



Supporting Children with Disabilities & Developmental Delays

January 13, 2026





Agenda

- **Welcome, Connector & Updates**
- **Advisory Workgroup Updates**
- **Discussion**
- **Public Comment**
- **Wrap-Up**

Community Agreements



Stay engaged



Speak your truth in a
safe



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



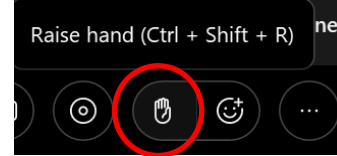
Be flexible

Navigating Webex



How to raise your hand for public comment:

1. In the right corner, click on the hand icon to raise your hand.



2. Your audio will be unmuted to give public comment.
3. Click the hand icon a second time to lower your hand.
4. **For mobile users:** click the three dots on the right of your screen to find the raise your hand icon.

- **Asking process and technical questions during the webinar:**

1. If you have a process or technical questions, please add it to the Q/A box.
2. If you are having any technical difficulties, please reach out using the chat feature directly to Erin Arango-Escalante.

Workgroup Engagement

Workgroup Members

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



Members of the Public

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



Connecting the Dots Across Workgroups and TAC

- **Supporting Children with Disabilities & Developmental Delays**
- Co-Design Workshops
- Focused Discussion
- Surveys and Interviews

Vision: What do families with children with disabilities and developmental delays want and need?

What do providers want and need to deliver to families?

- **Support Workgroups**
- Focused Discussions
- Surveys and Interviews
- Interagency Team

How do we get from current state to our vision?

What infrastructure is needed to make the vision possible?

- **Supporting Children with Disabilities & Developmental Delays**
- Focused Discussion
- Surveys and Interviews
- Co-Design Workshops

Current state: what are the pain points in family services?

Advisory Workgroup

TAC



FORESIGHT LAW+POLICY

Illinois DEC Advisory Groups Planning Workgroup: Draft Desired End State

January 13, 2026

Overview

- Who we are
- Where we are in our process
- What we've agreed to so far
- What comes next





Where We Are In Building Recommendations



Our Statutory Charge

- By July 1, 2026, the Department shall create or designate an advisory body to counsel the Department on an ongoing basis, ensuring the Department functions with transparency, operates with a commitment to centering racial equity and to meaningful inclusion of parent, early childhood service provider, and other public stakeholder engagement, feedback, and counsel, including the creation of committees or working groups, and devotes appropriate attention to data collection and timely public reporting. This advisory body's membership shall include representation from both public and private organizations, and its membership shall reflect the regional, racial, socioeconomic, and cultural diversity of the State to ensure representation of the needs of all Illinois children and families.

– 325 ILCS 3/1-35

But We Are Taking a Broader Approach

We are looking at IDEC's entire advisory function and how it hears from its constituents.

- This includes advisory groups but isn't limited to them



Our Approach to Building Recommendations

1. Developed draft recommendations for the desired end state: what do we want the advisory function to look like at IDEC?
 - Our draft has some open questions – which is fine for now, we can plug those holes later
2. Now analyzing the current state
3. After that we will 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

This draft was meant to be shared with partners to solicit their feedback, which the workgroup will address when we get to step 3 above.



Proposed Desired Future State



What We're Going to Do Today

Today you will see a draft proposal for the “desired end state.”

- Nothing is finalized – if you have any concerns, please raise them!
 - We will bring those concerns back to the Advisory Workgroup.
- If you have additional thoughts after the meeting please let us know.
- If there are other ways our work can intersect with yours, please let us know.



Draft Plan

- Measuring Impact
- Engaging the entire advisory ecosystem
- Direct engagement
- Advisory groups: What and who
- Advisory groups: How (including family and community engagement)

Measuring Impact (1 of 3)

- The advisory function will be successful if:
 - The Department is regularly seeking feedback on critical questions relating to policy and operations. The early childhood community believes that when there are major directional questions being considered, the Department will engage with its partners before answering them. Advisory groups can also raise issues on their own that they believe could be important to the Department.
 - The Department is regularly acting on feedback it receives to produce policies that are equitable and inclusive.
 - The Department is communicating to its partners about how it used the feedback it received. When the Department receives feedback that it cannot or will not act on, it communicates clearly the reasons why it cannot or will not.
- These actions create a cycle where Department partners believe that their input will be valued and continue to provide it.



Measuring Impact (2 of 3)

- The advisory function will be successful if:
 - IDEC is taking steps to build awareness about its advisory function, and a wide range of people – diverse across geography, roles, demographic, linguistical, and other factors -- are in fact aware of engagement opportunities.
 - A wide range of people are actually participating in the advisory function through multiple entry points.
 - The advisory function provides transparency to the early childhood community.
 - The advisory function continues to evolve as needed to meet the needs of the agency and community.
 - The advisory function takes into account the lived experience of the state's families and providers, including families who have not been served by the system.



Measuring Impact (3 of 3)

- To measure impact, the Department should conduct outreach asking stakeholders about the advisory function
 - This measurement should not be limited to surveys, but should also include focused conversations
 - The measurement of impact should reach across multiple populations, including providers, families, and those least well served by the system
 - The process of measuring impact should be ongoing and embedded, not just episodic
 - The process of collecting this input should be of minimal burden, and where possible should be combined with other engagement opportunities
 - The Department should use technology where possible to make it easier to provide input
- Consider having a dashboard or other method of transparently tracking input
- Impact should be measured with a regular cadence, perhaps quarterly



Engaging the Entire Advisory Ecosystem

- The advisory ecosystem includes local advisory bodies that collect community-level feedback. The group will come back and revisit this issue after further study of the current landscape.
 - The group will consider what kinds of activities the agency might support at the local level.
 - The group will consider how the agency should work with and/or build on existing resources, including the 39 Birth to Five Councils and Head Start Policy Councils.
 - The group will consider what channels need to be established to work with community-level leaders.



Direct Engagement



- The Department will have multiple channels for direct engagement to seek input and direction in addition to advisory groups.
 - This could include focus groups or focused conversations.
 - It could also include social media or texting opportunities.
 - This direct engagement should be available in multiple languages.
- These channels of engagement will be distinct from the Department's efforts to provide customer service or constituent services; these are about changes to policy and practice, not just about resolving individual situations.
 - The Department's customer service and constituent service functions should feed into its advisory function.

Advisory Groups: State Advisory Council

The Department will ultimately need to have a single lead advisory group, which will be designated as the state's advisory council under the Head Start Act (one of several relevant federal requirements).

Federal law defines some minimal requirements for membership in this group and topics it must address, but the workgroup can add to those recommendations.

- Federal law requires the state to include a mix of state agency representatives and organizational representatives, with the freedom to add other members as desired.
- The workgroup has emphasized the importance of including providers and families, including those least well served by the system.
- The workgroup has discussed
 - The importance of having providers and families included in ways that avoid isolation and tokenism.
 - Ensuring that other partner agencies are included.



Advisory Groups: The Full Range of Advisory Bodies (1 of 2)

Historically there have been various other advisory groups that all have different – and sometimes overlapping – responsibilities.

- The federal requirements for the State Advisory Council are broad, and include a wide mix of issues. Other required advisory bodies tend to be more specialized.
- It may be useful to have different members of groups appointed by different leaders, and to ensure that there are enough members appointed from outside the agency to provide balance.
 - **Term limits** may be a useful tool to ensure fresh perspective on an ongoing basis.
- Federal and state laws also require advisory bodies on topics including child care and early childhood special education.
 - IDEC should run “air traffic control” to ensure **coordination among groups**.
- IDEC should also ensure **coordination with other agencies** to ensure that IDEC’s advisory function is working well with other agency advisory functions, and not placing too great a demand on participants.

Advisory Groups: The Full Range of Advisory Bodies (2 of 2)

Historically there have been various other advisory groups that all have different – and sometimes overlapping – responsibilities.

- This workgroup can make recommendations for how these other advisory bodies should be organized and populated, including whether or not they should be part of the state advisory council (e.g., subcommittee). That issue will be revisited after examining the current state.
- The workgroup believes that reorganization should take place in a context that is sensitive to the fact that for many providers and families, participating in an advisory body is more difficult than providing feedback for other channels.
 - A major goal is minimizing the burden on participants.
- There will be a need to balance having standing advisory bodies with short-term task-oriented groups.
 - There are benefits to having short-term task-oriented groups, but having too many can be burdensome.

All Advisory Groups: Regular Practices

All advisory bodies should engage in practices that support provider and family engagement, including:

- Conduct on-boarding to ensure that all members understand their role and the advisory group's expectations
- Scheduling advisory groups when providers and families can participate
- Establishing norms of participation in an advisory group that are welcoming and inclusive
 - Sharing materials in advance
 - Avoiding jargon
 - Supporting participation in multiple languages
- Multiple ways to engage in the meeting
- Strong facilitation to encourage participation



Advisory Groups: Engaging Families (1 of 2)

To engage families, IDEC should:

- Engage with families and support them before and after meetings, building ongoing relationships and making them feel welcome. Good communication takes place in the context of relationships, and authentic engagement is crucial.
 - This may include providing training and support to family representatives joining advisory bodies.
- Ensure that diverse families are participating -- including immigrant and refugee populations, families not well served by the system, and families from around the state.
- Ensure that families have multiple opportunities to provide input, including regional and local opportunities and both in-person and virtual forums.
- Communicate to families about the impact of their engagement.
- Develop continuous improvement processes to ensure that the state is learning from experience and engaging families more effectively as time goes on.

Advisory Groups: Engaging Families (2 of 2)

To engage families, IDEC should:

- Provide opportunities to participate in the family's home language.
- Leverage existing family engagement efforts, including through Head Start.
- While there is not unanimity on the subject, in general workgroup members believe families should be paid for their participation.
- Ensure that families participating in any advisory workgroup should be given space to connect with each other (including across workgroups), with support and staffing to help them succeed in their roles.
 - This space should be voluntary for families and designed by those families to meet their needs.
 - If families have other suggestions for building community the Department should be as responsive to those suggestions as possible.



Discussion

What resonates with you?

Do the recommendations so far
reflect the priorities we've
discussed?



Public Comment



Additional Opportunities

[Child Care \(0 - 5\) / Pre - K Funding Subcommittee](#) – Tues, Jan 13, 1-2:30 pm

[Transition Advisory Committee Meeting](#) – Tues, Jan 13, 5:30 - 7:00 pm

[Bi-Monthly Transition Update and Listening Session](#) – Fri, Jan 23, 12 - 1:00 pm

[Health and Home Visiting Committee Meeting](#) – Mon, Jan 26, 1:30 - 3:00 pm



2026 Meetings

- February 3, 12:30-1:30
- Second Tuesday, 12-1:30, March-December 2026





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