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General – Transition Process

Last revised July 28, 2026

1. What early childhood programs and services are transferring to IDEC?

Illinois Department of Human Services	Illinois State Board of Education	Illinois Department of Child and Family Services	Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development
• Child Care • Migrant & Seasonal Head Start • Head Start Collaboration Office • Early Intervention • Home Visiting • State Home Visiting • MIECHV • Maternal Child Home Visiting	• Early Childhood Block Grant • Preschool for All (PFA) • Preschool for All Expansion (PFAE) • Prevention Initiative (PI)	• Child Care Licensing	• Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH)

2. What should I expect on July 1?

Check out our [IDEC Provider Letter available in English and Spanish](#):

A lot will remain the same on July 1:

- Our newly consolidated EC team of early childhood staff will still continue to support early childhood programs and services in Illinois
- Families will continue to access services and supports in the same manner they do now; there are no immediate technology or service delivery shifts for families
- This year's grants and contracts will be continued in FY27, so programs, services, and payment schedules will remain steady
- Providers will still have the same number to call for questions
- Regular updates from the agency through our newsletter, social media, updated website, and public meetings

3. What will be different on July 1?

- One place to go for early childhood services. All early childhood agency staff will be under "one roof."
- Early childhood programs and services will have a strong foundation of operational excellence from which to build over the next several years;
 - Stronger data practices and processes
 - Defined family engagement structure
 - New and growing family engagement team to support system navigation
 - Clear ownership of agency and program functions and mandates
- Early childhood grantees will use one unified grants management system, EUNA, managed by IDEC
- Customer service will be enhanced for questions about services
- The website will contain information on programs and services from each of the transferring agencies
- IDEC will officially be the lead agency for the Child Care Assistance Program, Early Intervention Program, Home Visiting Programs, and the Early Childhood Block Grant programs.

4. What will the next phase of the transition look like?

- Modernizing our operational processes, moving away from paper and pencil-based systems.
 - Small groups of parents, providers, educators, and state staff will begin or continue to test new modernizations and automation of systems with the goal of working through any issues ahead of a statewide roll out.
- Reviewing and documenting current practices for early childhood programs in order to best understand how to bring efficiency and equity

- IDEC will continue with our Transition Ad Hoc workgroups to lift the current state of early childhood programs and develop recommendations.
- IDEC will have reoccurring biweekly Transition Update Meetings to share redesign efforts and collect feedback from system partners.
- IDEC will continue to work on an unduplicated count of children in programs and services to bring transparency to families, providers and stakeholders so that we can make data-informed choices about future programs and opportunities.
- After approval from the FBI, creating a background check unit and streamlining the background check process.

5. I am a CCAP provider; how will I get paid after July 1?

There will be no immediate changes to how you receive your payment, and payments will remain as previously scheduled. IDEC will continue to use the current systems to pay providers – this includes Child Care Management System (CCMS) and IVR.

The State of Illinois will observe the Independence Day holiday on Friday, July 3rd and office closure will impact payment processing. For providers that are normally paid in the first week of July, the Comptroller's Office has indicated that recipients who have chosen to receive payments via direct deposit may see those deposits as early as Wednesday, July 8th. Paper checks will be mailed on Tuesday, July 7th. While the Comptroller's Office is implementing a new accounting system during this timeframe, no additional delays are expected.

6. What training would we need for the transition, if any?

IDEC is committed to a seamless transition which means mitigating any access or services changes/disruptions. With the exception of the new EUNA grants management system (see Questions 6 and 14), no immediate training is needed for families, providers, or other stakeholders. If you have specific questions about available training and guidance, please email Questions.IDEC@illinois.gov.

7. What is the new grants management system IDEC is using?

In Spring 2026, IDEC launched a new unified grants management system, EUNA Grants that IDEC will use to administer all IDEC grants in FY27. All existing early childhood grantees have been provided with access to training for all FY27 grants. The links to these trainings are available on the [IDEC website](#).

8. Also, can you confirm that as of now all programs at IDHS, ISBE, and DCFS are planned to transition to IDEC as of July 2026, and that you will update that again in June?

Yes, early childhood programs at IDHS, ISBE, and DCFS will statutorily transition to IDEC on July 1, 2026. For a full list of programs and services, visit the IDEC website at idec.illinois.gov. For ongoing updates and information on IDEC, please sign up for our [newsletter here](#).

9. Who do I reach out to on July 1 if I have a question?

If you are a grantee or a provider with a licensing question, unless you are otherwise notified, please continue to reach out to your same point of contact as you did on June 30 (e.g., your licensing rep). If you have other questions or need assistance navigating the system, please reach out to Questions.IDEC@illinois.gov

Communication

10. How are you working on communicating with providers that are not aware of IDEC and any changes because they are disconnected?

On May 27, 2026, IDEC sent a [letter](#) to providers in English and Spanish that included updates on the transition and reiterated what is not changing.

Our goal is that the transition will be seamless—what matters most is that providers continue to get paid and get their questions answered. They will see that communications are coming from a new agency but the staff they've been working with will be by and large the staff they will continue to work with.

IDEC continues to grow our team, build communications tools, and create resources. We know that families and providers learn about early childhood programs and services through many different places and spaces. We recognize the importance of IDEC partnering with multiple trusted stakeholders to share information.

It's important that IDEC continues to partner with multiple stakeholders across a diverse set of platforms and resources to communicate about the transition. This includes social media, formal letters, and in-person meetings. Our hope is that the transition is seamless so that providers feel positive impacts from the transition as they roll out. Please do feel free to share ideas for communications vehicles and the

types of information you'd like to be communicated by emailing Questions.IDEC@Illinois.gov.

11. How do I sign up for the IDEC newsletter?

For ongoing updates and information on IDEC, please sign up for our [newsletter here](#).

12. Where do I follow IDEC for updates? What are IDEC's social media handles?

The latest updates announcements and resources can be found on our [website](#) or social media platforms:

- [Linkedin @Illinois Department of Early Childhood](#)
- [Facebook @IllinoisDepartmentofEarlyChildhood](#)
- [Instagram: @Illinois Department of Early Childhood](#)

Engagement

13. Can I register to be a part of a workgroup?

Anyone can express interest in joining a workgroup by signing up on the IDEC website at idec.illinois.gov. Additionally, all workgroups are open to the public and anyone may join. To see when workgroups are scheduled, please visit the [IDEC online calendar here](#) or sign up for an IDEC Workgroup by completing the [English](#) or [Spanish](#) Interest Forms!

14. I signed up to participate in a workgroup but have not heard anything. When will I know if I've been selected?

Due to the high volume of workgroup interest submissions, we are not able to select everyone for a workgroup participation. All workgroup meetings are open to the public and direct input can be provided through public comment or Padlet during the meetings.

15. What are the plans to engage Illinois Montessori programs and families in the system?

IDEC is committed to supporting opportunities for all Illinois families, providers and stakeholders, including those participating in Illinois Montessori programs, to engage

in co-design efforts, feedback sessions and overall effort to improve in the early childhood system. IDEC has launched workgroups, listening sessions, newsletters, and other modalities for stakeholders to engage with us. We encourage families, educators, and other partners and interested parties to visit the [IDEC website](#) and [sign up for our newsletter](#) to learn more about specific ways to engage. Our goal is to continue ongoing collaboration that will aid in a simpler and better early childhood system for children and families in Illinois.

Grant Administration

16. What grants will be administered through EUNA Grants?

All grants administered by IDEC will be administered through EUNA Grants. This includes the Early Childhood Block Grants (Prevention Initiative, Preschool for All, and Preschool For All Expansion Grants) currently managed by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and grants currently administered by the DHS Division of Early Childhood.

As a provider, sub-grants that you currently apply for and/or receive directly through INCCRRA (e.g., Smart Start Workforce Grants) and CCR&R's will continue being administered by them.

17. Will current Early Childhood Block Grants (i.e., Preschool For All, Preschool For All Expansion, and Prevention Initiative) be continued or will we need to reapply for FY27?

Early Childhood Block Grants (i.e., Preschool For All, Preschool For All Expansion, and Prevention Initiative) are in a continuation year in FY27. As with past grant cycles, grantees need to reapply annually to receive the awards. Grantees will use EUNA Grants to apply for the FY27 award. The proposed FY27 budget maintains flat funding for ECBG, so IDEC does not anticipate making new ECBG (PFA, PFAE, and PI) awards at this time.

18. When will we know about our grant for FY27?

All Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) grantees were notified of the opportunity to apply for a FY27 continuation grant in April 2026. Grant applications are open **until** June 10, 2026. If you are a current ECBG grantee and have not received a notice, please contact your ISBE principal consultant.

19. Will there be an update on PFA Grant fund disbursement for 26-27?

All Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) grantees were notified of the opportunity to apply for a FY27 continuation grant in April 2026. Grant applications are open until June 10, 2026. If you are a current ECBG grantee and did not receive a notice, please contact your ISBE principal consultant.

20. Curious how the funding for PFA and PFAE will transition to IDEC? Is it safe for school districts to assume they will receive the same funding for FY27?

All Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) grantees were notified of the opportunity to apply for a FY27 continuation grant in April 2026. FY27 grants are anticipated to be level funded. If you are a current ECBG grantee and have not received a notice, please contact your ISBE principal consultant.

21. When will programs that have ISBE PFA/PI funding find out how we will be entering information for the FY27 grants?

All Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) grantees were notified of the opportunity to apply for a FY27 continuation grant in April 2026, including instructions on how to apply in IDEC's grants management system, EUNA Grants. If you are a current ECBG grantee and have not received a notice, please contact your ISBE principal consultant.

22. Are there instructions for current PFA/PFAE programs to follow at this point regarding transitions that should be followed? Will there be changes that current staff need to make or be aware of?

All Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) grantees were notified of the opportunity to apply for a FY27 continuation grant in April 2026, including instructions on how to apply in IDEC's grants management system, EUNA Grants. Multiple trainings for grantees were held this Spring and recordings and FAQs are available by using the link on the [IDEC Grants website](#). If you are a current ECBG grantee and have not received a notice or have additional questions, please contact your ISBE principal consultant.

23. Will there be any new opportunities for PFA/E funding in FY27?

No, it is not anticipated that there will be new PFA/E funding opportunities in FY27. Notices on how current grantees can apply for FY27 continuation grants have been

sent in April 2026. If you are a current ECBG grantee and have not received a notice or have additional questions, please contact your ISBE principal consultant.

24. Any changes to screening, eligibility, and/or programming requirements for PFA/E?

No, the FY27 ECBG program requirements will remain the same as FY26.

25. For schools, I understand that our oversight will stay with ISBE. Will our funding also remain with ISBE, or will it switch to IDEC (we receive a PFA grant).

All ECBG funding, including PFA, PFAE, and PI, will transition to IDEC. IDEC will be responsible for program implementation and oversight of these programs on July 1, 2026.

Federal Funding Freeze

26. With the federal funding freeze, what is our best pathway for making our voices heard about stopping the freeze?

On February 6, 2026, a federal judge ordered a preliminary injunction to stop the ACF's funding freeze until the case is decided on its merits. As of June 2026, there has been no change to that court order, but the litigation is continuing in court. If you disagree with this freeze, then you can reach out to members of the US Congress

Licensing and Background Checks

27. Will programs in schools (park districts offering before and after school) be required to follow the same ratio and teacher qualifications as child care centers? As a child care center that offers before and after school in addition to full day child care, will our before and after program have different requirements as it falls under alternative licensing?

All licensed programs will continue to comply with the appropriate licensing rule that governs ratios and teachers' qualifications. That includes child care centers that offer before and after school care in addition to full day child care. These requirements are not changing July 1, 2026. If you have specific questions, please reach out to Questions.IDEC@illinois.gov.

28. Will Regional Offices of Education qualify in the same exemption category as schools?

It depends on the program. Please reach out to Questions.IDEC@illinois.gov to connect you to the appropriate point of contact to answer your specific question.

29. How will IDEC monitor whether the Licensing Redesign Bill will expand or restrict the available workforce, particularly in home-based and rural settings?

The changes in the licensing redesign bill were developed based on the feedback of hundreds of Illinois' providers and stakeholders and are intended to clarify and streamline processes while ensuring requirements are in place to keep children safe. The Illinois General Assembly passed [Public Act 104-0480](#) to clarify language and update rules that will reduce complexity and subjectivity in licensing. and [HB5099](#) provides the authority and responsibility to IDEC to conduct the background check process (effective date: July 1, 2027).

IDEC has also partnered with Wonderschool to build a licensing platform for providers and staff that will help providers further navigate the licensing process. The platform is currently in development and further updates are forthcoming. IDEC will monitor implementation of these laws and projects closely, including impacts on the workforce, identifying any opportunities for continuous improvement and implementation support.

30. Is the definition of license-exempt staying the same for informal home-based FFN providers?

Yes, the definition of license-exempt is staying the same for informal home-based FFN providers as part of the transition to IDEC.

31. As IDEC is developing the new licensing platform, what feedback loops will exist, so provider experiences informed ongoing refinement, not just initial rollout?

IDEC will conduct testing with a sample group of providers to engage and provide feedback on the platform. Additionally, before and during the launch, IDEC will provide comprehensive support and have lots of opportunity for feedback. The exact format of these feedback loops is in planning and will be shared closer to the timeline of release. We also welcome any suggestions and feedback at Questions.IDEC@Illinois.gov.

32. Is there clarity about the role of the Licensing Platform in the background check process?

DCFS will continue to conduct background checks for all child care licensing facilities on July 1, 2026. IDEC will be working closely with DCFS and is exploring opportunities to add dedicated capacity at DCFS to support processing for child care providers.

Starting July 1, 2027, pending FBI approval, IDEC will assume responsibility for background checks. With the passage of [Public Act 104-0480](#), background checks will become more streamlined for individuals and IDEC is exploring opportunities to leverage technology, including the Licensing Platform, to further improve this process. We will continue to provide updates on this as we get closer to July 2027.

33. Will providers receive information about offenses that are waived to make their own determination of hiring eligibility?

Until IDEC obtains federal approval to conduct background checks, which can take up to a year, providers will continue to receive information from DCFS about offenses that are waivable to make their own determination of hiring eligibility.

Starting July 1, 2027, with the passage of [Public Act 104-0480](#), background checks will be at the individual employee or volunteer level, and IDEC will be reviewing waivable offense. As we get closer to July 2027, we will provide additional updates on this process.

34. How will IDEC ensure that leaders of centers have accurate information and promote and implement effective communication with their staff? Will there be a way to measure if leaders are aware of policies, strategies, and regulations in maintaining the well-being of staff/teachers and the impact on children in their care?

Early childhood services that support providers are now all under one roof- the Illinois Department of Early Childhood. This will provide a single place to go to and learn from for state level policy, rule, and guidance updates. To receive updates, please sign up for the [IDEC newsletter](#) at here or visit the IDEC website at IDEC.illinois.gov. If you have specific questions or concerns, please reach out to Questions.IDEC@Illinois.gov.

Additionally, many of the IDEC resources and supports for providers implementing and promoting effective practices and communications with their early childhood teachers and workers are through our grant or contracted partners like INCCRRA, the

Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs) or partners providing specialized training and technical assistance. As families or providers have questions or give us feedback, we are tracking that information in new ways so that we can start to better understand areas to improve our work through those partners. Please do share questions about policies or ideas for communications vehicles and the types of information by emailing Questions.IDEC@Illinois.gov.

35. What is the current average timeline for licensing a new childcare center in Illinois, and are there plans to reduce that timeframe?

Understanding expected timelines is critical for providers securing financing, hiring staff, and preparing for enrollment. Many new providers are paying rent, utilities, insurance, and loan obligations while waiting for licensing approval. Hiring staff months in advance is often financially unrealistic, and qualified candidates frequently accept other positions before the center can open. Right now, there is not a lot of data on how long it takes for aspiring child care providers to become fully licensed. Several factors come into play (e.g., readiness of the facilities, completeness of the initial application, training of the staff)—starting a child care home or center is essentially starting a small business or non-profit. But child care providers are caring for babies and so their work is incredibly important. The state's role is to ensure that facilities are safe, and staff are trained to give parents peace of mind that their children are not only cared for, but their cognitive functions are nurtured while parents' work. All 16 CCR&Rs provide resources to help with provider start up. To find your areas CCR&R and to learn about the resources available, please visit [Find Your Local CCR&R](#).

Additionally, IDEC recently hired a Director of Program Incubation and Start- Up who will lead efforts to support new providers, especially in communities with child care shortages, and start up new early care and education facilities. Sign up for our newsletter to learn more about IDEC and resources available or email Question.IDEC@illinois.gov if you have a specific question.

36. Has DCFS considered implementing a dedicated licensing liaison or accelerated review process for providers opening childcare centers in communities with childcare shortages?

As of July 1, 2026, IDEC will manage all aspects of child care licensing except for background checks as IDEC is awaiting approval from the FBI to run our background check unit (estimated July 2027). IDEC recently hired a Director of Program

Incubation and Start- Up who will lead efforts to support new providers, especially in communities with child care shortages, start up new early care and education facilities

As part of our commitment to make the licensing review process more streamlined and simpler for providers and staff, IDEC is in the process of updating our technology and data infrastructure to reduce burden, improve efficiencies, and expediate timelines. We anticipate components of this infrastructure rolling out in FY27. IDEC provides updates on these projects at our monthly Tech Talks, via our newsletter and through our Transition Update public meetings. Please visit our website at idec.illinois.gov to learn more about these events and resources.

37. How are we addressing statewide consistency in quality for early childhood programs and technical assistance and support being provided to EC educators and leaders?

IDEC understands the importance of consistency in quality for all early childhood programs across the state.

IDEC recently launched a Program Standards and Alignment Workgroup (PSAW) to help IDEC create a shared vision for birth to five program standards. The goal is to support every child's healthy development and success through kindergarten and beyond. PSAW will make recommendations to align program standards across key areas by looking at input from the workgroup and other resources, developing guiding principles, and assessing what is practical for implementation. Check out the PSAW meeting materials from [June 2026](#) and visit our website and check out the [calendar](#) to attend these public workgroup meetings.

38. Are there plans to expedite the background check and clearance process for child care center staff? What solutions are being considered to address staffing challenges created by lengthy background check processing times?

While IDEC began managing the child care licensing process on July 1, 2026, DCFS will continue to conduct background checks for all child care licensing facilities for another year. IDEC will be working closely with DCFS and is exploring opportunities to add dedicated capacity at DCFS to support processing for child care providers. Starting July 1, 2027, pending FBI approval, IDEC will assume responsibility for background checks.

Additionally, with the passage of [Public Act 104-0480](#), background checks will become more streamlined for individuals, reducing burden and wait times for individuals already with a background check looking to change positions or facilities. IDEC is also exploring opportunities to leverage technology, including the Licensing Platform, to further improve this process. Please sign up for the IDEC newsletter or join our Transition Update meetings to continue to receive updates as we get closer to July 2027.

39. What supports are available specifically for first-time childcare center owners navigating the licensing process? Many new providers face significant financial obligations, including rent, utilities, insurance, and loan payments, while waiting for licensing approval.

- A. First-time child care providers can receive direct technical assistance through their local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R). [Find Your Local CCR&R](#)
- B. Additionally, IDEC recently hired a Director of Program Incubation and Start-Up who will lead efforts to support new providers, especially in communities with child care shortages, and start up new early care and education facilities. Sign up for our newsletter to learn more about IDEC and resources available or email Question.IDEC@illinois.gov if you have a specific question.

Budget

40. Was there a budget briefing to dig into the proposed IDEC budget, as we've done with other agencies over the years?

Yes, we provided updates on the Governor's budget proposal. For more information on Governor Pritzker's FY2027 budget proposal, visit the [Governor's Office of Management of Budget website](#) (budget.illinois.gov/).

41. Was the Governor's FY27 Budget approved?

Yes, the 104th General Assembly (GA) approved a [FY27 budget](#) for IDEC. The GA appropriated \$4.4 billion for early childhood education and care as IDEC prepares for the first year of administering programs and services starting on July 1, 2026. IDEC will receive 2.084 billion from the General Revenue Fund to support IDEC's launch and transition of staff from other departments. For major programs:

- Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP): An increase of \$55 million to serve up to 155,000 children.
- Early Intervention: An increase of \$15 million to maintain and strengthen services.
- Early Childhood Block Grant: Maintain funding to support preschool and prevention initiative programs.
- The maintenance of other key programs and services like Home Visiting and Smart Start Workforce Grants.

42. From a school district perspective for preschool, when will we know about funding for FY27, as well as processes such as monitoring, etc.?

Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) grantees were notified of the opportunity to apply for a FY27 continuation grant in April 2026. FY27 grants are anticipated to be level funded. If you are a current ECBG grantee and have not received a notice, please contact your ISBE principal consultant.

Legislative bills

43. Is there any other legislation being developed for this session besides what was presented, and if so, can you provide any updates?

IDEC has [3 Legislative Initiatives](#) that passed in both chambers:

1) [Public Act 104-0480 \(HB3595\)](#), Child Care Terminology (Licensing Redesign)

Amends the Early Childhood Act. The bill honors early childhood educators and caregivers by moving away from outdated terms like “day care” to “early care and education” and “facility” to “provider.” It lets IDEC tie background checks to the individual instead of the provider and streamlines license exempt structure and application requirements, providing consistent licensing decisions, reduces delays, and duplications in process.

Effective date: Once signed by the Governor:

New license exemption structure is not effective until **July 1, 2027** for child care providers and not effective until **July 1, 2028** for Park Districts. Will require rulemaking.

Changes in terminology are effective in statute on **July 1, 2026**.

Background check changes will not go into effect until **July 1, 2027**, upon approval by the FBI.

2) HB 5099, IDEC Background Check

Amends Early Childhood Act and Child Care Act of 1969. Effective July 1, 2027, provides authority and responsibility to conduct fingerprint-based criminal history check on child care providers to IDEC. Allows IDEC to seek federal approval for this authority (until then, DCFS retains). The bill also adopts the National Child Protection Act.

Effective date: Once signed by the Governor or **July 1, 2026**, whichever is later, except for: Provisions related to authority and responsibility to conduct fingerprinting and background checks: **July 1, 2027**.

Will require rulemaking

3) HB 5204, IDEC Early Learning Council

Amends the Illinois Early Learning Council Act. Updates provisions, on appointees, sets forth provisions regarding conflicts of interest, and makes other changes.

Effective Date: January 1, 2027

Child Care Finder Tool

44. Will more information be shared about the child care finder tool ahead of it going live? Is the expectation that all families will go directly to this portal vs. being engaged by providers?

Yes, while not planned for July 2026, once the new IDEC child care finder tool is ready for roll out, IDEC will share information and resources with providers, partners and other stakeholders. To continue to learn more and keep up on this timeline, [sign up for our newsletter here](#).

45. How will the childcare finder work in relation to the CCR&R Referrals?

The IDEC child care finder will be another tool to assist with referrals. As we get closer to the roll out of the new tool, IDEC will work with CCR&R staff on communication, training, and resources. To continue to learn more and keep up on this timeline, [sign up for our newsletter here](#).

46. Can you tell us more about the new child care finder platform? Especially from a preschool lens.

We're excited to share more details on our new technology. Because of this, IDEC has rolled out a monthly series of Tech Talks, which focuses on our new tech. You can take a look at our previous Tech Talks which have focused on Grant Management, Licensing, and Child Care finder [in our calendar](#).

General Comments and/or Questions

47. How can people use child care if they have medical cards?

Please reach out to your local CCR&R for support on family specific questions. To find your CCR&R, please visit the [INCCRRA](#) website.

48. Can you define coordinated application?

A coordinated application in early childhood is a single unified process that allows families to apply for multiple early childhood programs at once—rather than having to complete separate applications for each program or provider. While IDEC plans to release a coordinated application in the future, this will not be introduced on July 1.

49. I usually try to listen to most of the transition workgroups, but I haven't seen any kind of draft yet (other than possibly the funding group, and even that isn't very clear). Do you know when we might start seeing a draft of the proposed changes?

All the transition workgroups continue to iterate on emerging recommendations, with the process of refining based on feedback and direct input from parents, providers, and other system partners. Emerging recommendations can be found on the slide decks for each ad hoc workgroup. They are also discussed at each monthly workgroup meeting. Workgroups frequently share their tentative timelines for finalizing recommendations during workgroup meetings.