



Raising Illinois

2023 Accomplishments on Behalf of Expecting Families, Infants & Toddlers

We have much to celebrate as we look back on 2023--a year in which we saw historic investments laid out in Governor J.B. Pritzker's multi-year Smart Start Illinois initiative, noteworthy legislation, and system improvements that support our state's infants, toddlers and expecting families.

Despite the ongoing challenges, Raising Illinois' contributors and champions have a lot to be proud of as we reminisce on a collection of positive outcomes last year that support Illinois' children in the most critical years of their lives--the first three.

This document outlines Raising Illinois' accomplishments for Fiscal Year 2023, from July 1, 2022 - June 30, 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, work was done 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 new and refreshed priorities, amplifying efforts and sharing information about our collective work. Visit www.raisingillinois.org/get-involved to join the Raising Illinois coalition and be a part of our robust and diverse advocacy efforts.



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.



[raisingillinois](#)



[@RaisingIllinois](#)



[Raising Illinois](#)



POLICY PRIORITY: HEALTHY PARENTS & BABIES

Comprehensive Perinatal Supports



Local, State & Federal Budgets

- Commitment of **\$5M in FY 2024 to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for obstetrics providers** to incentivize improved birth outcomes
- Commitment of **\$317M in FY 2024 to increase the Medicaid base rate by 10%** for hospitals, federally qualified health centers and community clinics
- Commitment of **\$18M in FY 2024 for the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) to support and protect statewide reproductive health initiatives**
- Commitment of **\$38M in FY 2024 for IDPH to reduce health disparities** by improving access to equitable health care in safety-net hospitals



Legislation

- Passage of the **Access to Public Health Data Act** (HB 2039; Pub. Act 103-423), directing various state departments and agencies to share public health data, including information on adverse pregnancy and birth outcomes, with local health departments
- Passage of HB 2450 (Pub. Act 103-531), establishing **cultural competency training as a prerequisite for health care provider licensure and renewal** beginning in 2025
- Passage of HB 2519 (Pub. Act 103-160), requiring all hospitals and birth centers to provide parents of newborns with **instructional materials about voluntarily donating milk to premature infants**
- Passage of HB 2820 (Pub. Act 103-169), requiring all birthing facilities to establish policies and continuing education on **addressing airway emergencies experienced during childbirth**
- Passage of the **Mental Health and Wellness Act** (HB 2847; Pub. Act 103-535), requiring state-regulated health insurance plans to cover **an annual mental health and wellness visit to all insured adults and children at no cost**, beginning in 2025



Administration & Implementation

- Award of **\$4.58M in FY 2023 to expand doula services through the Prevention Initiative**, with the potential to serve an estimated 259 additional children once staffing needs are met
- Award of **\$400K in FY 2023 to expand doula services through the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS)**, with the potential to serve an estimated 60 additional children
- Federal approval of the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) State Plan Amendment to **increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for a variety of maternal and child health services**
- Expansion of **Family Connects Chicago**, a Universal Newborn Support Services (UNSS) model, to **7 birthing hospitals** in the City of Chicago, reaching over **5,000 families**
- Continued implementation of **Family Connects in Peoria and Stephenson counties**, reaching **nearly 2,200 families** combined
- Completion of a **workforce analysis to assess the availability and key competencies of the various provider types necessary to scale UNSS statewide**, conducted under the federal Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) grant with oversight from the Illinois Maternal Health Task Force



Public Awareness & Engagement

- Launch of **statewide HFS campaign on Medicaid coverage redetermination** upon the end of continuous eligibility, with high-volume multimedia outreach to beneficiaries
- Ongoing work by the ECCS grant's cross-sector advisory council, coordinated by the Illinois Maternal Health Task Force, to include **community engagement objectives as part of UNSS expansion**
- Development of a package of **public awareness materials on UNSS**, with different resources designed for families, providers, and policymakers
- Launch of **the Gathering campaign**, led by EverThrive Illinois, to address maternal morbidity and mortality in Chicago



POLICY PRIORITY: HEALTHY PARENTS & BABIES

Strengthened Home Visiting System



Local, State & Federal Budgets

- Federal **appropriation of \$500M in FY 2023 and \$550M in FY 2024** for the **Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program**
- Commitment of a **12.5% increase (\$18.75M) in FY 2024 to the Prevention Initiative set-aside in the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG)**, to fund and expand home visiting services
- Commitment of a **27.9% increase (\$5M) in FY 2024 for IDHS home visiting programs**, to serve an additional estimated **440 families**, as well as increase provider salaries



Legislation

- Federal **reauthorization and expansion of MIECHV**, investing a total of **\$3.1B over five years**, doubling the tribal set-aside, developing new data dashboards, and permitting the use of virtual home visits (within the Consolidated Appropriations Act, Pub. L. 117-328)
- Passage of SB 1794 (Pub. Act 103-0498), **codifying the IDHS home visiting program** and ensuring that future funds supplement, rather than supplant, current funds
- Passage of HR 86 and SR 36, requesting the **allocation of a portion of the state's opioid lawsuit settlement funds to home visiting programs**



Administration & Implementation

- Award of **\$2.45M in FY 2023 for Prevention Initiative home visiting programs**
- Implementation of IDHS **home visitor salary floors**, increasing average salaries of home visitors and supervisors by **15% and 17%** respectively
- Inclusion of the **home visiting workforce project** in Illinois' \$4M federal **Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) award**
- Submission of formal recommendations on behalf of the Coalition to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to **inform the development of the FY 2024 ECBG Request for Proposals and improve Prevention Initiative's home visiting model**



Public Awareness & Engagement

- Administration of **Gateways Staffing and Salary Survey** to inform advocacy on provider compensation and related workforce recommendations
- Development of **home visiting messaging materials** for both families and policymakers
- Distribution of **staff wellness resources** to the home visiting workforce





POLICY PRIORITY: HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING

Accessible Family- and Center-based Early Learning & Care



Local, State & Federal Budgets

- Commitment of a **41.4% increase (\$170M) in FY 2024 to the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) for child care system investments**, including:
 - ◊ \$40M to expand the Child Care Assistance Program, meet growing caseload demands, and modernize the Child Care Management System
 - ◊ \$130M to increase wages for early childhood educators through the creation of the Smart Start Child Care Workforce Compensation Contracts program
- Commitment of a 12.5% increase (\$18.75M) in FY 2024 to the Prevention Initiative set-aside in the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG), to fund and expand center-based infant-toddler child care slots
- Commitment of \$2M in FY 2024 to the Off-Hours Child Care Program, to help first responders and third shift workers identify and access child care during nontraditional work hours



Legislation

- Passage of the FY 2024 Budget Implementation Act (HB 3817; Pub. Act 103-8), **making permanent the income threshold of 225% of the federal poverty level for eligibility to participate in the Child Care Assistance Program**
- **Testimony from numerous Coalition supporters, including three Family Leaders and two rural Family Child Care providers**, before joint committees of the Illinois General Assembly in support of Smart Start's proposed investments



Administration & Implementation

- Award of **\$4.38M in FY 2023 for Prevention Initiative center-based programs** to serve infants and toddlers
- Submission of formal recommendations on behalf of the Coalition to ISBE to **inform the development of the FY 2024 ECBG Request for Proposals and improve Prevention Initiative's center-based child care model**
- Establishment of the **ECBG Family Child Care Model** for FY 2024, creating a pathway for home-based providers to receive a new funding stream for their programs
- Inclusion of an **increased award amount for infant-toddler classrooms** in the proposed **Smart Start Transition Grants**, beginning in FY 2024
- **Federal issuance of Executive Order 14095** to increase access to affordable and high-quality early care and learning by, in part, making **changes to the Child Care and Development Block Grant program**



Public Awareness & Engagement

- Engagement of **300+ parents, providers, and other advocates for a public all-Coalition event**, "Child Care: Correcting Perception by Acknowledging Impact," highlighting the recommendations from the Infant and Toddler Child Care Roadmap
- Launch of the Coalition's **Family Child Care Provider Committee** with equitable representation from educators across the state, to explore challenges in quality improvement, facilities, and access to resources



POLICY PRIORITY: HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING

Optimized Early Intervention



Local, State & Federal Budgets

- Commitment of a **34.5% increase (\$40M) in FY 2024 to the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Early Intervention (EI) program** to increase reimbursement rates by 10% for providers and service coordinators, address service coordination challenges, and accommodate growing caseloads



Legislation

- Passage of HR 86 and SR 36, requesting the **allocation of a portion of the state's opioid lawsuit settlement funds to EI**
- **Testimony from numerous Coalition supporters, including a Family Leader**, before a joint committee of the Illinois General Assembly in support of increased funding for EI



Administration & Implementation

- Award of **\$200K from the federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5)** for the IDHS Bureau of Intervention to conduct multi-state research on EI models to inform future improvements to service delivery and workforce supports
- Finalization of contract to develop a **new data management system** to improve EI data collection, tracking, and reporting
- Implementation of **strategies to address existing disparities in EI access for underserved populations** identified in the Education and Workforce Equity Act (HB 2170; Pub. Act 101-654):
 - ◊ The Illinois Interagency Council on Early Intervention's Equity and Access Workgroup developed and gained approval of recommendations for proposed demonstration sites that would **pilot modifications to EI service delivery** to better meet the needs of families with complex needs
 - ◊ The divisions of neonatology at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital, Northwestern Prentice Women's Hospital, University of Chicago Hospital, and the University of Illinois at Chicago Hospital, and EI providers collaborated to launch Project INITIATE, a **NICU-to-Home service delivery model** that seeks to seamlessly transition high-risk, Medicaid-eligible infants to home-based services immediately after NICU discharge and follows them through the process to begin EI services



Public Awareness & Engagement

- Collection of **100+ family testimonials** about the impact of EI through the Coalition's "Babies Can't Wait" campaign
- Participation by **50+ people in 2 bilingual "know your rights" workshops** for families experiencing service delivery delays, organized by the Coalition, Equip for Equality, Start Early, COFI, and the Illinois EI Clearinghouse
- Convening of **2 family town halls** co-hosted by the EI Bureau and the Illinois EI Clearinghouse
- Completion of a **statewide survey of pediatricians' engagement with the EI program**, conducted by the Illinois Chapter of the American Association of Pediatrics
- Release of the **Center for Equity and Excellence Early Intervention Equity Pilot report** by the EI Training Program and EI Bureau with recommendations to address disparities in access, participation, and support
- Launch of the **EI Parent Leadership Training Program** by the Illinois EI Clearinghouse, focusing on training parents on advocacy skills, EI principles, and leadership opportunities
- Formation of the **Illinois EI Grassroots Alliance**, which obtained **nearly 3,000 signatories** on a petition advocating for greater state investment in EI



POLICY PRIORITY: FINANCIALLY SECURE FAMILIES
Family-friendly Work Policies



Legislation

- Federal passage of the **Pregnant Workers Fairness Act**, requiring employers to provide reasonable accommodations for medical conditions related to pregnancy and childbirth (within the Consolidated Appropriations Act, Pub. L. 117-328)
- Federal Passage of the **Providing Urgent Maternal Protections for Nursing Mothers Act (PUMP Act)**, requiring employers to provide break time and a private place to pump at work for both hourly and salaried employees (within the Consolidated Appropriations Act, Pub. L. 117-328)
- State passage of the **Paid Leave for All Workers Act** (SB 208; Pub. Act 102-1143), entitling nearly all employees in Illinois to a minimum of 40 hours of paid leave, or an accrual of one hour for every 40 hours worked, in a 12-month period
- Considerable progress in **negotiating a state-level paid family and medical leave insurance proposal**, led by 25+ contributing organizations and legislative champions through the Time to Care Coalition



Administration & Implementation

- Extension of the **temporary rule permitting families to qualify for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) under Initial Activity Search**, allowing up to three months of subsidized early care and learning while the parent or other relative is searching for eligible employment or education



Public Awareness & Engagement

- **Release of report assessing impact of establishing job search as an eligible activity for CCAP**, titled Expanding Illinois Child Care Assistance to Job and School Search: Experiences of Cook County Parents



POLICY PRIORITY: FINANCIALLY SECURE FAMILIES
Income Supports for Families



Local, State & Federal Budgets

- Commitment of **\$15M in FY 2024 for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program** to increase cash assistance grants to 5% above previous levels
- Commitment of **\$17.6M in FY 2024 to satisfy the newly established child support passthrough payment requirement**



Legislation

- Passage of the Second FY 2023 Budget Implementation Act (SB 1720; Pub. Act 102-1115), **increasing child support passthrough payments to 100%** for households who receive cash assistance through TANF
- Passage of the FY 2024 Budget Implementation Act (HB 3817; Pub. Act 103-8), **increasing the TANF cash assistance amount by 5%, to 35% of the federal poverty level** (the equivalent of \$103.58 more per month for a parent with two children)



Administration & Implementation

- Administration of the **Chicago Resilient Communities Pilot**, providing a total of **\$31.5M in monthly payments to 5,000 households**
- Administration of the **Cook County Promise Guaranteed Income Pilot Program**, providing a total of **\$19.5M in monthly payments to 3,250 households**
- Implementation of the **Illinois First Steps program** with **\$2.5M in seed deposits** for higher education savings accounts for every child born or adopted starting in CY 2023, fulfilling HB 2237 (Pub. Act 101-466)



Public Awareness & Engagement

- Facilitation of **community-based information sessions on the Illinois First Steps program**, led by LIFT-Chicago
- Development of a **statewide outreach and mobile enrollment campaign** to improve awareness, challenge misperceptions, and drive participation in the **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)**, with a planned launch in FY 2024





POLICY PRIORITY: STRONG INFRASTRUCTURE

Cross-system Preparation, Professional Development & Support



Local, State & Federal Budgets

- Commitment of **\$22.8M in FY 2024 to implement the Children's Behavioral Health Transformation Initiative**, a cross-agency program to better coordinate and facilitate access to mental health services
- Commitment of **\$2M in FY 2024 to the Illinois Department of Public Health to create a mental health training program for front-line workers in the pediatric field**



Administration & Implementation

- **Increase of nearly 35% to the number of consultants in the Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC) Database**, maintained by the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA), to **144 consultants across all 102 counties**
- Establishment of **2 new cohorts of the Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC) certificate program** at Erikson Institute, providing **55 full advanced grants and scholarships**
- Facilitation of **9 community of practice meetings** by the Erikson Institute for clinicians and practitioners to support their use of the DC:0-5 diagnostic criteria, reaching **113 professionals**
- Award of **\$3.37M in Early Childhood Faculty Preparation Grants to 4 universities**, reaching an estimated **78 students** from diverse backgrounds pursuing graduate degrees in early childhood, as part of the **Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) initiative**
- Continued administration of the **ECACE scholarship program, awarding nearly \$12.8M to 1,438 students** in its first 18 months
- Launch of the **Illinois Early Childhood Educator Apprenticeship Pilot** by the Illinois Department of Human Services' Division of Early Childhood to bridge and connect scholarship programs leading to credentials and degrees with on-the-job training and mentorship tailored to specific community contexts



Public Awareness & Engagement

- Launch of a **public awareness campaign on I/ECMHC** through the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development

POLICY PRIORITY: STRONG INFRASTRUCTURE

Strong State & Community Structures



Administration & Implementation

- Establishment by Birth to Five Illinois of all **39 regional Birth to Five Action Councils and Family Councils** statewide
- Award of **\$4M in FY 2023 to the Illinois State Board of Education from the federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5)** to strengthen coordination, quality, and outcomes of prenatal-to-three and early childhood services