



**FORESIGHT** LAW+POLICY

# Illinois DEC Advisory Groups Planning Workgroup Meeting #9

March 2, 2026

# Introductions

- Please add your name, county, and role in the chat!
  - What's your favorite part of Spring?



# Plan for Today

- Introductions
- Meeting Norms
- Family Engagement Framework
- Early Learning Council Legislation
- Next Steps
- Public Comment

# Welcome!

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Here are our virtual meeting protocols:

## **For Workgroup Members:**

- ✓ Please be on video as much as possible to help with overall engagement
- ✓ Mute self when not speaking
- ✓ Feel free to come off mute, use Chat feature or “raise hand” button for questions or comments
- ✓ If you are experiencing an unstable connections, switch to phone call or close other applications

## **For Public Participants:**

- ✓ Attendees can provide input through public comment (last five minutes of meeting)



## Workgroup Working Norms

- Process is part of the solution
- Step Up, Step Back
- Questions seek to understand, be curious
- Prioritize parent experience and provider experience
- Act with courage and vulnerability
- Recognize the difference between intent and impact; I might not intend to hurt or offend but the impact may be to hurt or offend



# Where We Are In Building Recommendations



# How We Are Building Recommendations

1. We have developed draft recommendations for a desired end state that are now being shared with other groups.
  - It has some outstanding issues or open questions – we will plug those holes later as needed.
  - At our next meeting we will go over the feedback we have received from other workgroups with whom we have shared our draft recommendations.
2. We have been learning about the current state: what does the advisory function currently look like?
  - We learned about Birth to Five Councils and Head Start Family Councils.
  - We learned about the Early Learning Council, the state's designated State Advisory Council under the Head Start Act, and decided we wanted to dig deeper to understand how to reshape our lead council to meet our changed needs after July 1.
  - At this meeting we will learn more about IDEC's emerging family engagement framework, and also legislation impacting the Early Learning Council
3. Starting in May we will organize our views about the current state and discuss how to get from the current state to the desired end state: identify immediate next steps -- and ongoing processes for IDEC as the advisory function evolves



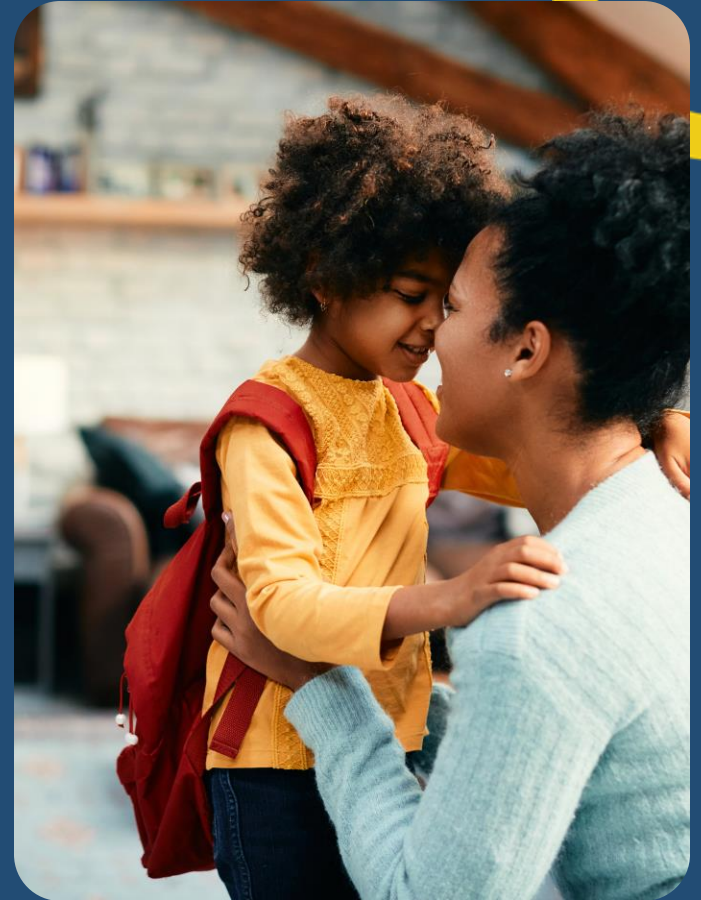
# IDEC's Family Engagement Framework





# Family Engagement Framework

A *draft* framework outlining the vision, principles, and structures for engaging parents and caregivers as partners in Illinois' early childhood system.



# Proposed Community Agreements



Stay engaged



Speak your truth in a safe space



Take space, make space



Allow time for interpretation



Experience discomfort-  
and name it – while being  
open to new ideas



Show empathy and respect



Expect and accept lack of closure



Come prepared to actively participate in meetings



Avoid the use of acronyms and describe so everyone understands



Be flexible



Assume Positive Intent

# Goals and Agenda

## Today's Goals

- ✓ **Review the draft Family Engagement Framework**
- ✓ **Discuss if there are gaps in principles, policy and/or practice guidance**
- ✓ **Hear from you!**

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## Agenda

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<b>Welcome &amp; Opening Remarks</b>	5 min
<b>Ice Breaker</b> Engage with us!	5 min
<b>Review of Draft Family Engagement Framework</b> Policy and Practice Guidance	10 min
<b>Small Group Discussion in Breakout rooms</b>	20 min
<b>Report Out</b>	20 min
<b>Next Steps &amp; Close</b>	5 min

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## Family Spotlight - What do you hope will be accomplished if parents are included at decision making tables ?

*"Including parents in decision-making ensures policies and programs are grounded in lived experiences, building shared ownership and stronger outcomes for students and communities. When parents are included at decision making tables, schools make more informed, equitable decisions that reflect real family needs and strengthen trust, partnership, and student success."*

*- Sanna, Cook County*

*"I'm hopeful that when parents are included at decision-making tables, policies move from theory to lived reality—grounded in what actually supports children and families day to day. The result is smarter systems, stronger trust, and early childhood programs that are not just well-designed, but truly responsive and equitable for Illinois families."*

*-Kesha, Sangamon County*



Engage with us!

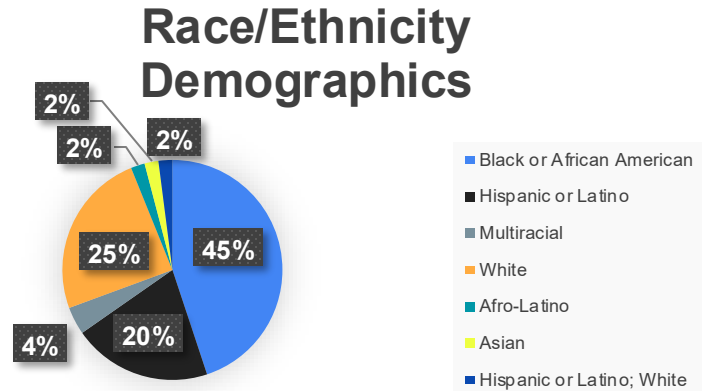
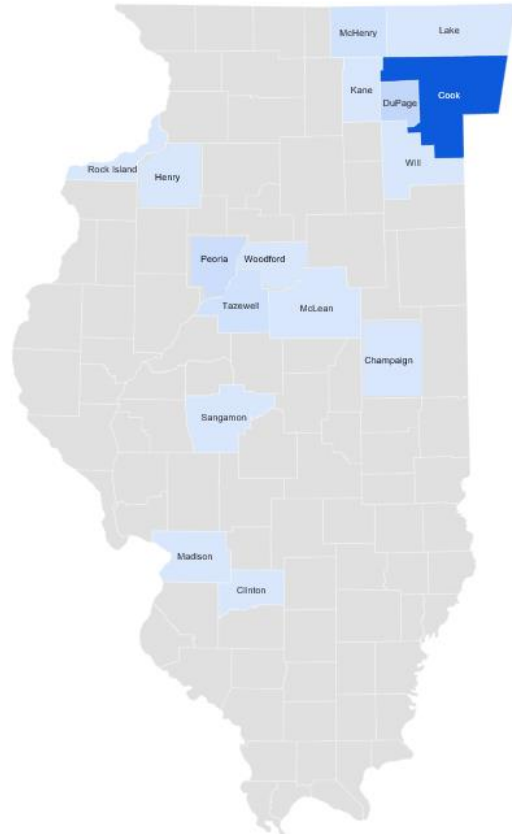


“Family Engagement works best when there is\_\_\_\_”



<https://www.menti.com/aln27jwrcbtr>

# Parents that IDEC has engaged in workgroups and discovery




Workgroup	# of Parents
Supporting Children With Disabilities and Developmental Delays	13
Supporting Multilingual Learners	6
Funding Design (FD)	3
Home Visiting (HV) Subcommittee	2
Family, Friend and Neighbor Subcommittee	1
Child Care/PreK Subcommittee	1
Transition Advisory Committee	2
Advisory Workgroup	2
Program Standards and Alignment	4
Data, Analytics, and Insights	4
Birth to Three Sprint	17

# Guiding Principle



Policy  
Guidance



Practice  
Guidance



**Family  
Engagement  
Framework  
Structure**

# Draft Family Engagement Guiding Principles

1

Center parent/caregiver voices by respecting and honoring their lived experience and expertise in early childhood.

2

Staff and facilitators are trained in equity and cultural competency principles to engage with parent/caregivers across Illinois to build stronger relationships and establish mutual trust.

3

Embed parent/caregivers into programmatic leadership and governance processes to ensure they are at decision making tables.

4

Resources and communication modalities are family friendly, use strength-based language, and are accessible in multiple languages to engage families across Illinois.

5

Implement equitable strategies for continuous quality improvement to center parent/caregiver voice and improve feedback loops.

6

Design programs and cultivate community partnerships that are informed by the needs of children and families.

7

Provide compensation for parent/caregivers' participation, feedback, and contribution to workstreams and beyond as available.

1

Center parent/caregiver voice by **respecting and honoring their lived experience and expertise** in early childhood.

**Policy Guidance:**

- If the policy or program lever doesn't work for parent/caregivers, it's not going to work.
- Make it easy for parent/caregivers to engage in conversation and co-design without being programmatic, operational, or statutory experts.
- Engage parent/caregivers as partners in program design, implementation and evaluation.
- Ensure representation from parent/caregivers that make up the rich diversity of the community's geographic location, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status (SES), religion, immigration status, etc. are included at the table.
- Develop strength, asset-based and trauma-informed approaches when engaging parent/caregivers.
- Be transparent with parent/caregivers about decision-making.



1

Center parents voice by **respecting and honoring their lived experience and expertise** in early childhood.

### Practice Guidance:

- Parent/Caregiver engagement activities must be inclusive of the rich cultural, linguistic, racial, geographic, and socioeconomic diversity of the community
- Ensure representation of parent/caregivers in underserved communities by relying on data collection related to culture, language, racial and ethnic makeup, geography, and socioeconomic status to guide outreach and engagement.
- Lift parents/caregivers as parent/caregivers. Advocates enter as advocates and intermediaries enter as intermediaries.
- Develop mutual trust through a bottom-up approach ensuring that parent/caregiver voices are elevating and informing how well services are being delivered.



**Join a breakout group to  
discuss the questions  
with others!**



**In your breakout room, discuss...**

1. What resonates, remains unclear, or is missing from the draft Family Engagement Guiding Principles?
2. If these draft principles were fully implemented, what would change for parents?
  - What would parents experience differently?
3. Are there considerations that should be included in the Family Engagement Guiding Principles?

**Staff and facilitators are trained in equity and cultural competency principles** to engage with parent/caregivers across Illinois to build stronger relationships and establish mutual trust.

### Policy Guidance:

- Require equity and cultural competency training for staff and facilitators.
- Establish equity competencies ensuring that diversity is reflected in adapting engagement opportunities for the community.

*“...to ensure that the agency has language and cultural knowledge brokers on staff at the agency. This goes beyond family liaisons because it’s important that agency staff that have relatable lived experiences and can help interpret what is coming from the family communities.”*

*- Supporting Multilingual Learners Workgroup*



**Staff and facilitators are trained in equity and cultural competency principles** to engage with parent/caregivers across Illinois to build stronger relationships and establish mutual trust.

### **Practice Guidance:**

- Develop a standard operating procedure that informs parent/caregiver engagement best practices.
- Staff will seek training and technical assistance on cultural competency and equity principles.
- Embed staff and facilitators that reflect the rich cultural, linguistic, racial, geographic, and socioeconomic diversity to amplify lived experiences.
- Provide annual training and technical assistance for relationship building, time for regular community of practice on parent/caregiver engagement activities, and accountability in practice to inform training improvements and professional development for staff and facilitators.



Embed parent/caregivers into programmatic **leadership and governance** processes to ensure they are at decision making tables.

### Policy Guidance:

- Develop policy guidance to establish Programmatic Policy Councils that include parent/caregivers in the decision-making process.
- Head Start Policy Councils require that 51% of representation be parent/caregivers and the remaining 49% are community members.

*"Head Start includes Head Start Policy Councils – through these Councils, parents are seen as equal partners and parents are governing the program in which their child is participating. Parents make up 51% of Policy Councils, and the remaining 49% include community members."*

*- Advisory Workgroup*



## Embed parents/caregivers into programmatic **leadership and governance** processes to ensure they are at decision making tables

### Practice Guidance:

- A program will embed culturally responsive facilitation strategies to engage parent/caregivers, recognize, honor, and identify lived experiences of families, allowing authentic and safe participation without needing to assimilate into dominant norms or systems.
- Include language access services whether interpretation or translation for parent/caregiver members as needed.
- Budget for parent compensation, transportation or meal support as needed for parent/caregiver leaders that they want to engage in their projects.
- Plan to provide orientation and ongoing governance training for parent/caregivers to build leadership skills, learn budget priorities, and inform CQI for the advisory structure.
- Document parent/caregiver participation in decision-making processes.
- Publish annual reports on the objectives and outcomes of the Programmatic Policy Council.



**Resources and communication modalities are family friendly**, use strength-based language, and are accessible in multiple languages to engage families across Illinois.

### **Policy Guidance:**

- ALWAYS consult with a communication team on best practices.
- Remove jargon, acronyms, and bureaucratic language.
- Translate all core materials into parent/caregivers preferred language(s).
- Establish clear timelines for language translation so that parent/caregivers with different language backgrounds can access the materials at the same time.



**Resources and communication modalities are family friendly**, use strength-based language, and are accessible in multiple languages to engage families across Illinois.

### Practice Guidance:

- Before making operational or programmatic decisions, engage families early on what information they need, how they prefer to receive it and in what languages.
- Work with the Family Engagement team to plan for the development of focus groups, listening sessions, and co-design workshops with families.
- Use multiple communication modalities that parent/caregivers can select, especially around the implications of a policy change.

*“Better communication, shared resources, listen to the concerns of parents and guardians.”*

*- Parent/Communities from DuPage (Transition Survey)*



Implement equitable strategies for **continuous quality improvement** to center family voice and improve feedback loops.

### Policy Guidance:

- Use the family-centered continuous quality improvement (CQI) processes.
- Disaggregate data to ensure disparities in engagement, experience, access and outcomes are identified.
- Close feedback loops with clear processes, timelines, responses, and actions.
- Train staff and facilitators on equity-centered CQI processes when engaging families.



Implement equitable strategies for **continuous quality improvement** to center family voice and improve feedback loops.

### Practice Guidance:

- Regularly evaluate a parent/caregiver engagement co-designed survey or other survey data to assess parent perspectives quarterly.
- Evaluate participant engagement data to ensure we are engaging and representing diverse parent/caregivers.
- Follow up with communities on whether feedback is or isn't used or implemented.
- Address barriers to participation such as transportation, technology, language access, etc.
- Probe the community about the efficacy and accessibility of parent/caregiver engagement opportunities.

*“Families want to see their voice actually taken into consideration, so some sort of 'closure' or a way to show that they truly had an influence.”*

*- Parent, Supporting Multilingual Learners Workgroup*



**Design programs and cultivate community partnerships** that are informed by the needs of children and families.

### **Policy Guidance:**

- Standardize community needs assessments and reports that inform local and regional needs for children and families to inform program goals and strategies.
- Prioritize partnerships that recognize parent/caregivers as co-designers and ensure they are embedded into decision making processes.
- Develop guidance that emphasizes clearly defined roles, responsibilities and expectations for all intermediaries to ensure alignment and support for children and families.



**Design programs and cultivate community partnerships** that are informed by the needs of children and families.

### **Practice Guidance:**

- Utilize current intermediary structure to find alignment with system navigation, communication, resources and comprehensive services provided to children and families.
- Emphasize equitable experiences as community systems development is informed by children and family needs and strengthened by local relationships/partnerships.
- Collect feedback from families and community partners on the intermediary structure to ensure effectiveness.



Provide **compensation for parent/caregivers'** participation, feedback, and contribution to workstreams and beyond as available.

### Policy Guidance:

- Determine equitable compensation amounts for participation in virtual, in-person or asynchronous events and engagement opportunities.
- Ensure compensation is flexible and accessible to parent/caregivers regardless of banking status, income source, or immigration status.
- Reimbursement for travel, child care, meals, and/or technology to remove barriers for parent/caregiver representation and increase accessibility as needed.
- Embed into the budget requests funding for parent/caregiver compensation following engagement activities.
- Designate a person responsible for administering compensation in a timely manner and oversight.



Provide **compensation for parent/caregivers'** participation, feedback, and contribution to workstreams and beyond as available.

**Practice Guidance:**

- Plan for compensation ahead of time to ensure that payments are not delayed.
- Share clear details with parent/caregivers on compensation amounts, requirements for participation to be compensated, and timeline for payment.
- Provide equitable payment options for parent/caregivers (e.g. prepaid gift card, check, or electronic payment).
- Consider paying parent/caregivers for meeting time, pre-work preparation, review of materials and follow-up activities as needed.
- Implement family-friendly processes to minimize paperwork and administrative issues.
- Monitor compensation processes to inform internal guidance and improve processes.



## Report Out



## What did you discuss in your breakout room?

1. What are some strengths of the Framework?
2. What are some gaps in the Framework?
3. What are some opportunities/additions to improve the Framework?

**Engage with us!**



**Which Family Engagement Principle matters to you most personally?**



<https://www.menti.com/aln27jwrcbtr>

# Feedback Survey

Please take moment to complete Family Engagement Framework Feedback Survey!



**Scan the QR Code!**



## Next Steps



- Advisory Workgroup members should reach out to Elliot Regenstein or Trish Rooney for any feedback.
- Revisions will be shared with the workgroup by June 30<sup>th</sup>
- Next Family Service Workgroup Meetings:
  - Supporting Multilingual Learners – Tuesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> from 12-1:30 PM
  - Supporting Children with Disabilities and Developmental Delays – Tuesday, March 10<sup>th</sup> from 12-1:30 PM



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 @IllinoisDepartmentofEarlyChildhood

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[www.idec.illinois.gov](http://www.idec.illinois.gov)





# The Early Learning Council: Draft Legislation



# IDEC Legislative Bills Updates



## Streamlining Early Childhood Advisory Committees

Support SB2984 (Sen. Collins)/HB5204 (Rep. Mason)

### Purpose:

Moves administrative authority and certain appointments to IDEC to create clearer coordination and accountability.

Illinois Early Learning Council (ELC)	<b>This legislation will update the structure and administration of the Early Learning Council to reflect IDEC's leadership role in early childhood.</b>
<b>What Will Change:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>IDEC Secretary (or designee) will serve as co-chairperson of the Council.</li><li>IDEC will provide staffing and administrative support, which was previously overseen by the Governor's Office.</li><li>ADDS parents and caregivers of children five and under.</li><li>Vendors and grantees with conflict of interest can discuss but not vote on recommendations for which they have a conflict of interest.</li></ul>
<b>Why This Matters:</b>	These updates ensure the Council operates with clear leadership, transparency and accountability.
Update ECACE Statute	<b>This legislation will appoint authority for the ECACE Advisory Committee to IDEC.</b>
<b>What Changes:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Appointment authority for specified Advisory Committee members shifts from the Department of Human Services to IDEC.</li><li>IDHS will continue to appoint one co-chair.</li></ul> <p>No changes are made to member qualifications or responsibilities.</p>
<b>Why This Matters:</b>	Changes ensure appointment authority is aligned with IDEC's new responsibility for child care programs and creates clear coordination for the workforce systems.

### Bottom Line:

SB2984/HB5204 ensures early childhood leadership and oversight are fully aligned under IDEC while maintaining strong advisory structures that support Illinois' early learning and child care systems.

For questions contact:  
Gerson Ramirez, IDEC Legislative Director  
Gerson.Ramirez@illinois.gov or 447-910-8388

[idec.illinois.gov](http://idec.illinois.gov)

## SB2984 (Sen Collins) /HB5204 (Rep Mason)

- Makes IDEC the Co-Chair and the agency responsible to staff the Early Learning Council and explicitly adds parents/caregivers of children 5 and under to the Council. Additionally, amends the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity Act. Provides that IDEC shall appoint specified members to the advisory committee.

*\*Preparing to call the bills for a vote in Committee*



# Next Steps



## Next Steps

- What other questions do you have about the subjects addressed today?
- At our next meeting we will go over the feedback we have received from other groups about our proposed desired end state.
- Please send us any additional materials you are aware of that might be relevant, from Illinois or elsewhere.



**QUESTIONS?**



# Public Comment Hearing from you!



# Survey

<https://tinyurl.com/ILDECsurvey>

