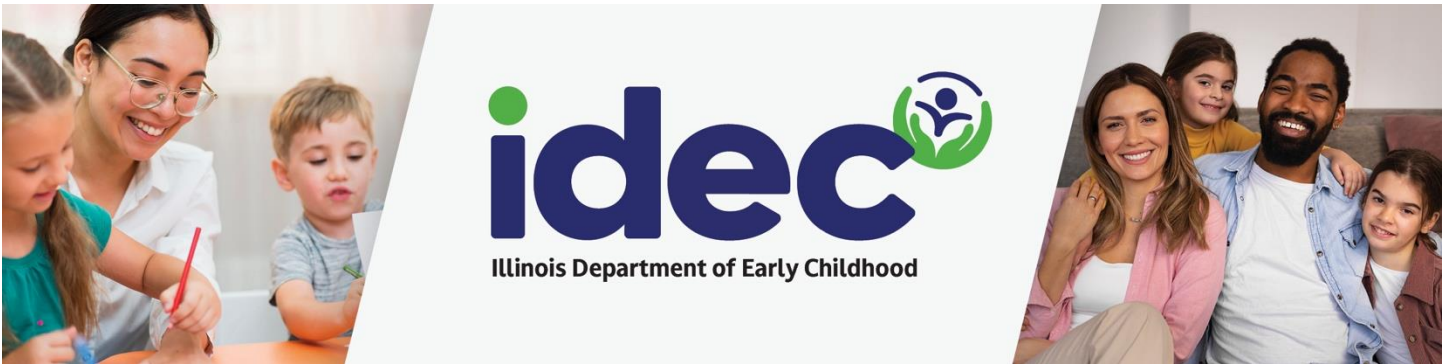


Frequently Asked Questions



Introduction

The **Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC)** is being created to make early childhood services simpler, fairer, and better for families and providers. As we undergo this transition, we know there are questions about what it means, timelines, and implications to early childhood programs and services--below, you will find answers to common questions. Use the links below to jump to the sections:

- [For Parents](#)
- [For Providers](#)
- [General Information](#)

For Parents

1. Why is Illinois creating the Department of Early Childhood, a new state agency for early childhood??

Right now, child care and early education programs, like preschool, aren't all in one place in state government. It's like keeping your child's clothes in three different rooms — t-shirts in the kitchen, socks in the basement, and pants in the bathroom. Imagine how hard it would be to get your child dressed! This is what Illinois families and providers face today. Instead of going to one place for support and funding, they have to work with three different state agencies, making it harder to get the help they need.



Illinois wants to be the best state to raise a family, so we are improving early childhood education and care to make it easier and fairer for families with young children. The new Department of Early Childhood (IDEC) will bring early childhood services together in one place, making it easier for families and providers to access services and improving how different programs work together across the state.

2. What will change under the new agency?

In the short term, nothing will change. **Until July 1, 2026**, programs will stay with their current agencies, and services will continue as usual. In the long term, moving all early childhood programs into one agency will make it easier for families and providers to access services and support.

3. What programs and services will move to the new agency?

Programs and services moving from their current agencies (**ISBE, IDHS, and DCFS**) to the new agency include:

<p>Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) ● Migrant & Seasonal Head Start ● Early Intervention ● Head Start State Collaboration Office ● Home Visiting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ State Home Visiting ○ MIECHV ○ Maternal Child Home Visiting
<p>Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Early Childhood Block Grant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Preschool for All (PFA) ○ Preschool for All Expansion ○ Prevention Initiative (PI)



Illinois Department of
Child & Family
Services (DCFS)

- Child Care (Day Care) Licensing

*These programs and services will move to the new agency starting **July 1, 2026.***

4. My child is in pre-school or child care now. What will change?

In the short term, nothing will change. Your child's program will stay with its current agency, and services will continue as usual. In the long term, moving all early childhood programs into one agency will make it easier to access services and support.

5. I am eligible for state early childhood resources now. Is that changing?

No changes as a result of the transition to IDEC are expected in the short term. Your program will stay with its current agency until July 1, 2026. Long term, the new agency will make it simpler and fairer for families to access services and support.

6. How can I learn more about the transition to the new agency?

You can learn more and provide feedback in several ways:

- **Website:** Visit the [Early Childhood Transition website](#) for updates and information.
- **Transition Advisory Committee (TAC):** The TAC gathers input and addresses the needs of families and providers. Meetings are held monthly and are open to the public. Find the [list of members](#) and [meeting dates](#).
- **Listening Sessions:** The State holds virtual listening sessions every two months to share updates and gather input. Find dates and times [here](#).
- **2024 Feedback Survey:** Share your thoughts through the [Listening Session Survey \(English\)](#) or [Listening Session Survey \(Spanish\)](#).

For Providers

7. I am currently a Provider (e.g., PFA/PFAE, CCAP, SSWG, PI grantee). What will change?



In the short term, nothing will change. Until July 1, 2026, your program will stay with its current agency, and services will continue as usual. In the long term, moving all early childhood programs into one agency will simplify access to services and support for providers and families.

8. Will there be new Requests for Proposal (RFPs) and/or Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) for Fiscal Year (FY)26?

Until July 1, 2026, current agencies will continue managing programs and issuing RFPs and NOFOs. For more information, visit [Illinois Cares for Kids for IDHS Early Childhood Services or ISBE's Early Childhood Request for Proposals Site](#).

9. Will there be new Requests for Proposal (RFPs) and/or Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) for Fiscal Year (FY)27?

IDEC is committed to a smooth transition. No final decisions have been made about FY27 RFPs or NOFOs. We will keep stakeholders informed, and updates will be posted on the IDEC website.

10. How will funding for programs be handled during the transition?

Current agencies will continue managing funding for FY25 and FY26. Funding for early childhood programs, including Smart Start Illinois, will remain with IDHS, ISBE, and DCFS until July 1, 2026.

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General Information

12. Did the creation of the new agency require legislative action?

Yes, the creation of the new agency required a law to be passed. In Spring 2024, Senate Bill 1 (**Public Act 103-0594**) was passed, and Governor Pritzker signed it into law on June 25, 2024. This law created the Department of Early Childhood to manage early childhood programs and services.

13. What is the timeline for the new agency?

The new Department of Early Childhood will be created *over the next two years*. Until July 1, 2026, programs will stay with their current agencies to allow time for a smooth transition.

14. Is the new early childhood agency part of Smart Start Illinois?

Smart Start Illinois is a multi-year plan to eliminate preschool deserts, increase funding to child care providers to raise wages and quality, and reach more vulnerable families with early support. Moving to the new agency will help make these changes and create a simpler and fairer system. Until July 1, 2026, Smart Start funding will continue to be managed by the current agencies (IDHS and ISBE), and then it will move to IDEC.

15. Is there a FY25 Budget for the new Department of Early Childhood?

Yes, the FY25 State Budget includes \$14 million to help establish the new Department of Early Childhood. This funding will help align and simplify processes across programs and services and support improving programs. Long-term, this is an investment in a better system for children from birth to age five.

16. What are the workgroups, and how can I learn more about them?

As we start building the new agency and making early childhood services easier, fairer, and better for everyone in Illinois, the Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC) is focused on listening to parents and providers, especially those who have not been well-served by the system. One way IDEC is doing this is by creating workgroups that focus on specific topics.



These workgroups will include people from all parts of the early childhood community, but most members will be parents and providers. They will make recommendations to help shape future policies and improvements to the system.

- Supporting Families with Special Needs
- Supporting Multilingual Learners
- Workforce
- Data, Analytics, and Insights
- Funding Design
- Intermediary Alignment
- Standards Alignment
- Social Emotional Supports
- Advisory and Governance
- More workgroups will be added as needed.

Find upcoming meetings and more information [here](#).

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