

# TAC Equity Workgroup Primer

## Equity Workgroup Objectives

1. Review equity resources and recommendations.
2. Incorporate TAC feedback from discussions during the February and March meetings.
3. Develop a proposed TAC equity definition.
4. Share the proposed definition, reflections and proposed next steps during the April TAC meeting for discussion.

## TAC Equity Discussions

At the February 27 TAC Meeting, members broke into small groups to discuss “Defining Equity.” The following themes rose to the top for TAC members based on the conversation and notes collected in this [Jamboard](#).

- In addition to defining equity, we need to **hold ourselves accountable** through our **implementation and actions**. This will require equity checks throughout the process and being open to adjusting along the way.
- It is important to **engage voices beyond our own immediate networks** or those who participate in listening sessions to ensure we are **inclusive** and considering those **furthest from opportunity**.
- When talking about race or other specific populations, we should be **specific**, not speak in code. **Real solutions require honest conversations**.
- We need **disaggregated data** to understand our **impact** on equity.

At the March 12 TAC meeting, TAC members had an opportunity to discuss how to listen to and incorporate family voices in the process of transitioning to a new ECE agency. The notes are captured in this [Jamboard](#). Key themes from these small group discussions were:

- **Parents are the experts** when it comes to their children and their experience with the ECE system. By **building relationships and trust** to engage families, we can empower them and show **their voice does matter**.
- There are **many and varied barriers to engaging families** – particularly those furthest from opportunity – in conversations about systems. This includes limited access to meetings via technology or transportation, language and literacy barriers, real or perceived power dynamics, and time.

Voices from the field:  
How can we ensure this process centers equity?

- **Center parent and provider voices** and welcome everyone into the process.
- **Invest in equitable data-driven approaches** that center priority populations to improve services.
- Support and **scaffold engagement** with underserved populations to **meet them where they are** and bring them along.
- Ensure **pay equity** to attract and retain a **diverse and highly qualified ECE workforce**.
- Identify and **deconstruct** our own **biases**, particularly those that **impact program and system operations**.

- To overcome these barriers, we should consider ways to **meet families where they are**, such as **leveraging partners** with existing relationships and trust, limiting jargon and **compensating family members** for their time and expertise.
- It will be important to be **clear about our purpose** for engaging families to intentionally consider barriers and design outreach that honors their needs.

### Listening Session Equity Feedback

On January 19, 2024, the team supporting Illinois' transition to a unified early childhood agency held the first of several bimonthly listening sessions intended to engage stakeholders in the planning for the new agency. The listening session was held via Zoom and included an overview of the goals and timeline for the transition, as well as opportunities for participants to provide feedback on three key questions verbally and through a [Padlet](#) tool.

While one of the key questions specifically asked about equity ("How can we ensure this process centers equity?"), participants elevated equity priorities throughout responses to all questions. **Equity for families and the workforce through the transition process and within the new agency** was the primary theme of the input from the first listening session.

Participants consistently emphasized the need to advance equity for families and the workforce through the transition planning process and within the new agency. Many people hoped that the new agency would include more equitable access to high quality programs for families and increased funding and support for providers through a more streamlined ECE system. Specific suggestions included:

- **Invite and involve stakeholders** – especially those who are least well-served by the current programs and services – to the conversation *as well as the decision-making*.
- **Create thoughtful and intentional opportunities to participate in planning** through multiple modes of engagement and addressing barriers to participation like transportation, child care, language, and technology.
- **Prioritize inclusion** of children and families with disabilities, English Language Learners, and providers and families from all regions in the state. *Several people mentioned a need for more resources and supports for bilingual students, families, and English learners.*
- **Address pay parity** within the workforce.
- **Collect and share data** that centers and includes priority populations to improve services. This includes:
  - considering approaches to ensure the process centers equity such as: using a Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) regularly to guide conversations and decisions.
  - providing the TAC members and consultants with DEI training that focuses on racial equity and justice.
  - using a Targeted Universalism approach to creating policies and collecting data.
  - using an intersectional framework.
  - providing training on implicit biases.

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*“Within each community, parents have different challenges and barriers to accessing ECE resources. Moving forward, a unified agency should listen to parents at the community level at least to identify the different challenges in order to truly make this accessible.”*

*-- Anonymous*

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A second listening session held on Friday, March 14 also gave members of the public an opportunity to share feedback with the TAC. Participants were invited to add comments to a [Padlet](#) board\* as well as share verbally during the meeting. In response to the question “How can we ensure that the voices of those farthest from opportunity are included in the process?,” participants elevated the following ideas:

- Offer **in-person town halls or regional listening sessions** in underserved communities (i.e. designated preschool deserts).
- The content for these should **avoid jargon and acronyms** to ensure that families who are not familiar with the details of the ECE system can meaningfully engage.
- Share information about the new agency as well as about opportunities to engage on **multiple platforms such as social media and TV** and do so well in advance.
- Registration forms and agendas should be **available in multiple languages** and note whether interpretation will be available.
- **Leverage trusted organizations and individuals** to share information and elevate family voices. This may include spreading the word about ways to engage or identifying family members for focus groups, surveys, etc. Participants specifically highlighted these trusted intermediaries:
  - Program teachers/owners
  - Head Start, Early Head Start and the IL Head Start Association
  - Birth to Five Regional Councils
  - Early Childhood Collaboratives
  - On-the-ground service providers (EI, Home visiting, physicians, etc.)
  - School districts
  - Religious institutions/communities
  - Other community groups
- **Consider compensation** for families, TAC members and workgroup participants.

\*Note: a [Spanish language Padlet](#) was also provided, no comments have been posted as of 3/19.

## TAC Equity Resource Library

### [Early Learning Council Racial Equity Definition](#)

*Description:* Illinois’ Early Learning Council Racial Equity Definition and Priorities

### [Racial Equity and the Early Childhood Funding Commission](#)

*Description:* Chicago United for Equity (CUE) engaged in a three-pronged Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) inspired analysis of the Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding’s recommendations. These findings and recommendations were designed to serve as a guide for a more robust future process across the state.

### [Chicago United for Equity Racial Equity Impact Assessment](#)

*Description:* A Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) is a set of questions to investigate the benefits and burdens of a policy or practice.

### [NAEYC Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education Position Statement](#)

*Description:* This position statement is referenced as a tool by the ELC. Equity is discussed based on varied lenses (including that of educators, policymakers, and professional development).

### [National Council of Teachers of English](#)

*Description:* This brief takes a programmatic perspective and, at the end of the article, equates access to supportive, inclusive, quality programming as a universal right.

### [WIDA - Promoting Equity for Young Multilingual Children and Their Families](#)

*Description:* Similar to NCTE, this bulletin advocates a programmatic (language-focused) approach. This article also strongly advocates for equity work that places families at the center.

### [Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center - Fact Sheet - Advancing Racial Equity in Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education](#)

*Description:* This resource provides a compilation of current research/evidence about racial disparities and inequities for young children with disabilities. The last section of the resource includes questions for state and local leaders, which was particularly relevant to our committee's work.

### [The City of Chicago 2024 Equity Report](#)

*Description:* This is the Office of Equity and Racial Justice's (OERJ) first annual status report of the City's efforts to institutionalize equity. This report aims to share the overall progress of the City of Chicago's racial equity efforts, make strategic recommendations the City should take to accelerate improvement, report progress on department Budget Equity commitments from 2023 and share the new commitments for 2024, and share trends and evaluations of departments' Racial Equity Action Plans (REAP).

### [Chicago's Equity Statement of Principles](#)

*Description:* This source provides Chicago's definition of equity, vision for equity, guiding principles, and an overview of the office of equity and racial justice.

### [Chicago's Office of Equity and Racial Justice](#)

*Description:* About Chicago's Office of Equity and Racial Justice.

## 2Gen Resources

### [Ascend at the Aspen Institute 2Gen Approach](#)

*Description:* This source provides an overview of Aspen's two-generation (2Gen) approach to equitably centering the whole family.