



# Raising Illinois

## 2023 Priorities on Behalf of Expecting Families, Infants & Toddlers

Upon us is an ambitious, yet possible, year of work on behalf of Illinois' infants, toddlers, families and, especially, those who care for them. Advocates across the state are committed to inform and support historic investments, noteworthy legislation and system improvements that support the most critical years of a child's life – the first three.

Raising Illinois is a collective effort to close the opportunity gap for our earliest learners. We are a partnership of diverse individuals and organizations across Illinois committed to supporting our youngest generation by ensuring families can access high-quality health care, engage in quality learning experiences and establish economic security.

This document outlines Raising Illinois' top policy priorities for 2023, across the coalition's four priority areas and eight interconnected strategies within the [Illinois Prenatal-to-Age 3 Agenda](#). As organized in this document, efforts will be advanced through federal, state and local budget advocacy, legislative advocacy, administrative and implementation advocacy and public awareness and engagement.

We encourage you to join us in advancing these new and refreshed priorities, amplifying efforts and sharing information about our collective work. Visit [www.raisingillinois.org/get-involved](http://www.raisingillinois.org/get-involved) to join the Raising Illinois coalition and be a part of our robust and diverse advocacy commitment to Illinois' families and young children.

### Our Mission

Together, we must address the root causes of disparities and create an equitable and cohesive early childhood development support system for expecting families, infants and toddlers and the communities in which they live. We believe race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or ability should not determine the opportunities and, ultimately, the success a child experiences in life.

### Our Vision

Every expecting family, infant and toddler in Illinois should have equitable access to affordable high-quality learning experiences, health services and economic supports that they need during their most formative years—creating the strongest foundation for their success in school and life.



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POLICY PRIORITY: HEALTHY PARENTS & BABIES

## Comprehensive Perinatal Supports



### Administration & Implementation

- Monitor full implementation by the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) of the State Plan Amendments for Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), **ensuring 12-month continuous postpartum care for all newly eligible beneficiaries**
- Support HFS **implementation of Medicaid coverage for a second postpartum visit**, as required by Public Act 102-665 (SB 967), and ensure coverage regardless of whether pregnancy ends in childbirth, stillbirth, miscarriage or abortion
- Track full implementation by HFS of Medicaid **reimbursement for doula, home visiting and Universal Newborn Support Services (UNSS)**
- Provide **technical assistance on setting increased prenatal and postpartum reimbursement rates** for Medicaid coverage of Certified Professional Midwife services
- Expand **Family Connects Chicago community alignment boards** throughout four regions in the City of Chicago, strengthening the reach of UNSS
- Continue administering the statewide **Early Childhood Comprehensive Services (ECCS) grant**



### Local, State & Federal Budgets

- Identify and advocate for **new funding through grants and budget appropriations** to continue scaling UNSS model to more communities statewide



### Public Awareness & Engagement

- Increase public education and respond to misinformation about the **expansion of 12-month continuous postpartum coverage** for Medicaid beneficiaries
- Continue awareness campaign regarding the end of the federal Public Health Emergency and Medicaid redetermination process to **prevent lapses in health coverage**
- Support **marketing efforts of Family Connects** in the City of Chicago, Stephenson County and Peoria County





**POLICY PRIORITY: HEALTHY PARENTS & BABIES**

# Strengthened Home Visiting System



## Administration & Implementation

- Ensure **home visiting and doula workforce considerations** are included in Illinois' application for the federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5)
- Inform the Health and Home Visiting Committee of the Early Learning Council on:
  - **Aligning key funding streams**, including Notice of Funding Opportunities/Requests for Proposals
  - Recommending equitable strategies for **increasing compensation**
  - Recommending strategies for **doula expansion**
  - Linkages and referrals/communication with **Early Intervention, child welfare and other parts of the early childhood system**
  - Implementation of **Medicaid coverage**
- Support distribution of the **Gateways/ Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) workforce data collection and staffing survey** and **encourage home visitor registration** in Gateways registry
- Support improved **statewide data collection** across early childhood systems
- Continue to monitor **implementation of Medicaid financing** and **inform and collaborate** with HFS
- Support **alignment of Fiscal Year 2023 (FY 2023) and FY 2024 funding opportunities** across the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS)
- Implementation of Title IV-E claim for **home visiting for intact families involved in the child welfare system** through the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)



## Legislation

- Reauthorize the federal **Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting program** with doubling of funding, as well as:
  - Increased set-aside for **tribal populations**
  - Equitable **compensation adjustments**
  - Expanded **professional development** opportunities
  - Additional **family and provider consultation** for program design, evaluation and policy decisions
  - Wider criteria for **program evaluation and funding eligibility** of community-led models
  - Codifying a **funding formula** that Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) must use when distributing funding to states, creating more stability and transparency
  - Reduction of the **administrative burden** on grantees and programs
  - Continued **virtual service delivery**
- Explore legislation codifying the state's provision of **evidence-based home visiting programs**
- Amend language in the Illinois Public Aid Code to ensure the state uses federal Medicaid funding to supplement, and not supplant, **state funding for home visiting and doula services**



**POLICY PRIORITY: HEALTHY PARENTS & BABIES**

## **Strengthened Home Visiting System (continued)**



### **Local, State & Federal Budgets**

- Advocate for a **20% increase (\$119.6 million)** in Fiscal Year 2024 (FY 2024) state funding for the Early Childhood Block Grant through ISBE, with **\$29.9 million specifically set aside for prenatal-to-age 3 services**, including home visiting services provided by the Prevention Initiative program
- Advocate for a **20% increase (\$3.6 million)** in FY 2024 state funding to the two budget lines that fund the **evidence-based home visiting programs** administered by IDHS



### **Public Awareness & Engagement**

- Increase **public awareness of doula and home visiting services** by auditing existing outreach resources, amplifying content and developing new storytelling materials
- Utilize caregiver and provider survey results to **inform strategies and contribute to future survey design**
- Focus on staff wellness by **distributing relevant resources** to the field and programs







**POLICY PRIORITY: HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING**

# Accessible Family- and Center-based Early Learning & Care



## Administration & Implementation

- Implementation of Public Act 102-926, which **codifies the extension of automatic Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) eligibility for parenting youth in foster care and families in the Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) Extending Family Support Program**, as well as provider reimbursement rate equivalency
- Ongoing administration of the Early Childhood Construction Grant (ECCG) to provide capital **improvements to infant/toddler child care facilities**
- Development and implementation of the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) **apprenticeship program for child care providers**
- Advocate for IDHS's **child care contracting model** to incentivize the creation of additional infant/toddler slots and inclusion of children with disabilities
- Implement the **early childhood workforce salary scale** developed by the Center for Early Learning Funding Equity (CELFE)
- Continued development of DCFS's **background check portal**
- Inform administrative changes to **address challenges of DCFS' child care licensing processes**



## Legislation

- Explore the possibility of **expanding CCAP income eligibility threshold** through new legislation



## Local, State & Federal Budgets

- Advocate for a **20% increase (\$82.1 million)** in Fiscal Year 2024 (FY 2024) state funding to CCAP, with a significant portion supporting programs that serve infants and toddlers



## Public Awareness & Engagement

- Increase CCAP uptake of **families experiencing homelessness**
- Convene family child care providers to identify resource barriers for making **non-capital facilities improvements to family child care homes**
- Convene parents and providers for **multiple engagement and advocacy opportunities** throughout the year



**POLICY PRIORITY: HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING**  
**Optimized Early Intervention**



**Administration & Implementation**

- Implement the **Modified Service Delivery Pilot**
- Inform launch of a new **Early Intervention data management system**
- Advocate for implementation of **actions urged by the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus** in the Early Education Act, focused on:
  - Increasing the number of **children under age 1** receiving Early Intervention services
  - Addressing **racial disparities for children on wait list** to receive Early Intervention services
  - Increasing engagement of **children experiencing homelessness and/or are involved in child welfare** to receive Early Intervention services
- Track implementation of passed legislation to ensure **equitable access for those affected by reforms**, which include telehealth coverage, extended services for children who turn age 3 during summer, adherence to a 30-day timeline for service delivery and informing families of their rights



**Local, State & Federal Budgets**

- Advocate for a **20% increase (\$23.2 million)** in FY 2024 state funding for the state's Early Intervention program, paired with a **sizeable rate increase** for providers and service coordinators



**Public Awareness & Engagement**

- Increase **direct communication between providers, families, IDHS Bureau of Early Intervention and state legislators** to support active engagement and awareness in improving the Early Intervention system and families' ability to advocate for their children
- Improve **public awareness** on Early Intervention referrals, access timelines and complaint processes - targeting families and potential referral sources, including pediatricians, home visitors, Early Head Start and child care personnel





**POLICY PRIORITY: FINANCIALLY SECURE FAMILIES**  
**Family-friendly Work Policies & Income Supports for Families**



**Administration & Implementation**

- Ensure that cash assistance programs like the guaranteed income pilots in the City of Chicago and Cook County do not count as income on beneficiaries' taxes to **maximize their intended benefit**
- Monitor the impact of City of Chicago and Cook County **guaranteed income pilot programs** and coordinate on evaluation and expansion
- Monitor the **impact of the City of Chicago Fair Workweek Ordinance** and consider plans to expand at the state level in Fiscal Year 2024 (FY 2024)



**Legislation**

- Advocate for the passage of **paid family and medical leave (PFML)**, as well as **paid sick time** without preemption
- Advocate for the creation of a **state child tax credit**
- Enact HB 4423, amending the Illinois Public Aid Code to **reduce the proportion of child support retained by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS)** and **increase the amount of child support that children actually receive** from their noncustodial parents, alleviating family poverty and strengthening parent-child bonds



**Public Awareness & Engagement**

- Review and disseminate the **findings from the statewide report on Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)**, conducted by the Greater Chicago Food Depository





**POLICY PRIORITY: STRONG INFRASTRUCTURE**

# Cross-system Preparation, Professional Development & Support



## Administration & Implementation

- Work with the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Division of Early Childhood to develop more **sustainable contracting and funding models** that allow for increased provider wages
- Funding of **new Infant Mental Health Certificate cohorts** to increase number of consultants in under-served counties
- Track **pipeline and workforce utilization of programs** offered through the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) and advocate for a set-aside specifically for the infant/toddler workforce
- Increase access to a coordinated system for **Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC)**
- Continue to expand the ExceleRate pilot and Strengthen and Grow grants to provide steady funding for **increased wages for child care providers**
- Track and amplify cost modeling efforts of Center of Early Learning Funding Equity to **support adequate compensation**
- Ensure IDHS waives **Gateways credential application fee** in Fiscal Year 2023 (FY 2023) and beyond
- Monitor **competency-based learning pilot programs** for infant/toddler credentials and master's degrees



## Legislation

- Advocate for passage of supplemental FY 2023 appropriations and additional FY 2024 appropriations for **increased service reimbursement rates, reimbursement for travel mileage and payment for cancellations** for Early Intervention providers



## Local, State & Federal Budgets

- Advocate for a **20% increase in FY 2024 state funding across all early childhood programs**, with an emphasis on fair compensation for the infant/toddler workforce



## Public Awareness & Engagement

- Continue promoting the **ECACE scholarship opportunity** for infant/toddler educators
- Increase awareness of the ability for undergraduate students and the infant/toddler workforce to receive **academic transcripts** even if they have outstanding student debt
- Recruit additional **I/ECMH consultants to attend orientation** and join the statewide consultant database

# Strong State & Community Structures



## Administration & Implementation

- Support IDHS in the development and implementation of its **child care contracting model**
- Advocate for implementation of the **CELFE compensation framework** for the early childhood workforce