



Raising Illinois

Fiscal Year 2021 Accomplishments (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021)

Last year was a big year for Illinois' infants, toddlers and families. Advocates across the state informed and supported historic investments and implementations, noteworthy legislation and system improvements that support the most critical years of a child's life – the first three.

Despite an ongoing pandemic and fluctuating economy, Raising Illinois' contributors and champions have a lot to be proud of as we reminisce on a collection of actions taken last year that support Illinois' youngest children and families. [Learn more about Raising Illinois.](#)

1. Early Intervention

- a. Passage of the statutory, **permanent extension of telehealth services** for Early Intervention (EI), as part of Public Act 102-104 (HB 3308).
- b. **Extension of EI benefits beyond age 3** for children with summer birthdays, minimizing service gaps and ensuring continuity of care, mandated in both the Education and Workforce Equity Act (HB 2170) and Public Act 102-209 (SB 820).
- c. Legislative findings recommending EI system improvements that would **decrease wait list times** for families who face the greatest disparities in access, **increase EI referrals** for infants discharged from the NICU, and **improve public awareness and professional training for EI enrollment** based on medical diagnosis and at-risk automatic eligibility criteria, all formalized as the Early Education Act, part of the Education and Workforce Equity Act (HB 2170).
- d. Formal recommendations submitted to the Governor from the Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding to ensure **adequate funding, streamlined governance and improved financing mechanisms** for EI.

2. Home Visiting

- a. Investment of an **additional \$12 million** in the Fiscal Year 2022 state budget for home visiting programs, beyond the existing COVID-19 pandemic relief funds for the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program.
- b. Strengthened **connections between state substance abuse prevention and treatment efforts and family and child well-being**, including producing guidance for MIECHV home visiting staff working with substance use disorders.

- c. Building on **Coordinated Intake structures** in local communities, strengthened referrals and referral processes between home visiting programs and managed care organizations, as well as between the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and home visiting programs.
- d. Implementation of a **new data system** to track referrals for families to enroll in home visiting through Coordinated Intake, allowing for more standardized, data-informed discussions about Coordinated Intake services across communities.
- e. Formal recommendations submitted to the Governor from the Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding to ensure **adequate funding, streamlined governance and improved financing mechanisms** for home visiting programs.
- f. Creation of the statutory **framework for Medicaid to cover providers of home visiting and doula services**, which was included in the Health Care and Human Service Reform Act (HB 158).

3. Perinatal Newborn Supports

- a. Establishment of **two new freestanding birth centers** (Burr Ridge and Chicago).
- b. **Extension of 12-month postpartum benefits for all Medicaid-covered births** in Illinois due to the maintenance of eligibility requirement in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) for the duration of the ongoing national public health emergency.
- c. Federal approval of Illinois' Section 1115 waiver request to **extend Medicaid benefits through the 12-month postpartum period, with continuous eligibility and income threshold of 213% FPL**, after the national public health emergency ends.
- d. Creation of the statutory **framework for Medicaid to cover providers of home visiting and doula services**, which was included in the Health Care and Human Service Reform Act (HB 158).
- e. Award of 5-year federal grant through the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Program to **expand the Universal Newborn Support Services model**.
- f. Award of philanthropic funding and completion of **analysis of sustainable funding mechanisms** for Universal Newborn Support Services.
- g. Creation of an **implicit bias training** requirement for health care provider licensure renewal, as part of the Health Care and Human Service Reform Act (HB 158).
- h. Improvements in understanding the impact of social determinants of health, such as housing instability, on disparate perinatal and maternal morbidity and mortality outcomes, as part of the **Illinois Maternal Health Task Force**.

4. Cross-System Professional Development

- a. Creation of the statutory **framework for requiring Medicaid providers to use the developmentally appropriate DC 0-5 diagnostic criteria** in the delivery of behavioral health services to young children, as mandated in the Education and Workforce Equity Act (HB 2170).

- b. Investment of federal funds to **double the number of Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health (I/ECMH) consultants** providing services in child care programs.
- c. Passage of the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity Act (HB 2878), establishing a **formal agreement among all public universities and community colleges**, as well as any private institutions that choose to participate, to work cooperatively through **regional hubs** and improve access to associate's, bachelor's and master's degrees and certificates, Gateways credentials, and other licensure endorsements. Accomplished through partnership with early learning and care field and higher-education institutions.
- d. Appropriation of **\$110 million** in federal child care stabilization funds to the Illinois Community College Board, Illinois Board of Higher Education and Illinois Student Assistance Commission to **improve early childhood educational pipelines**.
- e. Participation of family- and center-based child care provider(s) on advisory committee to ensure collaborative efforts of the early learning and care field and higher-education institutions stay on track.
- f. Launch of **higher education pilot**, funded by the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5), to **strengthen infant/toddler workforce pathways**.

5. Family and Center-Based Care and Learning

- a. Award of over **\$725 million** (as of September 2021) in federal COVID-19 pandemic relief funds for the Child Care Restoration Grants, supporting the **stabilization of child care providers** and **retention of the child care workforce**.
- b. Creation of the Child Care Workforce Bonus program, also called "Hero Pay," to provide **stipends to child care staff** who continue to serve children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- c. Formal recommendations from the Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding submitted to the Governor to ensure **adequate funding, streamlined governance and improved financing mechanisms** for child care programs that serve infants and toddlers.
- d. Launch of **ExceleRate Illinois Pilot** project, funded by the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5), to test new supports for **quality improvement of licensed child care centers**.

6. Economic Security

- a. **Copayment reductions for families** who receive support for child care expenses through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).
- b. Establishment of **"job search" as an eligible activity** for parents with children under age 3 to receive support through CCAP.

7. State and Community Structures

- a. Formal recommendations from the Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding submitted to the Governor to ensure

- coordinated local and regional governance** for systems that serve infants, toddlers and their families.
- b. Creation of the **Illinois Early Childhood Transformation Team** to assist in pursuing the recommendations of the Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding.
 - c. Commitment of federal funding to launch **39 regional early childhood planning councils** statewide, developed to solicit engagement from **community-based stakeholders** and prioritize **parent perspectives**.
 - d. Establishment of the Illinois Department of Human Services' **Division of Early Childhood** to streamline existing child care, home visiting and EI services.

Raising Illinois is a collective effort of 200+ diverse individuals and organizations committed to supporting our youngest generation by ensuring families can access high-quality health care, engage in quality learning experiences, and establish economic security.

Visit www.RaisingIllinois.org to better understand the challenges Illinois families are facing today, learn more about each of our eight policy priorities, share your experience with us and hear experiences from other advocates, and stay up to date on the latest news regarding early learning and care in the state.

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