

Illinois Early Childhood Education and Care Transition Update

November 2023



Governor Pritzker is
committed to
making Illinois the
best state in the
country to raise
young children

“

*I've asked you to join me today as we set **an audacious goal: Illinois will become the best state in the nation for families raising young children, with the nation's best early childhood education and child care.***

– Governor JB Pritzker, December 2019

”

Access to equitable, high quality, affordable ECEC is essential in Illinois

- 1 For **children** to have healthy social-emotional, academic, and physical growth during a critical time for brain development,
- 2 As a support for **parents and other caregivers** to participate in the workforce or further their own education, and
- 3 To provide **businesses** with the ability to have a consistent workforce today and a well-educated workforce in the future.

“

Comprehensive, high-quality, birth-to-five programs have a 13% return on investment and pay for themselves over time.

”

Today, Illinois' Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services provide essential supports to families, but the state can do more



~437k

children ages 0-2 in Illinois¹



~309k

children ages 3-4 in Illinois¹



~274k*

capacity to provide care for children under 5 in Illinois²



~269k

children 0-4 in families earning low incomes³

~746k kids in IL under 5 today¹



All families deserve loving, affordable, convenient care but lack access to high-quality ECEC options. In 2023, our system was unable to meet children and families needs and less than 30% of children demonstrated full readiness across language/literacy, math, and social-emotional domains when they entered kindergarten.

¹IECAM Database, 2021 census data

²IECAM Database, 2022 *includes licensed centers, licensed-exempt centers, and licensed family child care homes.

³IECAM Database, 2021 census data children < 200% FPL for children ages 0-4

We must improve the current system by advancing racial equity and learning from the 2019 Funding Commission

"Racial equity requires explicit acknowledgement of our racial history in addressing policy problems, shifting power to groups historically excluded from decision-making, and **co-designing future policy** to achieve outcomes that are no longer predicted by race." -Chicago United for Equity (CUE)

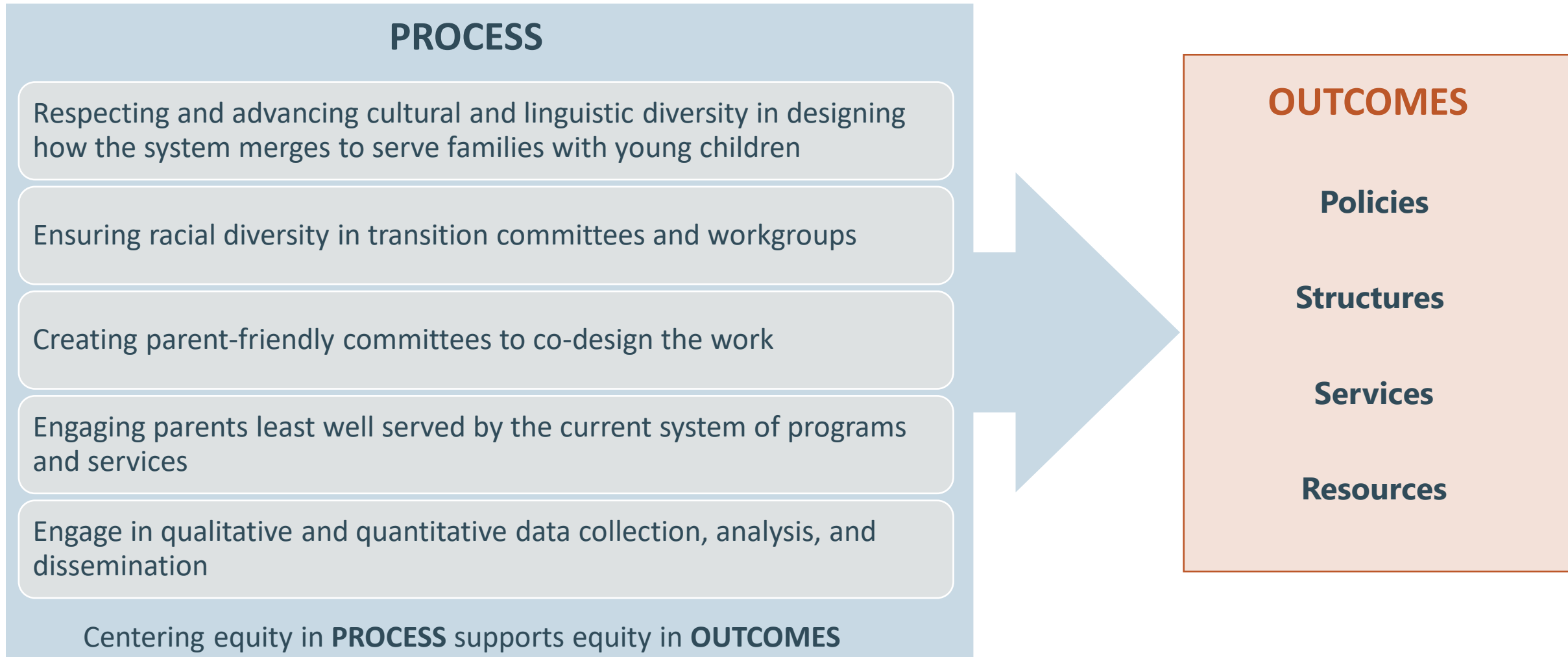


Chicago United for Equity (CUE) uses the analogy of baking a cupcake. "To use the analogy of baking a cupcake, racial equity cannot be the sprinkles, it must be the flour."

Our approach to racial equity adds parents to the process of choosing what type of cupcake to make and designing the recipe, as well as in the ingredients.

Our efforts to improve the system must center racial equity and parent participation

The transition will center racial equity in process, vision for system, and outcomes of programs and services.



Over the Governor's time in office, there has been tremendous progress in early childhood in Illinois



Structures

- Early Childhood Funding Commission
- Creation of Division of Early Childhood within IDHS
- Launch of Birth to Five Councils
- Announcement of unified early childhood state agency and launched a transition process



Programs

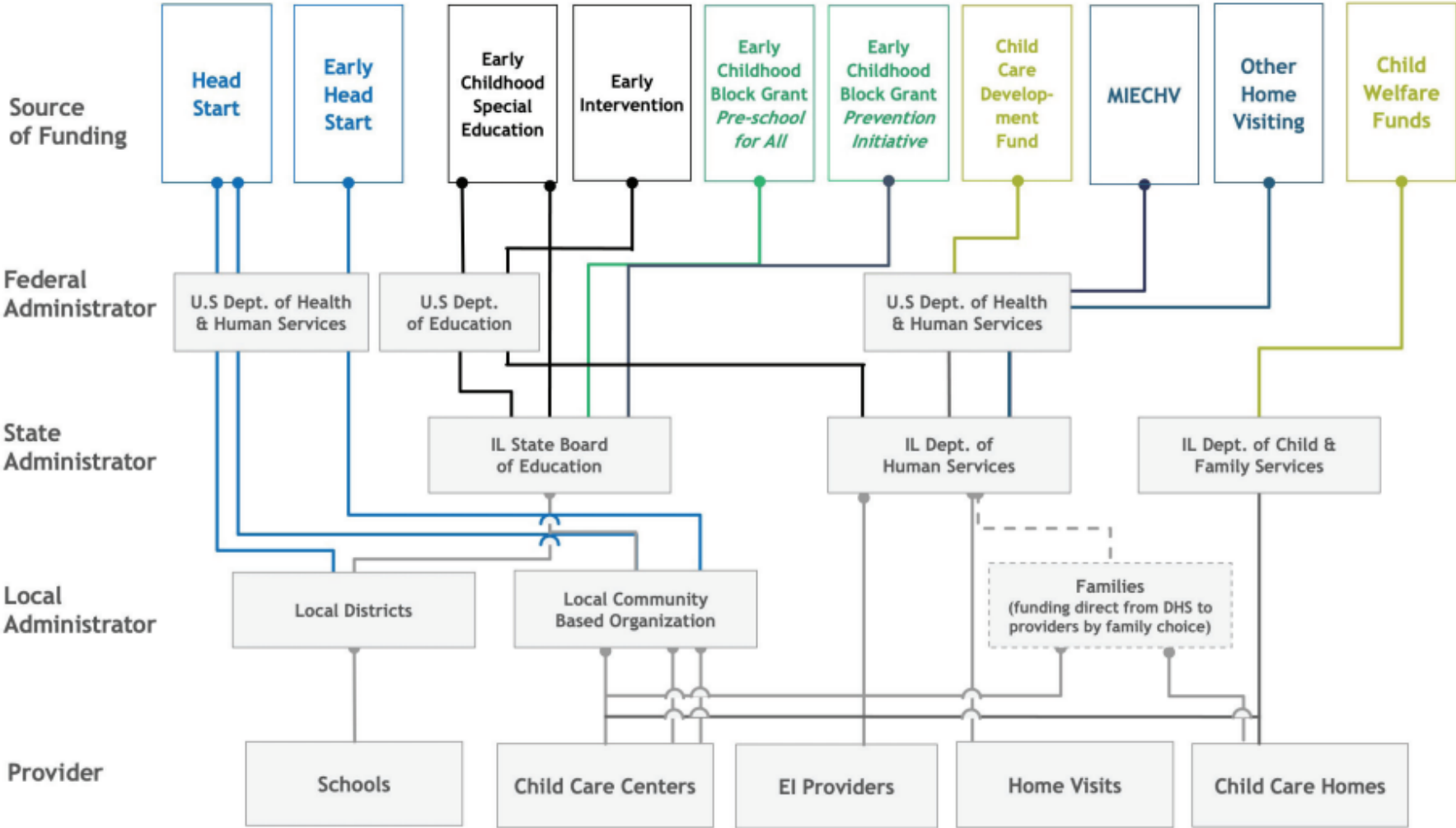
- Smart Start Illinois:
 - Revamp ISBE Pre-K RFP and committed to 20,000 new pre-k slots over four years to target preschool deserts
 - Expand the Home Visiting Program
- Investment in the CCAP program
- Investment in Early Intervention (EI) programs to enhance services for families
- Capital investments in new facilities



Workforce

- Smart Start Illinois:
 - Nation-leading child care Workforce Grants
 - Investment in Early Intervention to give providers a raise
- Additional scholarships and apprenticeships for early childhood educators through the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE)
- Bonuses for child care workers and EI providers

Illinois' early childhood system is complex and a better structure is needed to continue to advance equity and access



□ Early Childhood Block Grant
 □ Head Start
 □ Child Care Subsidies
 □ Home Visiting
 □ ECSE / EI

In fall 2023, the Governor initiated the transition to a unified state agency, bringing a long-standing vision to life

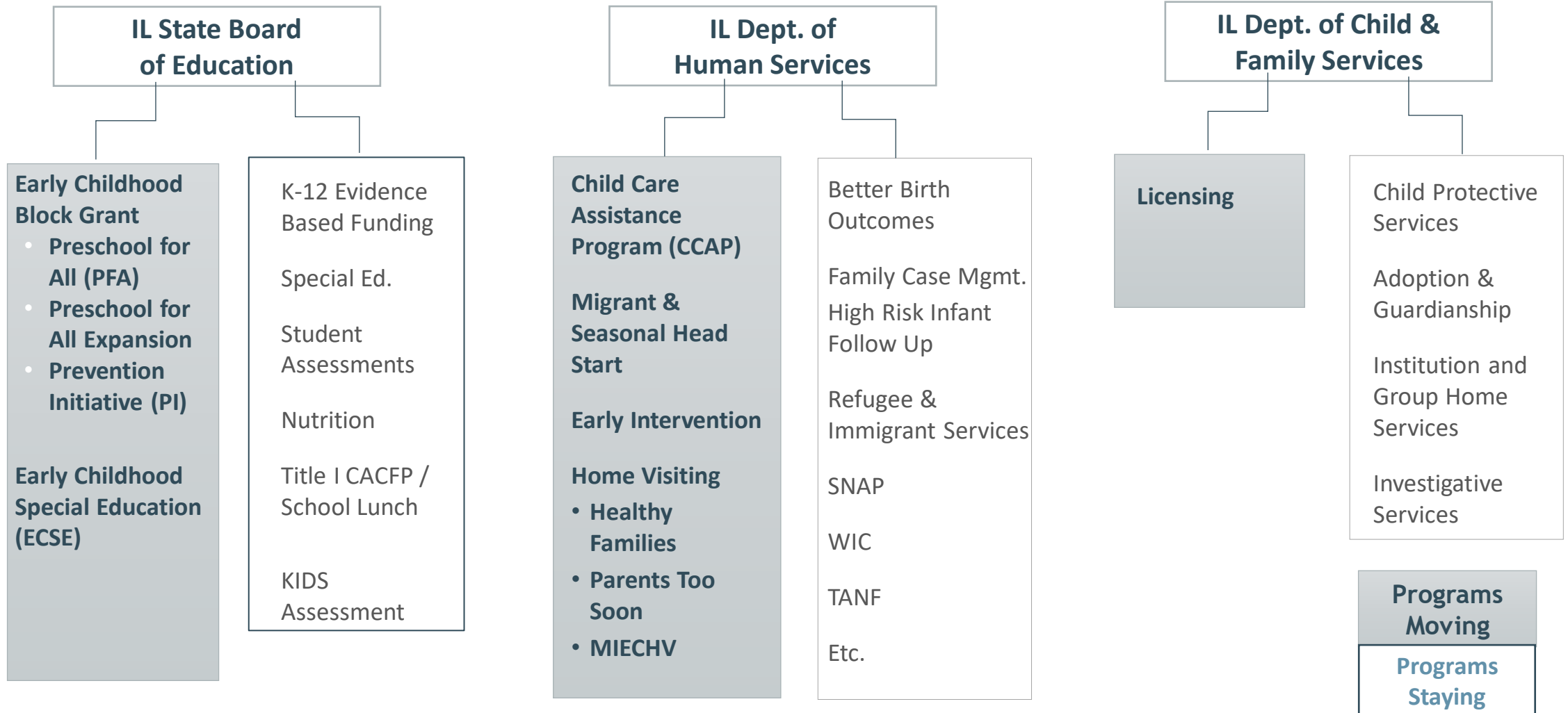
- On October 24th, Governor Pritzker [signed an Executive Order](#) to initiate the transition to a unified agency
- The unified agency **will address challenges families face** with navigating three different agencies and provide a **more equitable, integrated, and holistic system of services**
- An **external advisory committee** will be established for stakeholder input

“Early Childhood program governance has to be unified in its focus on serving children and families, easing the burden on providers and promoting equity,” Pritzker said at a news conference in Chicago. “Other states like Colorado, New Mexico, Massachusetts and Georgia, among others, have already created a unified state agency solely dedicated to early childhood. **It's time for Illinois to do the same.**”

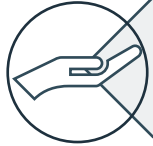
– Governor JB Pritzker, October 24, 2023
Capitol News, Illinois



Early education and care services will move, and broader family and school support will remain at home agencies



Early Childhood Transition includes planning & building critical infrastructure to serve families with young children



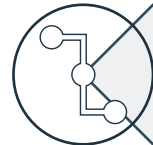
Diverse, high-quality, linguistically and culturally appropriate, convenient programs in homes, centers, and schools



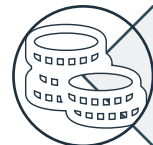
Strong data systems to inform equitable decision making and funding



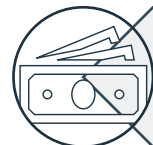
Family-friendly designs for navigating the systems of support



Disaggregated accountability and co-decision making



Stable funding for providers



Adequate funding that includes workforce compensation

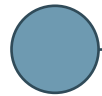
The transition will be over a multi-year timeline, allowing for thorough listening and thoughtful planning

Fall 2023 – Spring 2024

Spring 2024

Summer 2024

July 2026



Begin listening to parents, families, and providers about needs for an ECEC system



New agency authorized in legislation



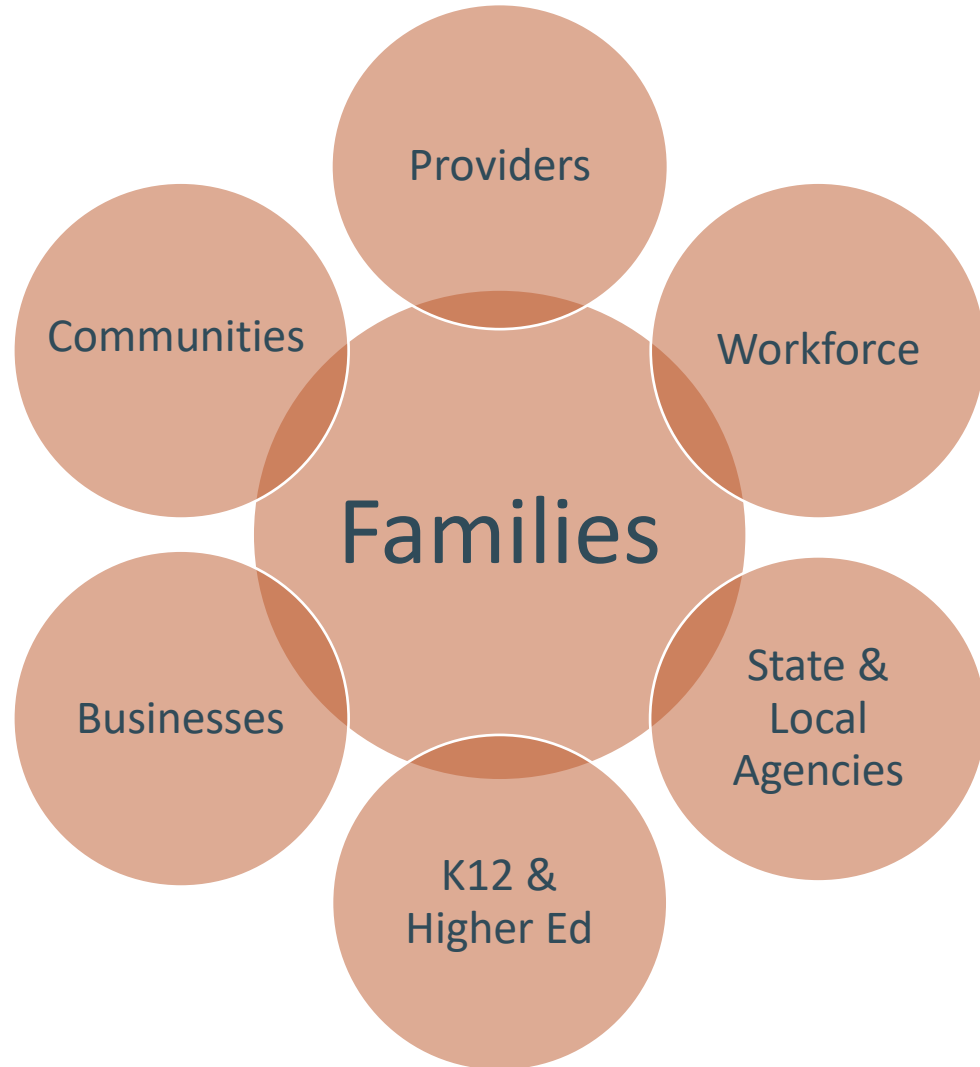
New agency launched



New agency operating programs

ISBE, IDHS/DEC, DCFS continue to administer programs and lead continuous quality improvement

Engagement with families, providers, and other stakeholders is foundational to this process



The state is establishing a **Transition Advisory Committee (TAC)**, comprised of representatives with diverse perspectives from across the state, to serve as an external advisory committee.

The TAC will **seek and help the state make meaning of stakeholder input** in preparation for the transition, with a **particular emphasis on understanding families' goals and needs** from a comprehensive ECE system for Illinois children.

Opportunities for engagement and communications

Bi-Monthly Transition Calls - bi-monthly interactive calls will provide updates, solicit input and feedback, and address questions about the transition

Existing Advisory Groups and Councils - existing groups will host conversations and provide feedback on the transition

Website - *in process*



Please contact
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Initial Feedback

- 1) What are you most excited about with the transition to a new agency?
- 2) What opportunities do you see to improve services to children and families through unified governance?
- 3) How do you want to engage/stay informed about the transition process?