

**Meeting Minutes****July 22, 2025 12:00-1:00 p.m.****Meeting Information:**Link: <https://illinois.webex.com/illinois/j.php?MTID=m7ac24404e7a73bc0e02041d7cdb46389>

Meeting ID: 2866 506 2688

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Phone: 312-535-8110

**Agenda:**

Welcome, Connector, and Updates	15 minutes
Draft Family Portraits	15 minutes
Family Portraits in Action	20 minutes
Public comment	5 minutes
Next steps	5 minutes

**Workgroup Participants:**

Theenshina Mayfield

Lakeesha James

Kesha Harris

Samantha Joliff

Johnna Darragh-Ernst

Yesenia Perez

Laura Lindsey

Talibah Moore

Benny Delgado

Kimberly Nelson

Karen Artley-Heath

Kristy Doan

Sanna Jesse

**Welcome & Introductions**

Erin Arango-Escalante (meeting facilitator) welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided the agenda for the day, which included draft family portraits and how they will be used. Erin also reminded everyone of the community agreements developed by the workgroup members.



The connector activity emphasized the importance of different perspectives and how we all see different things in the same image.

### **Draft Family Portraits**

Erin Arango-Escalante (facilitator) presented and shared about the portraits as follows:

- The last time we met, we talked about the concept of Family portraits and we heard some amazing feedback about the ideas. We are now coming back to you with drafts to review and are looking for your reactions today.
- A family portrait includes a set of descriptions of the characteristics, perspectives, and experiences of a family with at least one child, age 0-5. We are going into detail not just specifically focused on programs but rather, looking at the whole family in community and all the influences on their lives.
- A gallery of family portraits will provide realistic representations and real-life examples of families with young children, across multiple communities and in a variety of early childhood education and care settings and programs in Illinois. They portray the diversity as well as intersectionality of experiences, backgrounds, race, culture, class, gender, and other ways families have chosen to identify themselves. It's not about the "average" family, because that doesn't exist. We really want to look at families who have perhaps been underrepresented or underserved by existing systems.
- The portraits do not represent one family in particular, they have many different pieces that have been put together from things we have heard in interviews from many different families. We will show 4 of these draft portraits today but there will be more in the future to represent the diversity of families.
- What we share today is still draft and will be edited and updated based on feedback and additional information.

Andrea Cammilleri (co-facilitator) allowed time for the group to preview the family portraits, and pointed out the components that are part of each portrait. She asked participants to share their overall reactions, what else should be added to the portraits, and whether or not the portraits feel respectful of families.

Discussion:

- One participant asked to confirm their understanding that none of these are about a real family, but that parts of different stories and people's experiences have been merged together to create fictional "samples" of a family.
  - Facilitators confirmed that is correct.
- One member expressed that she liked the idea of the portraits and asked if the intention was to identify different pain points in the process so we can work to address them?



- Erin offered to give more details about how the portraits will be used by moving ahead to the next part of the presentation.

### **Family Portraits in Action**

Erin presented a slide entitled, 'How might the TAC and Workgroups incorporate and use family portraits?' Erin emphasized that we want to be sure we are continuing to center the family experience in our planning. She explained that as ideas come up in different workgroups, we want to look at every proposed strategy or solution through the lens of each family's experience. Guiding questions for those discussions might include:

- What would be the impact of this proposed change on this family?
- Would the family benefit from the change? If so, how?
- What might prevent the family from benefitting from this change?
- Would this solution be easy for this family to access? Why or why not?
- Is this solution a high priority for this family?
- What other innovations might have greater impact on this child/family?

Erin claimed that thinking about these questions will allow all workgroups to use the same set of family portraits to evaluate and elaborate their ideas. When we use these portraits, they will serve as a tool to use alongside other tools to center families in the discussions around proposed innovations and priorities. The portraits give us the ability to represent the families who have given input in different conversations, who cannot all be present at the table, to be represented in the discussion.

### **Discussion:**

- One member pointed out a typo of one family listing South Beloit and Rockford (two different communities), need to correct that mistake.
- Another member asked: Are the goals and challenges too high level for the purpose?
  - Erin responded that we appreciate the feedback, and also commented that it is intentional to have high level information because it allows us to consider different possibilities of what might be going on and engage in dialogue.
- One member wrote in the chat: I can't help but be struck by the first story (Tucker family) and this last family portrait (Osman & Gedi family). Both have children who would be automatically eligible for EI, and yet EI doesn't come up in the stories. How is the interviewing approach thinking about uncovering barriers in connections to and participation in EI?
  - Facilitators responded: This is important to point out that many families are not aware of their eligibility.



- Others agreed in the chat:
  - In these stories I see so many services that are not either introduced to families or information shared to help them stabilize.
  - Yes, my first thought was why aren't these folks in HS or EHS for all the comprehensive services? I hope they were referred to services?
- Someone else asked: Is this workgroup in contact and collaborating with the Birth to 5 Regional Councils? Many of their Regional Needs Assessments have brought up parents don't know where to access services.
  - Erin confirmed that the needs assessments have been reviewed and have helped inform our thinking for this workgroup.
- A member asked: Is the idea to raise pain points for when ECE services are under one roof, to improve coordination across programs (so people in home visiting are referred to EI when warranted)?
- Another posted: Is it a training issue? Like at the pediatrician/clinic level?
- A member suggested that the portraits might be used as a tool to train staff that are transitioning to the new department when they're bringing all the programs together.
  - Erin responded: That's a great idea. We are looking for your ideas of how else these might be used in the future.
- Erin noted: When we think about the mission of "simpler, better, fair," we can use these portraits to identify what that would look like for families like this.
- A member wrote in the chat: I think the information included in the portraits is very valuable and does provide a clear way to see the lapses in the families if they exist.
- For future portraits, a participant suggested we consider families currently in/eligible for the ISBE preschool for all and lack of transportation...not all children with an eligibility have transportation as a related service on their IEP...so they may drop or not enroll... pain points for many families in my program.
  - Erin: Yes, we do have a portrait like that in development! We've heard that a lot!
- A member suggested: It would be important to represent a family that has to choose between special education and full day child care. I also think it's important to represent some families where the system is really working for them.
  - Two others agreed.
- A participant asked, has anyone at IDEC thought about creating a statewide screening department for families? We are finding many pediatrician screenings are not really very accurate. Perhaps it could be hooked in with the Birth to 5 regional councils?
  - Another member responded: In Southern Illinois, the Southern Illinois Coalition for Children and Families has a screening workgroup with providers to track screenings throughout the southern region of the state. But within the coalition we're seeing that screening results are not resulting in referrals. A lot of the



doctors in southern Illinois will record that there are delays and rely on the early childhood programs to refer the children after they are enrolled.

- A member commented: I'm curious if there are portraits for families at or just above the poverty line. I know in my case, I made a little bit too much money but my son's disabilities made us more eligible for more services. I know there are families out there who fall into this situation of making just a little too much money but they want access to services.
- Another member asked, are the issues being raised in the portraits directly tied to the communities where the anonymously interviewed families raised them? While it's very important to have the anonymity of the families, on the flip side of that, when we create a portrait that is a conglomeration of various people's experiences, we also run the risk of losing somebody's truth in that experience because we're putting it through a filter, and trying to make sense of that. So for the questions that prompt us to try to identify how an innovation would impact a family, that might be hard to do. I also heard you ask what are the challenges and how do we find out about access issues into the systems, from people that we don't yet know about. That is definitely a challenge and I wonder if an approach might be to seek out feedback in areas where we know that's a high risk. So I think about families who are experiencing housing insecurity. How do we go out to areas and find community supports that are working with these families, and hear those truths and those stories? I think that might be helpful. Are we only looking at access into the system as the pain point, or do we need to extend our view into other types of pain points?
  - Erin: We are looking for community partners to keep working with them to gather this information from families. We are very interested in that. If you have suggestions through your networks to make that possible, we appreciate you sharing.
- The member continued... Another key thing to remember is that families who have had those experiences, have trusting relationships with other individuals--they could be pastors, someone in Birth to 5 networks, they could be pediatricians or other family members. Those are also communities of people we could probably grab information from when we are trying to understand system access issues.
- Erin noted that we will need to keep the feedback loop open by bringing portraits back to families and communities, hear from them how they can be refined, whether or not they represent truth.
- In conclusion, on a scale of 1-4, five participants rated the portraits as a 4 (very valuable and useful), three gave a 3. No one gave low scores of 1 or 2. One person commented that they paint a nice picture of our state's families.



### **Public Comments**

- Is this workgroup still making recommendations on how to ensure the ECE system is designed to serve young children with disabilities and delays? How do the family portraits intersect with that effort?

### **Padlet Comments available at links below:**

For workgroup members- <https://padlet.com/erin674/ChildrenwithSpecialNeeds>

### **For members of the public-**

<https://padlet.com/erin674/ChildrenwithSpecialNeedsPublicComment>

### **Next Steps**

- Future meetings: Tuesdays, noon-1pm (8/19, 9/23, 10/28, 11/18, 12/16)