

**Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC)  
Advisory Planning Workgroup**

**Meeting Minutes  
March 30, 2026, 4:00 – 5:30 p.m. CT**

Link: <https://illinois.webex.com/weblink/register/r3bd2d54f3437ca59d7aa71f216dab7f6>

Meeting Number (access code): 2867 386 7222

Meeting password: iFVmzcEa973

**Workgroup Attendees:**

Trish Rooney - IDEC  
Paige Greenwood – IDEC  
Elliot Regenstein – Facilitator

Angela Farwig  
Phyllis Glink  
Faniqua Hughes  
Ty Jiles  
Mary Kestel  
Evan Krauss  
Alison Liddle  
Lori Orr  
David Quiroz  
Tonia Williams

**Public Attendees:**

Cindy Berrey  
Jennifer Brown  
Jean Davis  
Donna Emmons  
Sarah Froehlke  
Dan Harris  
Keshia Harris  
Cathy Mannen  
Laurel Mateyka  
Lauri Morrison-Frichtl  
Rose  
Ambre Rowland  
Sarah Salanitro  
Bob Spatz

**Next Steps:**

- Participants are encouraged to share with Elliot ([elliott.regenstein@flpadvisors.com](mailto:elliott.regenstein@flpadvisors.com)) any resources they have relating to the work of the Advisory Workgroup.
- IDEC and FLP will continue to circulate meeting materials for upcoming meetings. The next conversation will see the Advisory Workgroup work to flesh out its recommendations based on what it learned through its discussions about the current state of the advisory function.

**Agenda:**

- I. Introductions
- II. Meeting Norms
- III. Desired End State recap
- IV. Recommendations from other groups
- V. Next Steps
- VI. Public Comment

## **I. Introductions**

Elliot Regenstein welcomed the workgroup participants to the tenth meeting of the Advisory Workgroup and each participant introduced themselves. Elliot then reviewed the agenda and plan for discussion. The agenda includes a recap of the desired end state and recommendations received from other groups. Elliot then reviewed the virtual meeting protocols.

## **II. Meeting Norms**

Elliot reviewed the proposed workgroup meeting norms, which were discussed at all previous workgroup meetings. These include the following:

- 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

## **III. Desired End State Recap**

Elliot explained that this group has developed draft recommendations for the desired end state – these have now been shared with other groups for feedback. The workgroup has also reviewed the current state, including learning about Birth to Five Councils, Head Start Family Councils, the Early Learning Council, and the state’s emerging family engagement framework. Following the review of recommendations from other groups -- and updates to the desired end state -- the workgroup will discuss how to get from the current state to the desired end state, including identifying immediate next steps and ongoing processes for IDEC.

Elliot then briefly reviewed the draft desired end state. The draft plan includes:

- Measuring impact
- Engaging the entire advisory ecosystem
- Direct engagement
- Advisory groups: What and who
  - State Advisory Council
  - The Full range of advisory bodies
- Advisory groups: How (including family and community engagement)
  - Regular practices
  - Engaging families

A workgroup member clarified that the desired end state draft relating to the full range of advisory bodies indicates that there are “benefits to having short-term task-oriented groups, but having too many can be burdensome”, which can be burdensome on both participants and staff.

#### **IV. Recommendations from Other Groups**

Elliot explained that the draft desired end state has been shared with the Transition Advisory Committee (December 9, 2025), Funding Design (December 17, 2025), Supporting Multilingual Learners (January 6, 2026), Supporting Children with Disabilities & Developmental Delays (January 13, 2026), and Professional Development Advisory Committee (February 4, 2026).

Elliot first discussed those things that people liked about the recommendations:

- The idea of having an “air traffic control” function to help coordinate among advisories.
  - This could include mapping out how all the advisories relate to each other, including identifying any that have decision-making powers in addition to their advisory function.
- The importance of having diverse ways to provide feedback.
- The emphasis on two-way communication.
- The value of feedback loops to let people know their input mattered.
- The idea of getting fresh voices on the Early Learning Council, including term limits (staggered to provide some continuity).
- The idea of centering family voice and supporting family engagement from across communities and cultures, including on the Early Learning Council.
- Supporting family representatives across different councils, including supporting them to engage with each other.
  - This includes pre- and post-meeting support.
- Compensation for providers and families who participate.
- The emphasis on equity.
- Moving toward change while leveraging existing infrastructure.

Elliot then reviewed the suggested amendments to the recommendations. Elliot emphasized that most of these built on what has already been done and seek to refine the desired end state, rather than rejecting any of it. Many are directionally aligned with what has already been said, but amendments may be helpful to provide more specificity. The suggested amendments include:

- Ensuring clarity about how and why appointments are made to advisory group.
  - Ensure that appointed members have clarity on the expectations for their service.
- The need for regional and local advisories (which we talked about just after finalizing our draft desired end state).
  - In some cases, surveys might best be distributed by trusted local partners rather than the state.
  - The state should also have a strategy for engaging existing parent and family groups at the local level, including Head Start.
- Ensure that people can access information and provide feedback on their mobile devices, which for many people is their primary communication tool.
  - IDEC might seek to use Padlets and surveys to collect information, including through text messaging or Signal.
  - IDEC also needs to find ways to engage families that are not tech-savvy.
- Have communications that don’t look too “official” – for certain communities that could be a negative.
- Families from some cultures may be unfamiliar with the idea of advisory councils and may need culturally-competent support to be effective as council members.
- Be more explicit about the need for staffing beyond just the air traffic control function.

Elliot then noted that there was feedback on categories of voices that are needed on advisory councils, including:

- Multilingual families.
  - This may include families who speak multiple languages, including American Sign Language.
- Families whose children have disabilities.
  - This includes ensuring the inclusion of families with “dual identified” children (disabilities and multilingual).
- Families from the child welfare system.
- Adoptive and foster families.
- Elected officials.

Elliot encouraged the group to discuss any disagreements with this feedback. If there are no issues with these recommendations, then these should be woven into the next draft of the desired end state. Workgroup members did not indicate any disagreements with the feedback from other groups.

A workgroup member commented on the feedback relating to how IDEC needs to find ways to engage families that are not tech-savvy – this workgroup member does not want this point to be lost.

A workgroup member noted their agreement with the suggestion on additional staffing – staffing must be robust enough to support all of the work. This member believes the group has discussed this explicitly, but that did not come across to the stakeholders, as it is included in suggested amendments.

The group expressed appreciation for the feedback from all of the groups, and the group was thankful for the time that was spent by others in providing the feedback.

Elliot explained he will now merge the recommendations into the existing draft. Elliot then turned the discussion to who should be represented in the advisory function.

Participants suggested adding the following groups to the list of who should be represented on the advisory committee:

- Caregivers of children with incarcerated parents
- Parents with disabilities with children with disabilities
- Non-parental caregivers (grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends, etc.)

Elliot noted the workgroup may want to clarify that not all categories of participants will be represented on every advisory group – the workgroup may want to make clear that this not a checklist that every advisory group should meet.

A workgroup member reminded the group to be thoughtful and comprehensive in identifying other voices that should be included – the group should consider leaving the list open ended so that other voices can be added when they are identified.

Elliot noted the “priority population” may need to be revisited at some point – he clarified that this is the list of populations that the group would like to see represented now, but there may be other groups identified in the future that should be included as well. Elliot agreed that it will not be possible to ensure

representation by everyone in every group, but in the aggregate the full spectrum of participants should be reflected somewhere in the IDEC advisory function.

Participants agreed that there should be some language that keeps open the opportunity to be inclusive to diverse stakeholders over time. A workgroup member also noted the importance of accessibility – there are many families who have incredible input but will need interpreters at all times.

Elliot explained this group could make a recommendation that this workgroup hopes the Council will share the value of diverse populations represented and this workgroup can provide the Council with specific examples of what groups they would like to see on the future list.

Elliot agrees that this conversation is focused on priority populations and other conversations have focused on accessibility – the final recommendations need to address both. The cross section of families and process must be accessible and supportive of a range of different kinds of engagement.

A work group member shared the following resource relating to priority populations:

<https://idec.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/idec/documents/unordered-documents/priority-populations-updated-2021.pdf>

A participant clarified that in addition to families being adequately represented, the advisory councils will also include a diversity of professionals. A workgroup member questioned whether there should be more specificity in the list of providers, so that all are represented, particularly in regard to regions, early intervention, variety of disciplines, etc. Elliot agreed with ensuring diversity in representation of providers and noted that how much diversity is needed may depend on the specific needs of the group at the time.

A workgroup member also would like to see representation from non-profits, businesses, philanthropy, and civic leadership. Others agreed that it is important to have representation from individuals not in the day-to-day field of early childhood.

Elliot reminded the group of the tension between wanting the bodies to be broadly diverse but also not burdensome – as they get larger, they can sometimes become more burdensome.

The group then discussed including elected officials. Participants raised some concerns with power imbalances and whether parents would feel comfortable speaking freely and honestly with elected officials in the room. A workgroup member noted that the recommendations in regard to elected officials' participation could include language on the value that every voice has an equal weight. There is also a broader category of public officials – “elected officials” can also mean any number of positions. The group may want to welcome engagement of public officials and acknowledge that some of that engagement will be contextual – depending on the topic being discussed, it may be important to have someone whose job relates directly to the work discussed at the table.

There are also benefits as elected and public officials may be closer to legislation and understand how the legislative process works.

Elliot explained that the statute requires legislative representation on the Early Learning Council.

## **VII. Next Steps**

Elliot thanked everyone for participation in the discussion today. Elliot confirmed the next meeting will integrate ideas from the discussion of the current state and build on what the workgroup accomplished today. The group will now start building toward final recommendations in the next three meetings between now and the end of June.

Elliot asked participants to send any additional materials they are aware of that might be relevant, from Illinois or elsewhere.

## **VIII. Public Comment**

Elliot invited public attendees to provide comments.

A member of the public expressed appreciation for the thoughtful process that this group has been using during these discussions. She noted the discussions have been intentional in considering representation of the diversity of families that are served across the early childhood continuum. She advocated for not overlooking the importance of worker and educator voice in representation on advisory councils. The voices of workers and educators, as well as the unions representing them, should be part of the early childhood system.

The next meeting is scheduled for [April 27, 2026](#).