

**Illinois Department of Early Childhood Transition Town Hall
Meeting Summary
March 15, 2024, 12 – 1 PM**

Attendees: 176

1. Welcome and Introductions – Ann Whalen, Bela Moté

- a. Participants were asked to engage in a poll asking “what organization or community are you representing?” and “what region of the state are you located in?”

Questions/Comments:

- Someone made a comment that the meetings should be recorded and shared with the field
- Someone wondered about issues of people who will be retiring soon – will folks who are retiring soon be able to keep their pay and keep their retirement or terms of their retirement?
- Several questions from DCFS team members: What does the transition mean for their jobs/livelihoods as union state workers who wish to continue on as licensing reps
- Several people asked if the presentation will be available to share with the ECE field

2. Transition Update – Ann Whalen

- a. New agency will be stood up on July 1, 2026
- b. Timeline of co-design and engagement opportunities for parents, providers, and other stakeholders via ad hoc workgroups, TAC meetings, co-design workshops, feedback forms, and listening sessions to support redesign of the new agency

Questions/Comments:

- Several people expressed interest in participating in the workgroups
- Someone asked if day care licensing reps and supervisors are on the work groups
- Someone asked, “will the DCFS “Sunshine” site be revamped, made more user friendly, and will violations be ranked in order of importance? Ex: A missing document in a staff file would not affect the well-being of a child so the level of severity would be low or N/A.”
- Someone asked, “Will unfounded violations remain on the site for one year?”
- Someone asked, “will proposed changes be sent directly to all early childhood educators – so that they don’t have to hear it through the grapevine or hunt for it online?”
- Several people asked about representation for existing DCFS daycare licensing folks in the task force meetings
- Someone asked for rural Illinois representation in the workgroups

3. Transition Advisory Committee Update – Bela Moté

- a. TAC has met four times since December – engaged with a team of consultants and stood up a racial equity workgroup to define racial equity
- b. Charge is to support the state on making meaning of stakeholder input with a focus on families and input from bimonthly listening sessions inform the TAC’s work

Questions/Comments:

- What is the professional representation was among members of the TAC?
- Will CMS be part of the transition?

4. Department of Early Childhood Legislation Update – Ann Whalen

- a. Overview of the Department of Early Childhood Legislation
- b. Overview of the FY25 Budget Request

Questions/Comments:

- Will ECBG and PI/PFA grants move to the new agency or stay under ISBE?
- Do you expect the staff to come from existing programs or are we adding new positions?
- Will PI/PFA grants being written next year be shortened to a 2-year timeline rather than a 5-year?
- What do you anticipate SB1 advocacy will look like as the bill moves towards a floor vote?
- Someone commented, “Let’s remove the term, ‘daycare’ and ‘provider.’ Change them to ‘early childhood education’ and ‘early childhood educator’ – elevating the field.”

5. Stakeholder Discussion and Padlet Activity – Aressa Coley

- a. Review of stakeholder feedback from last listening session in January.
- b. Reflection questions via Padlet
 - i. How can we ensure the voices of those farthest from opportunity are included in the transition process?
 - ii. What priorities would you like the state to focus on to manage change effectively throughout the transition?

Zoom chat questions/comments:

- Use Facebook widely
- Share more notice for the listening sessions/surveys
- Include various types of environmental and structural engineers in the process
- Share information in many languages
- Is there a plan to include INCCRRA/Gateways?
- Streamlining the licensing and complaint process would be great and beneficial to both the provider and licensor
- How many currently employees state employees will move to the new agency if all agreed to transition?
- Build relationships with centers and make sure all underserved people in the community are included and given support they need to be successful
- Determine which college courses apply to teacher certification and sharing that information with providers
- Please focus on making things clear and concise. Eliminate many of the hoops that Early Childhood Practitioners and Owners/ Directors are currently made to jump through. Focus on

steps which actually lead to quality rather than simply providing busy work which actually takes away time and energy from true quality for children.

- How many people/positions are currently providing the functions that will eventually be transferred to the new Dept.?
- How will Birth to Five be entwined into this work?
- Yes, I pray that all of us whom this is currently our passion and livelihood keep everything we have worked for in this transition.
- As part of the TAC process, how will members of the ad-hoc working groups be selected? And will the ad-hoc working groups be accessible to the public?
- Many of us deserve to keep our jobs and have poured our hearts into what we do and should lose what we have earned in this move forward. And we should be protected and preserved.
- When the ECBG moves to the state agency, how will existing programs continue to be funded? Will it be a grant writing process like the way it is now?
- Let's eliminate the requirement for high quality ISBE Prek/PI program to re-compete.
- Transportation is a major barrier to access of EC services in many counties including DuPage.
- Let's talk about how licensed exempt centers could help to provide wraparound child care supports to quality early intervention/pre-school programs.

Verbal questions/comments:

- It would be wonderful to teach classes for little kids and how people can develop their social emotional skills.
- Would be nice to provide opportunities for state and local folks to meet and talk face to face
- Give folks the chance to reflect on questions
- The business community needs to be part of the conversation, similar to other states
- What changes can we see in the new legislation?
- Invite local business and private foundations, medical systems, and other systems into the conversation, as well as front line employees
- Who will be included in the process? Ex: sociological engineers

Padlet questions/comments:

Q1 How can we ensure the voices of those farthest from opportunity are included in the transition process?

Themes:

- Leveraging virtual listening sessions, but also providing in-person opportunities
- Leveraging school districts, organizations that have existing relationships with families
- Making sure that access to internet and technology isn't the only way to get access to information
- Ensure that materials are linguistically appropriate and diverse
- Appreciation for existing platforms but ensuring folks who are not at the sessions can also learn information
- Leverage birth to 5 regional groups and HS agencies

Q2 What priorities would you like the state to focus on to manage change effectively throughout the transition?

Themes:

- On-time payments
- Leveraging data
- Collecting/analyzing local, regional, and state data
- Streamline paperwork for families
- Ensure the systems aren't bringing existing siloes
- Equity across the existing programs and resource sharing

English: [Early Childhood Education and Care March Transition Listening Session \(padlet.com\)](#)

Spanish: [Sesión de Escucha de Transición de Marzo](#)