

Project Summary/Abstract

Project Title: Illinois Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five (PDG B-5)

Applicant Name: Office of the Governor - Illinois

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The PDG B-5 will allow Illinois to develop an overarching statewide strategic plan, informed by a needs assessment, which will guide systemic efforts to meet our project's goal to coordinate Illinois' mixed delivery system so that all children and families have access to the services they need to thrive. Illinois will engage with its leadership, partners, and stakeholders, including families, throughout this process.

In conducting the needs assessment, we will coordinate outreach to stakeholders, inventory and analyze existing statewide needs assessments, document data and research gaps, develop a set of research plans, complete statewide cost modeling, and expand the scope of our existing unduplicated count of children B-5 in early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs.

In developing the strategic plan, we will update the existing strategic framework of our Early Learning Council (ELC), inventory existing strategic plans, and mine those plans for aligned goals and objectives. We will also conduct focused planning to align our governance, expand coordinated intake, and increase access at the community level for children with special needs and children in the child welfare system. These plans will be assembled into one comprehensive and integrated statewide strategic plan.

Illinois will also conduct activities designed to maximize parental choice and knowledge. In order to increase parents' ability to make informed decisions about their children's care and education, we will formalize the establishment of family representation on the ELC, develop and conduct Community Cafés to engage and support parents in their children's development, increase supports for families of children with disabilities, and update public-facing websites to better respond to the needs of families.

Illinois will share best practices with the field by engaging community voice in policy and program design through a Community Systems Portal, enhancing trainings for Family, Friend, and Neighbor providers who predominantly serve children B-3, training home visitors on the evidence-based Parents Interacting With Infants framework, and creating a database to facilitate cross-system use of early childhood mental health consultation.

Illinois will improve the overall quality of ECCE by supporting site-based Continuous Quality Improvement of infant/toddler programs, work through barriers to pathways for ECCE career advancement, and work toward a budgeting and monitoring system for layered funding.

Expected outcomes for year one: a) an increase in the number of communities participating in coordinated outreach, enrollment, and intake; b) creation of a cross-systems plan for increased equitable access for target populations; and c) an increase in the number of providers engaged in evidence-based quality improvement. *Outcomes for years 2-4:* a) increased involvement by and engagement of parents/family members in the development and education of their children; b) children and families in targeted populations are represented equitably in ECCE programs across the mixed delivery system; and c) increased proportion of children and families in identified target populations will be served by high-quality programs.