



**Illinois Department of Early Childhood**

# **SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS WORKGROUP**

Meeting 8  
February 25, 2025, 3-4 pm

# Agenda

- Welcome, Connector & Announcements
- Past Work – Reports & EI Cost Model
- Present Work – Family Insights
- Future Opportunity – Birth-3 Proposal
- Public comment
- Next steps

# Community Agreements



Stay engaged



Speak your truth in a  
safe environment



Take space, make  
space



Allow time for  
interpretation



Experience  
discomfort- and  
name it



Show empathy



Expect and accept  
lack of closure



Come prepared to  
actively participate  
in meetings



Avoid the use of  
acronyms



Be flexible



# Erin Arango-Escalante, Goonies

# Workgroup Engagement

## Workgroup Members

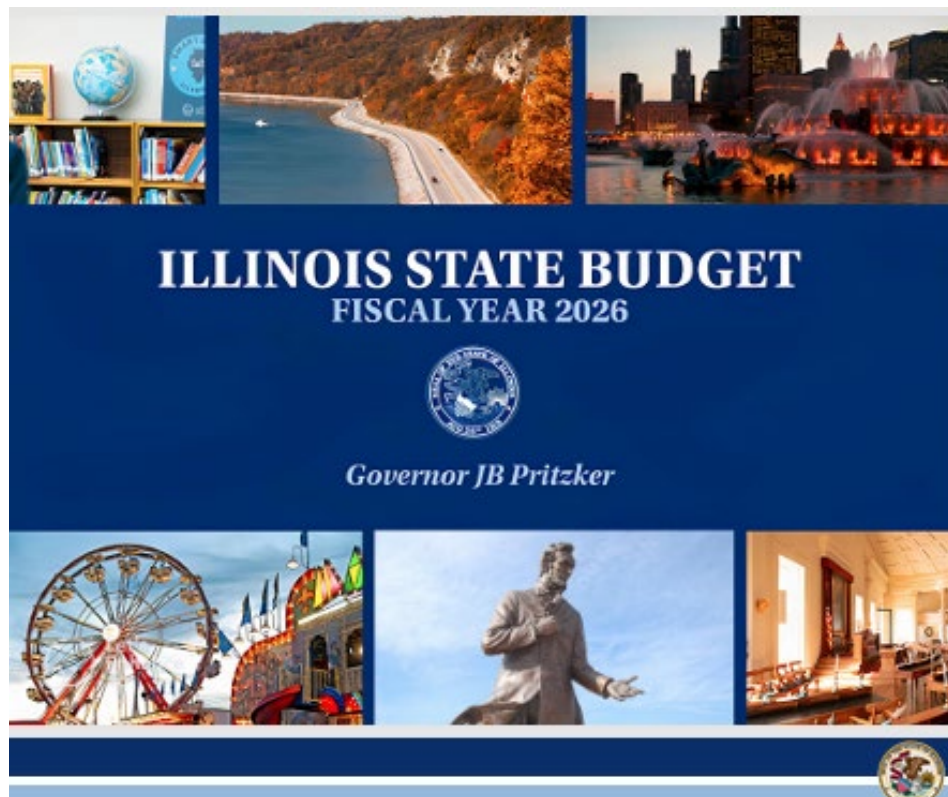
- <https://bit.ly/4epcNp6>



## Members of the Public

- <https://bit.ly/4htrqdH>





# Announcements

## Investing in What Matters: Early Childhood Development

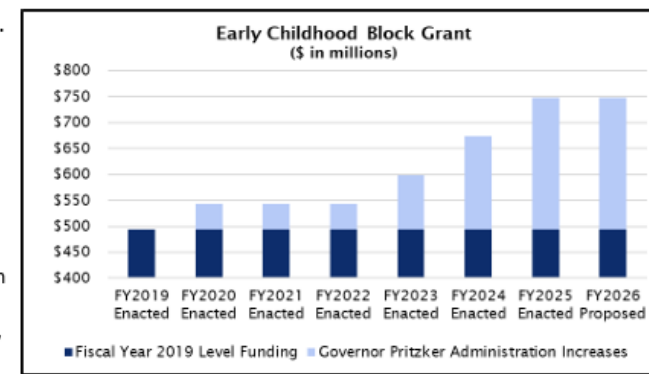
### SMART START ILLINOIS: Investing in Early Childhood

*Continued funding for the third year of the Governor's early childhood initiative*

This multiyear program provides a comprehensive approach to investments in preparing children to be lifelong learners. Year 3 investments include:

- **\$21.7 million** in operational funding for the Illinois Department of Early Childhood.
- **\$748 million** to maintain investment in ISBE Early Childhood Block Grant funding.
- Approximately **\$200 million** investment in funding for nation-leading Early Childhood Workforce Compensation Contracts.
  - **\$90 million increase** to annualize the cost of the contracts and replace expired federal childcare funding.
- Other Early Childhood Investments include:
  - **\$85 million** in additional investment to cover expected increased participation in the Child Care Assistance Program.
  - **\$3.3 million** to continue expansion of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.
    - Today, more 61,000 children under the age of five have been signed up to receive free books in the mail every month.
  - **\$10 million** to support rate enhancements for the Early Intervention service providers.

### IMAGINATION LIBRARY COVERAGE ACROSS ILLINOIS



*Embargoed until 12:00 PM, Wednesday, February 19, 2025*



## A colorful, cylindrical object, possibly a drum or a decorative container, featuring a vibrant blue background with large, stylized, multi-colored geometric patterns (resembling snowflakes or starbursts) and a green band near the top. The object is shown at an angle, revealing its circular end face.



Illinois strives to be the best state in the nation to raise a family. To do this, we must make early childhood education and care services **simpler, better,** and **fairer** for families with young children.



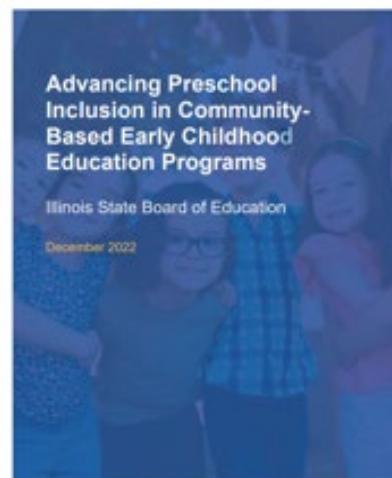
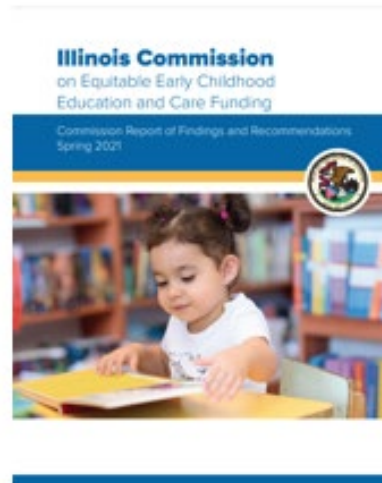


# Setting the Stage

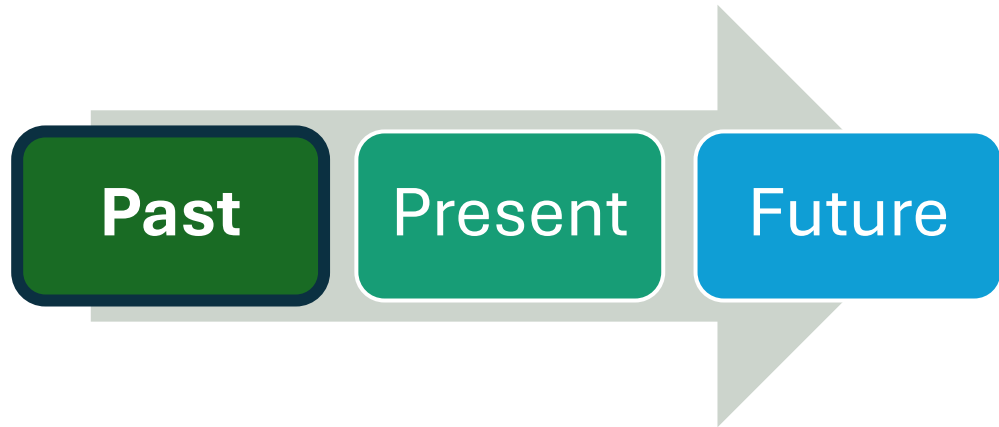
Past

Present

Future



# Setting the Stage



## Modeling the Cost of Early Intervention in Illinois: Analysis and Recommendations

Prepared by Afton Partners for the Illinois Department of Human Services –  
Division of Early Childhood

November 2024



# Family Perspectives

System or Policy Concern from Families	How Families View the Concern	Potential Ideas for Discussion
<b>Complex system</b> for young children and families that is difficult to navigate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families are frustrated and the <b>child may not get referred and/or receive services</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-design online, accessible <b>portal</b> that includes all early care and education programs and services and clear process for parents to navigate</li> <li>Fund local <b>navigators</b> to support parents in finding the appropriate services and navigating the process</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of consistent and accessible communication</b> for families and practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families are often <b>unable to find and/or access information</b> due to multiple locations for information, inconsistent language, use of acronyms, and/or translation in home language</li> <li>Families found that some practitioners (e.g., pediatricians) are <b>not aware of programs, services, and supports</b> to young children and families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-design online, accessible <b>portal</b> that includes all early care and education programs and services and clear process for parents to navigate</li> <li>Fund local <b>navigators</b> to support parents in finding the appropriate services and navigating the process</li> </ul>



DRAFT- FOR DISCUSSION

# Family Perspectives

12

System or Policy Concern from Families	How Families View the Concern	Potential Ideas for Discussion
<b>Long waiting lists</b> for families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families that know about Early Intervention <b>may not receive services</b> because of the long waiting lists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify additional <b>funding</b> to address disparities in access</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of professional development</b> (training and technical assistance) available to all early care and education programs that supports the diverse needs of all children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families believe there is a <b>lack of knowledge about referrals and supporting children with disabilities</b>, particularly those who need more intense behavior supports or medical care</li> <li>Families identified the <b>need for flexibility in service delivery</b> that ensures continuity of care while working towards IFSP goals</li> <li>Families believe <b>alignment and coordination between Early Intervention, Home Visiting, health care system, and child care are needed</b> to support the child and family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare field for <b>“no wrong door” policy</b> for screening and referrals</li> <li>Explore <b>cross-sector professional development</b>, including pre and in-service requirements, for those working with children and families</li> </ul>



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# Family Perspectives

System or Policy Concern from Families	How Families View the Concern	Potential Ideas for Discussion
<b>Delayed background check</b> process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families are concerned that therapists may not be able to provide <b>services in natural environment</b> (e.g., child care)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore options for <b>streamlined background check</b> process</li> </ul>
<b>Potential financial strain</b> of early care and education programs and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families are <b>struggling to pay</b> for services and child care (if services are privately paid for by family)</li> <li>Families struggle to <b>navigate insurance approvals</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore <b>automatic child care subsidy eligibility</b> and potential for <b>increase in CCAP reimbursement rates</b> for children who are receiving Early Intervention services</li> </ul>

DRAFT- FOR DISCUSSION



# Looking at All Opportunities

Past

Present

Future

Draft-For Discussion

Developmental Support Services- Birth to 3

Co-Design System Proposal "Sprint"

February 7, 2025

**Goal:** Design ways to increase access to and participation in essential 0-3 services for families with young children with special needs, differentiated by region and community assets and needs. Equitable access and participation in 0-3 services will increase family and child autonomy, decrease reliance on state services (e.g., fewer students will need more intensive intervention and supports later in school if we are able to provide needed developmental supports early), and increase dependability of the state.

**Approach:** Over the next 12 months, in partnership with DHS, IDEC will assemble a team of partners to create implement a "co-design sprint" to develop a strategic plan for 0-3 services for families with young children with special needs. Over the next 6-9 months, this will include:

- engaging 2-3 regional communities in a co-design, human centered process to design better approaches to information access and participation models for 0-3 services.
- conducting a deep dive with the field, DHS, HFS and other legacy agencies, to map the current state of 0-3 services, with a focus on Early Intervention (including how it intersects with Home Visiting), to explore how to map the current opportunities and by leveraging the engagement and analytical support of the IDEC transition workstreams.
- mapping how to get from the current state to the desired future state.

The TAC and Workgroup on Families with Children with Special needs will get monthly updates on the work. The Illinois Interagency Council on Early Intervention (IICEI) will receive quarterly updates on the work.

*What does success look like?*

- IDEC is able to create a package of policy and system changes that: a) address the regional and racial disparities that persist in access to high quality services and supports – enabling more families, particularly black and rural families, (inclusive of linguistic diversity) to receive services in their setting of choice in a timely manner, and b) improve provider experience ensuring a strong and stable network of providers that reflect the diversity of Illinois' families.
- IDEC/IDHS is able to easily and effectively communicate eligibility and process for services and supports.
- IDEC has an approach to transition and more effectively bill Medicaid and private insurance for eligible services.



- What resonates with you?
- What's missing from your perspective?
- What theme are you interested in knowing more about?
- What questions do you have?





# Public Comment



# NEXT STEPS

