (one in Spanish).
- In collaboration with the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Initiative Leadership Team, GOECD developed the requirements for a searchable Mental Health Consultant database.
- The Illinois Early Childhood Systems Feedback Portal was designed and developed: (1) to provide easily accessible “open source” resources for early childhood community collaborations to download, customize, and use to support their systems building and collaboration efforts, and (2) to offer a portal through which community collaborations and service providers could directly provide feedback to state-level entities on systems challenges and opportunities.

Activity Five — Improving Overall Quality**Goals:**

To improve the overall quality of ECCE by improving infant/toddler program environments, creating learning experiences for program leaders, and working through barriers to pathways for ECCE career advancement.

Accomplishments:

- One hundred forty-six infant/toddler classrooms and one hundred ten family child care homes received classroom supplies and furnishings to support quality learning environment.
- Five Communities of Practice were conducted across central and southern Illinois to introduce program leaders to the components of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and facilitate the sharing of concrete strategies to implement within their programs.

- One hundred nineteen individuals across southern and central Illinois received credential fee reductions to engage in or complete the credentialing process.
- Fifty-seven individuals received tuition assistance to complete early care and education college coursework.
- GOECD, in collaboration with the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA), issued a report that inventories and describes successful college cohort models in Illinois.

Illinois Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV)

Goals:

Illinois has long valued evidence-based home visiting programs as an effective and efficient strategy for improving the life trajectory of expectant and new families who are at risk for poor health, educational, economic and social outcomes. In service of this goal, over the past three decades Illinois has developed a robust statewide home visiting system that cuts across agencies and funding streams, reaching from the highest levels of government to the providers on the ground.

Illinois has received federal MIECHV funding since the program's inception in 2010. The MIECHV program includes the following three overarching goals: (1) increase the capacity of MIECHV-funded programs and communities to effectively implement Title V activities; (2) increase implementation of coordinated services in At Risk Communities (ARCs) to address needs of eligible families; and (3) increase [the number of] eligible families in ARCs with improved outcomes through comprehensive services.

Accomplishments:

Over the last five years, Illinois MIECHV has been awarded over \$46 million dollars to support the delivery of coordinated, comprehensive, and high-quality evidence-based home visiting services to eligible families in 13 at-risk communities. In addition to service delivery, the funding supports infrastructure building, research, and evaluation.

Overview of MIECHV families and services (FFY19):

- 1,076 adults (including 255 pregnant persons)
- 1,115 index children (including 642 children < 1 year old)
- 1,048 households
- 14,184 home visits

The Illinois MIECHV program has achieved several notable accomplishments:

- Improvements in 13 performance measures
- Ongoing development of a coordinated intake (CI) system
- Implementation of Family Connects in two counties
- Streamlined monitoring processes to track subrecipient fiscal and program data
- Demonstration projects focused on young mothers experiencing homelessness and pregnant/parenting youth involved in the child welfare system

Family Connects Illinois (FC IL) – Universal Newborn Screening Program

FC IL reaches beyond the typical target populations for home visiting services. Both FC IL programs — Stephenson and Peoria Counties — work collaboratively with local home visiting programs and CI services. The FC IL nurses identify all eligible families with a newborn that could benefit from home visiting, in addition to those identified with a significant risk. This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of referrals to home visiting.

Home Visiting for Homeless Families Demonstration Project

Since this project's inception, there has been an increase in homevisiting enrollment of families experiencing homelessness. Screenings, immunizations, and well child visits are tracked, among other outcomes. Although the sample size is too small to publish findings, preliminary data suggest that positive home visiting outcomes are still achieved with homeless families.

Illinois Pregnant and Parenting Youth in Care (IPPYC) Home Visiting Pilot

The focus of this pilot was to recruit an underrepresented population in home visiting — youth in foster care. The goals of the pilot included: breaking

the intergenerational cycle of abuse, neglect, and trauma; increasing coordination between the State's child welfare and home visiting systems; and creating a model that can be replicated throughout Illinois. Through the pilot, forty-two families were identified for enrollment in home visiting. Healthy Families America (HFA) initially allowed a waiver for this pilot, and subsequently released a model-wide adaptation that was partially influenced by results and concepts of the IPPYC work.

Mental Health, Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC)

The goal of I/ECMHC is to increase the capacity of home visiting programs to identify and address the mental health needs of young children and families and to instill reflective practices into their organizational culture. It is a multi-level preventative intervention that aligns mental health professionals with home visitors and supervisors. The Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership provides I/ECMHC, along with training/technical assistance, to a variety of home visiting programs throughout Illinois (funded by MIECHV and other sources).

Coordinated Intake (CI) for Home Visiting

Coordinated Intake provides a coordinated point of entry for home visiting services. CI is available in the following twelve MIECHV communities: the greater Englewood area of Chicago; Cicero, DeKalb County; East St. Louis; Elgin; Kankakee County; Macon County; McLean-Piatt-DeWitt-Woodford Counties; Peoria-Tazewell Counties; Rockford' Stephenson County; and Vermilion County. Lessons learned from MIECHV CI, along with information from other states and feedback from Illinois stakeholders, were used to inform the 2019 Illinois Strategic Plan for Coordinated Intake for Home Visiting (as part of the PDG B-5 Strategic Plan).

Challenges:

Racial Equity and Disparities: Racial equity is a priority for GOECD and the ELC. As a starting point, Illinois adjusted the MIECHV Maternal and Child Health benchmark data reports to include breakout by race and ethnicity and will review disaggregated data at least semi-annually. Illinois' MIECHV benchmark data for FFY18 indicate racial disparities in postpartum care, safe sleep, well-child visits, and breastfeeding. The largest disparities

were experienced by Black/African American families. The Illinois MIECHV program is partnering with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Executive Committee of the ELC Home Visiting Task Force of the ELC to develop strategies for reducing these disparities, culminating in a written plan in fall 2020, to be implemented during SFY 2020-21. As part of its strategy, and to collect more information from the field, Illinois MIECHV became a partner in two state-level MCH projects — the HRSA-funded State Maternal Health Innovation Grant I PROMOTE Illinois project (led by the University of Illinois at Chicago) and the CDC-funded Illinois State Physical Activity and Nutrition Project (led by the Illinois Public Health Institute).

Home Visiting Workforce: Recruitment and retention of qualified home visitors has been a concern in Illinois. In the last year, the total MIECHV home visitor turnover rate was 27%, a slight decrease from last year, with home visitor turnover at 35% (also a slight decrease from last year). Illinois has been working over the past several years to better understand the factors involved and to address this issue systematically. In late 2019 the State's Prenatal to Three (PN3) initiative developed an action plan for the home visiting workforce and other early childhood systems priorities including professionalization of the field and salary. In 2020, special meetings of the Executive Committee of the ELC Home Visiting Task Force will be convened to finalize these approaches.

Work to Support the PDG B-5:

Illinois included several home visiting initiatives in its 2019 initial PDG B-5 grant and its successful 2020 PDG B-5 Renewal grant proposal, summarized as follows:

Coordinated Intake: As previously mentioned, the Illinois Strategic Plan for Coordinated Intake for Home Visiting was written in 2019 and submitted as part of the State's overall PDG B-5 Strategic Plan. In 2020, Illinois proposed to implement a pilot that would test CI in Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) programs or Early/Head Start programs in five multi-county regions of the State, including rural areas.

Child Welfare and Home Visiting: Based on the lessons learned from the previously described I-PPYC home visiting pilot, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) developed a proposal in 2019 for using federal Family First Prevention Services Act funds for home visiting

services for child welfare involved families that were pregnant or parenting infants up to six months. This proposal, along with recommendations related to child welfare and Early Intervention, were submitted as part of the State's overall PDG B-5 Strategic Plan. A full-time home visiting specialist was hired at the DCFS Erikson Early Childhood Project to connect families to home visiting and to test the proposed policy and procedure changes.

Home Visiting Workforce: Illinois included two projects in its 2020 PDG B-5 grant proposal that address some of the previously described home visiting workforce challenges. These projects also align with the PN3 action plan, also previously mentioned.

Home Visiting Credentials: A panel of higher education faculty will evaluate the alignment of the Illinois home visitor core competencies with two existing credentials—the home visitor Child Development Associate (commonly used by Head Start/Early Head Start) and the Gateways Family Specialist Credential (recognized by the City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services). This work will inform the future alignment of home visiting credentialing across funders — including, if needed, the development of a new Illinois home visiting credential — and the creation of a plan to support the field in attaining credentials and appropriate compensation.

Home Visitor Registry: Currently, different types of early childhood professionals are classified in Gateways as home visitors. This project will make changes to the Gateways Registry data system to more clearly define the position of home visitor and to ensure appropriate classification for current and future Gateways users. The expected outcome is an aligned and accurate home visitor workforce registry, including basic demographics, educational backgrounds, credential attainment, and position tenure and turnover.

Preschool Development Grant-Expansion (PDG-E), Including the Pyramid Model and the Racial Equity Demonstration Project

Goals:

In 2015, Illinois was awarded a federal Preschool Development Grant-Expansion (PDG-E) of \$80 million over four years. This funding, supplemented by non-federal matching amounts, has allowed the State to provide more high-quality early learning services for our most at-risk young children. The goals of the PDG-E were to enhance Illinois' infrastructure by providing high-quality preschool programs and to expand high-need communities' capacity for high-quality full-day preschool programs for four-year-old children. PDG-E was specifically designed to address the needs of children with the highest need, including children in poverty or deep poverty, those who experience homelessness or are involved with the child welfare system, or children who have multiple other significant risk factors, such as parents who have low education or disability. A [*Preschool Development Grant Expansion: A Descriptive Study in Illinois*](#) was completed. The processes to execute this study began before the award of the PDG-E supplemental funding. Therefore, separate evaluations were conducted for: (1) the Pyramid Model, and (2) the Racial Equity Demonstration Project.

PDG-E

Accomplishments:

- PDG-E met the goal of identifying and enrolling children with the priority selection factors — 91% of students were classified as lower income, 12% of students had Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and 6% of students were classified as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act.
- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) ratings indicate the observed quality of PDG-E classrooms ranged from moderately high to high.
- Community partnerships were strengthened; early education has been elevated as a focal point for collaborative activity, increased resources, and system-building across organizations within most (70%) of communities.

- Almost all (92%) teachers and paraprofessionals surveyed believe they are making a difference in the lives of the preschoolers they serve.
- Families reported having greater access to community-based services. The role of the family educator plays a significant role; they build relationships, gain the trust of parents and other family members, and assess family needs. The survey shows 89% of participants reported they can talk to the family educator, 86% reported the family educator gave them information about community resources, and 85% reported the family educator gave information about community programs that would help their family.
- Evaluation data indicates the PDG-E program was transformational. While many subgrantees had provided Preschool for All through the half-day model, the new program model elevated the complexity, scope, and expected outcomes for children and their families. It required school districts to rethink how they provided other early education programming within their districts, and it required all programs to consider how they extend their collaborative relationships with other community-based programs.

Challenges:

The PDG-E descriptive study highlighted the following challenges:

- The need for a reduction in the ratio of students to adults in each classroom to increase program effectiveness.
- Limited space and finding well-qualified teachers due to teacher shortages.
- The need for additional mental health consultants time allowances/funding.

Pyramid Model

Accomplishments:

- An [Illinois Preschool Development Grant Expansion Pyramid Model Pilot Evaluation Report](#) was completed on the twenty-six PDG-E grantees who participated in the Illinois Pyramid Model Pilot from 2018-2019. The Pyramid Model project supported Illinois' overall goal to promote and support healthy social emotional growth for all children birth to age five.

- Approximately half or more of survey respondents indicated having noted decreases in rates of both suspension (60%) and expulsion (48%) due to the Pyramid Model. A quarter or more indicated seeing these benefits “to a great extent”.
- For this survey item, “suspension” was articulated as: the rate of sending children to another class or home for the remainder of the day due to challenging behavior. “Expulsion” was articulated as: the rate of sending children to other placements due to significant challenging behavior.
- Personnel across many programs described their successes related to using the Pyramid Model framework. Examples included: working with children specifically around identifying emotions and problem solving, fostering greater family engagement, strategies toward program-wide adoption of the Pyramid Model, and using data more effectively.
- Based on the pilot evaluation to date, findings suggest that the foundation for Pyramid Model implementation has been well-established in many of the twenty-six PDG-E programs.

Challenges:

The greatest challenges to Pyramid Model implementation include time for program personnel to meet and plan, the logistics of job imbedded coaching, and the need for increased knowledge of Pyramid Model practices among staff.

Work to Support the PDG B-5:

The Pyramid Model work will continue within the twenty-six PDG-E sites, offering professional development opportunities in Pyramid Model practices as part of the PDG B-5.

Racial Equity Demonstration Project

Accomplishments:

- An [Illinois Racial Equity Leadership Demonstration Project Evaluation Final Report](#) was completed. The demonstration project had two purposes: (1) to facilitate the advancement of equitable practices in early learning programs, creating positive preschool environments where families’ cultures, languages, and circumstances are respected and celebrated as key drivers of children’s learning; and (2) to support

administrators and leaders in the construction of the knowledge and tools to identify and disrupt racial inequities.

- The results of the project showed significant promise for ongoing professional development and learning for leaders in relation to a racial equity agenda.
- The project showed that racial equity professional development can have a positive impact on leaders' readiness to change paradigms, take action, and lead on issues of racial equity.
- Lessons were learned about how to best recruit for and structure a professional learning cohort in the future, which can be used to plan for racial equity work moving forward.

Challenges:

Support is still needed to further embed conversations and work for racial equity leader development.

Workforce

Goals:

The Early Childhood Workforce Development Project originally began under the auspices of the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Youth in 2016 with the goal of streamlining and improving the systems necessary to support early childhood educators and the early childhood workforce. This goal drove the workforce focused projects under the initial year of GOECD's PDG B-5 as well. In January 2020, as GOECD began execution of the first of three years of the PDG B-5 Renewal, the project transitioned into a new form to support workforce initiatives within the grant by clearing policy barriers and sustaining inter-agency coordination.

Accomplishments:

- In 2018, the project supported the publication of *Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce: The Illinois Context* ([Full Report, Executive Summary, One-Pager](#)), a National Academy of Medicine Innovation 2 Incubation report providing nuanced synthesis and recommendations on how Illinois can strengthen its early childhood workforce.

- In 2018, the project completed analysis of the Education Reimbursement Initiative, providing detailed information on the ways in which education financial support can best strengthen the education pathway for prospective early childhood educators and how the initiative may be replicated in the future. A [follow-up longitudinal analysis](#) was completed and published in 2019.
- From 2018-2019, in partnership with the National Governors Association, the project participated in the Early Care and Education Workforce 2.0 Policy Academy to introduce further discussion of early childhood educator compensation to the Children’s Cabinet, the ELC, and the state early childhood system. In 2019, the project published a [Consensus Statement on Early Childhood Educator Compensation](#) and [companion summary brief](#).
- In 2019, the project published informational materials for communities and stakeholders interested in pursuing pathways initiatives such as education reimbursement or cohorts to support early childhood educator candidates in attaining higher education.
- In 2019, the project published informational materials for high school and postsecondary advisors and counselors on the early childhood career pathway and opportunities for students to enter the field, including sample career options and potential compensation ranges. The materials were vetted by early childhood faculty at Illinois institutions of higher education and distributed to them for dissemination to students.

Challenges:

Despite the commitment of project members who continued to sustain the work voluntarily into the new administration, identifying sufficient capacity to prioritize and execute the work remained a challenge over the course of the project.

Work to Support the PDG B-5:

- In 2018, the project supported ongoing efforts within the ELC to develop legislation, ultimately P.A. 100-0645, to ease the early childhood teacher shortage and support career pathway development. Following passage of this law and in partnership with the ISBE, the project developed and published guidance for institutions of higher education and early

childhood providers on how to take advantage of the legislation. This work informed the PDG B-5 Renewal's postsecondary cohorts and course modularization projects.

- The project's support for tuition reimbursement and waiving of Gateways credential application fees, begun initially under the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, informed the PDG B-5 Initial Year and Renewal projects focused on the same efforts.
- In 2018, the project supported the publication of the [Early Childhood Matching Project's Phase Two Report](#), a follow-up report that links various early childhood data systems to more closely approximate the number of children served in publicly funded early childhood settings. This work informed the PDG B-5 Initial Year's unduplicated count research and the PDG B-5 Renewal's data projects spanning ISBE, the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), the Illinois Department of Innovation & Technology (DoIT), and the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM).

P.A. 100-0105 Suspension & Expulsion Act

Challenging behavior is common in children birth to age five but can sometimes reach significant levels. Infants and young children with challenging behaviors are more at risk for being suspended or expelled from education programs both in their early years and later in life. An Infant/ Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant is someone who can support child development by building the skills and capacities of caregivers, program leaders, and parents/families. There is increasing evidence that developing practitioner skills that promote the positive social-emotional development of all infants and children can help to reduce suspensions and expulsions.

Public Act 100-0105 prohibits early care and education providers from expelling young children birth to age five from their program because of the child's behavior. Effective January 2018, this applied to: (1) school- and community-based programs receiving Early Childhood Block Grant Funds; and (2) licensed child care providers serving children from birth to age five. Note: Expulsions are already prohibited for Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

Goals:

- Support the ISBE and the DCFS in the rule-making process to ensure

the P.A. 100-0105 rules are reflective of early childhood research and best practices.

- Ensure the ISBE and DCFS rules were aligned.

Accomplishments:

- A section of the GOECD website was developed to house Suspension and Expulsion resources.
- During Spring 2018, a workgroup of the Early Childhood Inter-Agency Team (membership includes representatives from GOECD, ISBE, DCFS, IDHS, IDPH, and the Illinois Head Start Association (IHSA)) worked with ISBE on a database and provided guidance on proposed data points.
- ISBE's data portal was launched in September 2018.
- Public awareness trainings were developed related to P.A. 100-0105. GOECD, DCFS, IDHS, IHSA, ISBE, Early Intervention Training Program, Illinois Action for Children, INCCRRA, and the Ounce of Prevention Fund partnered in the curriculum development and launch of the "Suspension & Expulsion in Early Childhood" Training of Trainers (TOTs).
- Four TOTs were held across the State in July and August 2019. These were facilitated by representatives from GOECD, Ounce of Prevention, and Illinois Action for Children, with support from INCCRRA.

Challenges:

- Rules need to be finalized to inform guidance and requirements for programs.

Work to Support the PDG B-5:

- Best practices for preventing expulsion align to the Pyramid Model practices, improving classroom environments and teacher interactions and implementing a tiered system of supports (universal, intervention, treatment). Partnering with families is an essential component of the law and is central to the Pyramid Model.
- The IHSA developed and piloted a Parent/Community Café on the topic: Supports for Children with Challenging Behaviors. Parent Leadership Institutes (trainings for parents to be Café facilitators and hosts) were held and parent leaders were recruited and trained to host and facilitate.



Early Learning Council Committee Reports

Racial Equity Work of the Executive Committee

Goals:

The goal of the racial equity work for the ELC Executive Committee was to ensure that the membership, governance, and work of the ELC reflects and advances racial equity.

Accomplishments:

With support from the Illinois BUILD State Team, the ELC Executive Committee, through two full-day retreats and dedicated time at regularly scheduled meetings, accomplished the following deliverables:

- Agreed on a [definition of racial equity in early childhood](#).
- Defined [priorities/objectives](#) to achieve in addressing racial disparities in the early childhood system.
- Agreed to [apply a set of questions from Race Forward](#) to all discussions and recommendations considered by the ELC.

- [Presented on racial equity work](#) to all ELC Committees and Subcommittees and completed [modified work plans](#) to align with the racial equity priorities and objectives.
- Formed an ad hoc governance workgroup of the ELC to apply racial equity priorities to membership and bylaws.
- Applied the racial equity definition, objectives, and key questions to the PDG B-5 Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan and the Prenatal to Three Initiative (PN3) Policy Agenda.
- Completed a survey to inform next steps for advancing racial equity work in an embedded manner within the ELC.

Challenges:

- Transitions in membership on the ELC Executive Committee and Illinois BUILD State Team require onboarding and reaffirmation of members to the racial equity goals and objectives.
- To advance racial equity in early childhood requires sufficient time for personal reflection, data analysis, and action. The demands on the Administration and Council members present barriers to this progress.

Access Committee

The Access Committee seeks to increase access to high-quality early learning programs for children, families, and communities with the greatest need and to support early learning programs that are serving the highest need families and children.

Goals:

- Serve more of the highest need children in high-quality early childhood programs.
- Expand and improve state and community-based policies and practices that include language to support priority populations being served in early learning programs.
- Enhance partnerships with state agencies, such as the DCFS, to better serve children in priority populations.
- Advance policies and system practices that include language to support family and community engagement in early learning programs.

- Launch and engage families through the Family Advisory Committee of the ELC.

Accomplishments:

- [Recommendations](#) were approved in August 2019 by the ELC Executive Committee from Early Childhood Construction Grant ad hoc group.
- Revised [definitions of priority populations](#) recommendations approved February 2019 by ELC.

Challenges:

- Data capacity limitations on priority populations, especially a lack of data on the racial breakdown of families and children, continue to limit the ability of state and local systems to properly address the barriers faced by these populations and the ability to raise awareness of the racial inequities that exist.
- Minimal resources for statewide family engagement continue to be a challenge.

Work to Support the PDG B-5:

- Approval received for creation and launch of Family Advisory Committee, which will formalize family voice on the ELC as part of the PDG B-5.

Access: All Families Served Subcommittee

The All Families Served Subcommittee seeks to serve more of the highest need children in high-quality early childhood programs.

Goals:

- Serve more of the highest need children in high-quality early childhood programs.

Accomplishments:

- Developed a [recommendation](#) for updating the ELC priority populations with the addition of and community-level priorities and risk factors; recommendation was approved in February 2019.

- Distributed information and accompanying resources to the field about the impact of public charge on families and the early care and education system.
- Highlighted the work happening in Illinois and in the All Families Served Subcommittee related to priority populations at the 2019 BUILD QRIS Conference as Subcommittee co-chairs presented a preconference session on serving children and families who face the greatest barriers to early childhood programs and services.
- Subcommittee provided extensive feedback to GOECD on proposed changes to the “For Families” and “For Providers” sections of their website.

Challenges:

- Data capacity limitations on priority populations, especially a lack of data on the racial breakdown of families and children, continue to limit the ability of state and local systems to properly address the barriers faced by these populations and the ability to raise awareness of the racial inequities that exist.
- Priority population families often face structural barriers presented by the way service systems are designed and implemented. This Subcommittee must engage state agencies and/or divisions across multiple systems to address those barriers. One challenge has been identifying and engaging key stakeholders in DCFS and IDHS with regard to serving children with intact family cases. The work is moving ahead at a slower pace but is ongoing.

Access: Family Engagement Implementation Subcommittee

The Family Engagement Implementation Subcommittee is committed to addressing systemic racial inequities that exist throughout Illinois. The central goal of this Subcommittee is to establish an early childhood advisory body made up of the parents and family members that reflect the varied racial, religious, cultural, geographic, and economic diversity that exists across our State.

Goals:

- Create a proposal for a Family Advisory Committee structure of family members to advise the ELC.

- With GOECD, secure funding to launch the Family Advisory Committee and establish a backbone agency.
- Create a family engagement training for the ELC.
- Revise the ELC schedule to rotate geographic locations.

Accomplishments:

- Finalized a detailed structure proposal for the Family Advisory Committee including target size of the Committee and terms; recruitment strategies; a process to select members of Family Advisory Committee to be on the ELC; and a process to select members of ELC to serve on the ELC Executive Committee.
- Participated in summer workgroup meetings to help shape the PDG B-5 application with GOECD.
- With GOECD, finalized Family Advisory Committee parent applicant criteria and orientation summary.
- Created norms and expectations to better allow for input and equity for all voices.

Challenges:

- Launching the Family Advisory Committee was challenging without initial funding.
- Some work was put on hold until the role of the Family Engagement Manager at GOECD was filled; this took longer than expected and made it difficult to move forward.
- Work to Support the PDG B-5:
- The activities of the Family Engagement Implementation Subcommittee are all related to PDG B-5. Planning and launching the Family Advisory Committee is a key activity under Activity Three of the PDG B-5.
- The Family Engagement Implementation Subcommittee co-chair and members participated in two ELC strategic planning meetings for PDG B-5.

Access: Early Childhood Construction Grant (ECCG) Ad Hoc Committee

Goals:

A time-limited workgroup established to review the existing ECCG statute and program rules in order to generate recommendations aimed at strengthening the program in anticipation of new capital funding.

Accomplishments:

- The workgroup partnered with content experts like the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map and IFF to propose updated community rankings and understand current need and capacity in the state-based programs rated through ExeceleRate.
- The workgroup engaged and surveyed programs, several of which were previously awarded ECCG funds, about their experience.
- The workgroup drafted [recommendations](#) after four meetings over the course of five months, which were approved in August 2019 by the ELC Executive Committee.

Challenges:

- The unwillingness (or inability) of the Capital Development Board (CDB) to participate in workgroup meetings created challenges, in part because the agency knows better than workgroup participants what is possible and what is not. In addition, the CDB would have been able to identify obvious barriers to implementing any of the report's recommendations.
- Due to the workgroup's expedited timeline, several considerations were not part of the final recommendations, though the final report includes a list of concerns for further contemplation.

Home Visiting Task Force (HVTF)

Goals:

- Develop strategies to advance a comprehensive vision for home visiting that includes improving the quality of and access to evidence-based home visiting programs for all at-risk families.

- Increase coordination between home visiting programs at the state and local levels, as well as between home visiting and all other publicly funded services for families.
- Identify ways in which home visiting can connect with other systems in order to better support priority populations.

Accomplishments:

- Throughout FY19 and 2019, the Task Force continued to host trainings and presentations on innovative topics relevant to the home visiting field at quarterly meetings, including on the Diversity-Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Children, and Families, the Illinois Pregnant and Parenting Youth in Care (IPPYC) child welfare-home visiting collaboration, the Mothers and Babies postpartum depression intervention, the Service Provider Identification & Exploration Resource (SPIDER), and discussed the potential role of home visiting and the HVTF in these areas.
- The Ad Hoc Child Injury and Violence Prevention Workgroup developed a set of resources on child safety and injury prevention. These resources, covering a range of topics including SIDS and safe sleep, inter-conception health, immunizations, breastfeeding, and pre-and-post natal smoking, are hosted on the iGrow website and were disseminated widely to the home visiting field via the Home Visiting Task Force website.
- Working through the Ad Hoc Home Visiting and Early Intervention Workgroup, the Task Force Collaborated with GOECD, the IDHS Early Intervention Bureau, and the Illinois Interagency Council on Early Intervention to distribute cross-silo surveys to Early Intervention and home visiting providers to better understand their experiences in collaborating with each other and hear what they need to best support children and families they serve.
- Members of the HVTF supported work on the MIECHV Needs Assessment and the HVTF listserv was used to disseminate surveys widely to the field.

Challenges:

- The HVTF has struggled to assess regular engagement across a large membership, which includes over two hundred fifty email

list subscribers amassed over years. Turnover in key partner roles has meant the HVTF has had to reestablish connections with state agencies. Responses to the HVTF membership survey were too few to draw meaningful conclusions about representation of the field on the Committee and will require a follow-up survey in 2020.

- With the departure of staffers and co-chairs, several of the prior HVTF subgroups became inactive. The HVTF addressed this challenge through a refresh of the Subcommittee structure but found that nominating and confirming co-chairs for the reactivated bodies under the Committee took longer than anticipated. Though the Universal Newborn Support Ad Hoc work group and Sustainability Subcommittee had not hosted their first meetings by the end of this reporting period, co-chairs and major objectives were in place for both groups by the end of 2019.
- While the Ounce of Prevention supported the activities of the Task Force after the departure of staffer Anna Potere, the Committee was unstaffed from February through April 2019 until Kayla Goldfarb, Policy Analyst for the Ounce of Prevention, joined the Task Force as a staffer in May 2019.

Work to Support the PDG B-5:

- Contributed to the PDG B-5 strategic planning efforts undertaken by AIR by sharing documented priorities and lessons learned for the home visiting system.

HVTF: Executive Committee

Goals:

- Monitor the health of the Illinois home visiting system, including tracking issues of enrollment, workforce stability, and funding allocation.
- Identify strategies to increase private and public investments needed to expand core intensive home visiting and institutionalize promising practices.

Accomplishments:

- Led the development on a [new consensus statement on the vision of the HVTF for the Illinois home visiting system](#).

- Continued to support and hear updates on planning activities by the DCFS regarding the expansion of home visiting services through the Families First Prevention Services Act.
- Representing the HVTF Executive Committee, HVTF co-chairs engaged in outreach to state partners on priority home visiting issues, including to including IDHS Secretary Grace Hou on increasing alignment and coordination in the home visiting system across funding streams, and Deputy Governors Jesse Ruiz and Sol Flores on the Family Connects Illinois universal newborn support model. During this reporting period the Family Connects Illinois advisory body continued to meet to monitor progress on the pilot sites and shared updates with the HVTF Executive Committee. Several HVTF Executive Committee members are also represented on the advisory body for the City of Chicago's Family Connects initiative, which launched in 2019.
- Building on the revised vision statement for the Illinois home visiting system, elevated the priorities of the HVTF in the planning of the Prenatal to Three Initiative (PN3) Policy Agenda, and ensured alignment between the HVTF's multi-year workplan and the PN3 home visiting objectives.

Challenges:

- Moving beyond the budget impasse, continues to present challenges obtaining cross-funder data on enrollment, workforce vacancies, and projected service numbers across the major funding streams for home visiting.
- Lacking a unified, real-time data reporting and sharing mechanism, it was challenging to monitor and respond to issues of enrollment and retention in the home visiting field which created obstacles in assessing community saturation of home visiting services.
- Experienced the same staffing change as the full Task Force, as described above.

Work to Support the PDG B-5:

- Collaborated with the MIECHV team and the Ounce of Prevention to develop and vet a home visiting cost model to support PDG B-5 strategic planning efforts.

- Offered feedback on and opportunities to vet the PDG B-5 Coordinated Intake Strategic Plan.

HVTF: Illinois Pregnant and Parenting Youth in Care (IPPYC)

Goals:

- Increase collaboration and alignment between the home visiting and child welfare systems to further expand home visiting as a strategy to advance positive outcomes for children involved in the child welfare system and their families, specifically pregnant and parenting youth in care.
- Increase the number of pregnant and parenting youth in care enrolled in voluntary home visiting programs throughout the State and across home visiting models.
- In late 2019, the project-based home visiting innovations, including the IPPYC Subcommittee disbanded as formal Subcommittees under the HVTF. The advisory bodies for these innovative projects provide updates to the HVTF and can consult with the HVTF Executive Committee on issues of scale or policy barriers, as needed.

Accomplishments:

- Collaborated with fifteen home visiting sites in opening and providing services to pregnant and parenting youth in care. Expanded referral relationships for referrals to additional communities and home visiting models.
- Presented findings and next steps at a Congressional Site Visit with Chairman Davis and Ranking Member Walorski (Indiana) to advocate for next steps for the Family First legislation.
- Finalized and distributed an IPPYC paper that outlined recommendations and action steps identified through the pilot timeframe, which was distributed and presented at multiple committees, meetings, and conferences.
- Presented alongside Chapin Hall on a webinar for the Society for Research in Child Development and presented to the Annie E. Casey Foundation team on Family First resources for states.

Challenges:

- The project encountered barriers to collaboration between the child welfare and home visiting systems as providers continue to encounter obstacles in understanding each other's roles in supporting youth.
- Following the completion of the project evaluation by Chapin Hall, it was a challenge to identify data points for further collection and analysis.
- As the project moved from a pilot with a set of participating programs within a limited geographic boundary to a statewide program operating with multiple models it was challenging to locate new home visiting partner sites.
- There will need to be continuing efforts to cross-train staff of both systems to further develop well-functioning partnerships, so they maximize working together to support parents and their children.

Work to Support the PDG B-5:

- Collaborated with DCFS Home Visiting Program to provide guidance on the work to connect child-welfare involved families with home visiting services.
- This pilot led to a new collaboration between DCFS and Home Visiting to create a new pilot to serve DCFS intact families with very young children as an important pillar of Illinois' Family First Prevention Services efforts.

HVTF: Home Visiting for Homeless Families (HVHF) Project

Goals:

- Increase the number of children and families experiencing homelessness who are served by high-quality home visiting programs to improve the developmental trajectories of these families.
- Inform future program development through the analysis and dissemination of lessons learned.
- In late 2019, the project-based home visiting innovations disbanded as a formal Subcommittees under the HVTF. The advisory bodies for these innovative projects provide updates to the HVTF and can consult with

the HVTF Executive Committee on issues of scale or policy barriers, as needed.

Accomplishments:

- Increased the number of children and families experiencing homelessness served in partner home visiting programs, from one hundred sixteen families and one hundred eleven children served in 2018, to one hundred thirty-nine families and one hundred forty-five children served in 2019.
- The project began analyzing and sharing data points collected by participating home visiting programs, including qualitative data from focus groups with program participants and providers.
- Through state and national presentations, project leadership increased awareness of the innovative service delivery approach and barriers to home visiting facing homeless families.

Challenges:

- Though the project leadership tracks data on participant engagement and outcomes, the project has yet to secure funding for more robust research and evaluation necessary to scale the program and formally document lessons learned.
- As expected for the service population, home visiting providers continue to encounter families with complex parent/family needs. Though the project employs a clinical consultant with expertise in working with homeless families as a resource for programs, participating home visiting providers have expressed challenges balancing case management activities with core child development/parent-child activities.

Integration & Alignment Committee (IAC)

The Integration & Alignment Committee (IAC) works to recommend appropriate changes to early childhood systems and improve coordination, integration, and advance racial equity across early childhood programs and funding streams in order to address the comprehensive nature of children's healthy development and readiness for school. The Committee will use a

racial equity lens to provide input and feedback on key federal and state early childhood initiatives that impact cross sector early childhood systems. It will provide leadership on systems building efforts and will intentionally seek to include diverse stakeholder voice and representation. In moving this work forward, IAC will continue to identify external tables and other ELC Committees and Workgroups to ensure work of the Committee is informed and coordinated, striving to be racially equitable. The IAC will explicitly focus on two main strategies identified by the BUILD Team to advance racial equity: (1) determine metrics and identify processes to measure and monitor progress; and (2) be proactive about inclusion of a broad representation with a racial equity lens.

Goals:

- Integrate and align early childhood programs and services to support program quality and seamless access for children and families.
- Maximize efficiency and quality of infrastructure investments across all types of early childhood services and ensures the range of early childhood services and supports are connected so that families experience a seamless system.
- Analyze real-time programmatic slot placement data across the State following the re-competition of the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG).
- In alignment with the broader ELC, the IAC works to advance the ELC's racial equity priorities.

Accomplishments:

- Undertook a deep examination of the slot capacity and gaps within home visiting so that ECBG could be funded to the highest need communities.
- Used data and maps to identify and discuss counties with no, or little to no, home visiting programs, using this information to inform resource allocation in FY2020.
- Supported surveys from providers in the field to assess the impact of the funding decisions on their ability to serve the number of children in need and the quality they can provide within their program.
- Supported the Mixed Delivery System (MDS) Ad Hoc Committee to develop recommendations for how the State could improve access to

early childhood funding at the community and provider level so that equitable access to high-quality services was improved across the State. The findings from the MDS Ad Hoc Committee built on the 2014 Blending, Braiding, and Sustainable Funding (BBSF) Subcommittee report that examined the challenges that community-based programs experience as they tried to braid and blend multiple funding streams to provide high-quality early learning services. The [Mixed Service Delivery Report](#) from the MDS Ad Hoc Committee elevated the challenges that providers and families from across the State experience in ensuring that funding for birth to age five services can be equitably accessed. This report also offered recommendations for how the State can better support planning at the community level, including policies that would make it easier for providers to access funds, to implement programs across funding streams, and to receive timely payments. The recommendations were adopted by the ELC, and the IAC continues to partner with the Administration to ensure that the recommendations are implemented.

- Furthered the work of the MDS Ad Hoc Committee and met with state agencies to elevate the challenges around blending and braiding funding.
- Began to collect information on organizations that successfully blend and braid funding in order to support the state agencies in developing guidance for programs.

Challenges:

- The Committee, as well as the Subcommittees, were challenged by data collection. In some instances, the data did not exist. In other cases, data quality was not sufficient for the Committee's purposes. In other instances, data collection from state agencies was met with bureaucratic hurdles.
- The ECBG re-competition request for proposal (RFP) required programs to include plans about how they would implement comprehensive services, but final contract allocations did not cover services beyond home visiting. While another solution was implemented, this example underscores the obstacles in obtaining timely information across early childhood program funders on slot capacity and enrollment.

Work to Support the PDG B-5:

IAC supported the PDG B-5 strategic planning process, soliciting input from the ELC.

IAC: Inclusion Subcommittee

The Inclusion Subcommittee of the IAC of the ELC works to ensure integration and alignment of early childhood programs and initiatives to other systems in issues related to children with or at risk of delays and disabilities. The Inclusion Subcommittee is an important body of public and private partners that provides feedback on State efforts to promote inclusion and to improve access and quality for children with delays and disabilities across early childhood settings and in federal and state program design and improvement, such as the Child Care Development Block Grant, the Early Childhood Block Grant, ESSA, EHS-CC partnerships, the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, and SSIP.

Goals:

- Identify and address challenges to serving children with disabilities in community-based programs, including supporting collaboration between local education agencies (LEAs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) through the sharing of strong partnerships and guidance for operationalizing cooperation including through funding strategies and Memorandums of Understanding.
- Continue to elevate the Subcommittee's 2017 recommendations to IDHS regarding inclusionary practices in child care.
- Advance the Child Find Data Recommendations to work toward an unduplicated, disaggregated child-level count of developmental screenings, and expand engagement across ECCE and other direct service providers to ensure that every child receives at least one developmental screening.

Accomplishments:

- In collaboration with state agency partners at GOECD, ISBE, and IDHS, the Subcommittee developed the [*Building Relationships to Support Inclusion in Early Childhood: Tools to Support your Efforts*](#) webinar. The course is intended to provide ECCE, Child and Family Connections

(CFC), and LEA staff and administrators with a deeper understanding of the available tools and resources to help foster partnerships and implement best practices that promote inclusion.

- Developed and disseminated a survey to CBOs and LEAs to identify experiences, barriers, and promising practices for serving children with disabilities in community-based programs. The results of the survey informed the drafting of major Subcommittee goals for FY20.
- Completed a member survey in late 2019, yielding insights about membership composition, areas for potential future discussion, and improvements for engaging a broader audience on inclusion issues.
- As a follow-up to the two previous Inclusion Summits, held a joint statewide meeting with the Early CHOICES Least Restrictive Environment (ECLRE) Stakeholders Committee. Both groups are doing similar work and the meeting was to establish clarity, highlight work in progress, and coalesce around issues and future collaboration.
- Participated in a T/TA opportunity with Child Care Aware, led by INCCRRA, focused on inclusion and data mapping, with a formal presentation of the maps and process to the QRIS conference with Child Care Aware and DEC.

Challenges:

- While the Subcommittee continued to work with Child Find Project and IECAM staff to analyze current developmental screening data, challenges persist in the uniform collection and reporting of data across CFCs and by source of screening data, the disaggregation of data by zip code for certain geographies, and the lack of a formal CQI framework to ensure Child Find data returns to providers to improve collection and reporting.
- The Subcommittee struggled to identify concrete guidance for LEAs on how to best collaborate with and support early childhood programs to serve children inclusively in natural settings, particularly on financing strategies replicable across programs.
- Kayla Goldfarb, Policy Analyst for the Ounce of Prevention, joined the Subcommittee as a staffer in July 2019.

Work to Support the PDG B-5:

Discussion at Subcommittee meetings provided feedback to Early CHOICES on the development of the PDG B-5 Strategic Plan outline, as well as outreach materials on the principle of inclusion and rights and resources for children and families ([ISBE inclusion brochure](#)).

IAC: Data, Research, & Evaluation Subcommittee (DRE)

Goals:

- Act as a thought partner and convener to inform, support, and respond to data initiatives, projects and concerns across the State.
- Guide the development and implementation of a unified data system, research initiatives, and quality program and system evaluations – in order to provide better information to support and further improve early childhood programs throughout the State.
- Identify and elevate the data challenges of the Illinois early learning community.

Accomplishments:

- Updated the ELC’s research agenda with priority questions, and an emphasis on racial equity, based on responses from the ELC Committees and Subcommittees.
- Created a data tracker document (Key Data Initiatives and Sources) to organize essential Illinois data initiatives, reports, and sources relating to early learning, to help inform the work of Illinois early childhood stakeholders. The document includes some national data sources that may be useful to developing Illinois-specific resources.
- Informed the development of or provided feedback for the following projects or initiatives: Illinois Data FIRST Project-Early Childhood ROI; Early Childhood Matching Project; Risk and Reach Report; KIDS data; the Child Find Annual Report; a Preschool for All Analysis by the Latino Policy Forum; the All Families Served Subcommittee priority populations data; Community System Development Subcommittee data workgroup systemic access; and the PDG B-5.

Challenges:

- Data quality, access, and limitations persist, and the DRE continues to engage stakeholders by elevating needs and gaps. Data remains fragmented and limited; in too many cases data is not easily available in an actionable form, and the State does not have an inclusive distinct count of children enrolled in services. This includes data needed to support priority populations as defined by the All Families Served Subcommittee.
- The State does not have adequate analytic capacity to act on the data it does have. The DRE is pleased to provide support for ongoing data initiatives, and DRE should be complementing and engaging more robust analytic capacity within state agencies and across the stakeholder community.

Work to Support the PDG B-5:

- Facilitated opportunities for and provided input for several projects related to PDG B-5:
- July 11, 2019, special convening for the Early Childhood System Cost Model as a part of the Needs Assessment.
- September 12, 2019, AIR presented on the Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan.
- October 31, 2019, AIR solicited feedback on the Needs Assessment.
- December 19, 2019, AIR solicited feedback on strategic planning.

IAC: Health Subcommittee

Goals:

Develop strategies for supporting and promoting children's health across early childhood and health systems, including engaging partners and stakeholders who affect children and family's health and well-being and building partnerships across systems and at various levels in order to collaboratively form initiatives, using a racially equitable lens, to improve children's healthy development and school readiness.

Accomplishments:

- Convened the Managed Care Organizations (MCO) Ad Hoc Workgroup to strengthen linkages between the health and early childhood sector.
- Engaged the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services to inform early childhood stakeholders about the Medicaid redetermination process and ensure families are informed about the need to take action to continue coverage.
- Provided input on the Maternal and Child Health Services Title V Block Grant, managed by IDPH.

Challenges:

- Encountered challenges in conducting and disseminating webinars related to early Medicaid-related topics.
- The MCO Ad Hoc Work Group had to adjust its approach and expectations because of the continued delays in rolling out the Integrated Health Homes affected participation and capacity for plans.

IAC: Managed Care Organizations (MCO) Ad Hoc Workgroup**Goals:**

To bridge the gap between the health and early childhood sectors given that many MCOs have similar metrics to that of early childhood programs, e.g. well-child exams and immunizations. Further, MCOs should be informed of early childhood programs as to encourage enrollment to early childhood services to their members.

Accomplishments:

- Shared early childhood resources with MCOs including presenting a pilot program between a home visiting program and an MCO.
- Strengthened relationships between early childhood and health.
- Created a desk reference of early childhood programs for MCOs to better understand the early childhood services landscape.

Challenges:

Given the dynamic nature of the Medicaid program and competing priorities among the MCOs, it was a challenge to identify a specific set of

goals that all MCOs could agree to measure related to early childhood programs.

IAC: Community Systems Development Subcommittee (CSDS)

Charge:

Support the ability of local community partnerships to improve outcomes for children and families in their communities through effective state policies and practices.

Goals:

- Serve as an advisory body to initiatives developing and driving community systems work including guiding, informing and recommending best practices.
- Advance access to resources to guide community systems work.

Accomplishments:

- Reviewed Subcommittee members' roles and participation and [drafted Proposed Roles and Responsibilities](#). In order to foster more engagement from members, provided an opportunity for participants to help shape the meeting agenda by submitting topics of interest via a survey.
- Advise communities on working with funders to ensure that funders understand the necessity of a community systems-lens and the benefits of collaboration and aligned systems. Developed [Guide for Working with Funders](#).
- Created a clearinghouse/directory for CSDS materials on Basecamp for co-chairs and staffer.
- Created and launched a system for gathering feedback/agenda items in advance of meetings.
- Launched the racial equity survey and the membership survey to help understand the Subcommittee makeup and various levels of engagement of members.

Challenges:

- Alignment of CSDS work with the overall early childhood statewide goals and objectives. In the next year, the Subcommittee hopes

to identify and recommend goals and metrics for community collaborations that will align with the State's goals and objectives.

- Leadership transitions: Julia Zhu, Community Systems Policy Director resigned in November 2019.

Quality Committee

The purpose of the ELC Quality Committee is to increase the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of early childhood services in supporting the healthy growth and development of all young children birth to age five, especially those with the highest needs. The Quality Committee's charge is twofold:

- Ensure a coordinated early childhood system of aligned standards, professional development, monitoring, and support through oversight of the ExceleRate Illinois QRIS; and
- Ensure early care and education professionals, including center directors and principals, have the knowledge, skills, and are fairly compensated to effectively support the development and learning of all young children in Illinois.

Goals:

- Promote and advance the integration of continuous quality improvement policies and practices through alignment of early childhood services that support the healthy growth and development of all young children birth to age five, especially those with the highest needs.
- Ensure early care and education educators, including leaders, are professionally qualified and compensated, possessing the knowledge and skills to nurture and support the development and learning of all children in Illinois.

Accomplishments:

- Served as the Advisory body for the development of the Consensus Statement on Early Childhood Educator Compensation.
 - Consensus to support early childhood advocates in ensuring compensation parity is top legislative priority.
- Supported expansion of workforce opportunities to support Illinois'

linguistic and culturally diverse population of young children by endorsing the Professional Development Advisory Council's (PDAC) development and piloting of the Gateways® to Opportunity ESL/ Bilingual Credential aligned to standards in the ISBE ESL and Bilingual Professional Educator license endorsements.

- Pilot phase initiated in 2019, will conclude in 2020. Statewide launch anticipated 2021.
- Built out pathways to educator careers across funding streams using the competency-based Gateways ECE Credential® framework in partnership with PDAC, IDHS, ISBE, Illinois Community College Board and Illinois Board of Higher Education.
- 98% of Illinois higher education institution's early childhood teacher preparation programs have aligned their programs to the competencies within the Gateways ECE Credential.
- Increased the number of both ECE educators and of program directors who hold the Gateways ECE or Illinois Director Credential (IDC).
- Almost one out of every four early childhood teachers working in licensed based settings hold a Gateways ECE Credential Level 2 or higher (college coursework required) in 2019 compared to one out of twenty-five in 2015. (Actual percentage increase 4.1% to 23%).
- Approximately one out of every four Directors or program administrators working in licensed settings hold an IDC compared to one out of every twenty in 2015. (Actual percentage increase from 4.8% in 2015 to 24.1%).

Challenges:

Compensation inequity continues to be a critical challenge negatively impacting recruitment and retention of early childhood teachers. Low wages disincentivize individuals from entering the field and inhibit the existing workforce from gaining the knowledge needed to provide high-quality services to young children through attainment of degrees/credentials.

Work to Support the PDG B-5:

Informed development of the PDG B-5 Illinois Cost Model for Early Childhood Education and Care.

Quality: ExceleRate Subcommittee

Goal:

Determine how ExceleRate standards and supports can foster site level program improvement based on Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) principles.

Accomplishments:

- Drafted recommendations for expanded state supports (training, technical assistance and coaching) for CQI based on the Subcommittee's earlier inventory of publicly funded supports. [Recommendations](#) were approved by the Quality Committee and the ELC Executive Committee.
- Developed the document [Vision for ExceleRate Quality System and Funding System Integration](#), which distinguishes two types of standards now in ExceleRate – staffing standards and professional practice standards. It considers funders primarily responsible to support adequate staffing and compensation, whereas program operators, with adequate staffing, should be held responsible for professional practices.
- Created a first draft of new ExceleRate standards organized by the Whole Leadership Framework and incorporating the Subcommittee's list of CQI components.

Challenges:

- The ExceleRate State Agency Partners group has not had the opportunity to plan for expanded cross-sector CQI supports.

Work to Support the PDG B-5:

- Created the framework for the CQI Communities of Practice funded in the 2019 PDG B-5 grant and operated by Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies in five regions of the State.
- Recommended the Subcommittee's document [Vision for ExceleRate Quality System and Funding System Integration](#) as the basis for the PDG B-5 Child Care Pilot funded in 2020.
- Proposed potential Bronze-level standards to be tested in the PDG B-5 Child Care Pilot. These pilot standards incorporate CQI practices developed previously by the Subcommittee.

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