

## Meeting Minutes

December 9, 2024, 2:30-3:30 p.m.

### Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84531429453?pwd=TbQPra1l2os5oquW88M9fl5TcyuNGp.1>

Meeting ID: 845 3142 9453

Passcode: 678922

### Meeting Objectives:

- Welcome and introduce new members
- Review and discuss regional listening session preliminary findings and ChiByDesign themes
- Identify themes that resonate and are missing, and discuss short-term ideas
- Discuss next steps for workgroup

### Agenda:

Welcome, agenda & connector	10 minutes
Preliminary findings and themes	15 minutes
Themes by participant role	25 minutes
Public comment	5 minutes
Next steps	5 minutes

### Padlet (for use during meeting):

For workgroup members-

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

For members of the public-

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

**Participants:**

Luis Narvaez

Michelle Ramirez

Gaddys Ybarra

Debra DeValdivielso

Trish Rooney

Edgar Ramirez

Rebecca Vonderalck-Navarro

Dagmara Avelar

## *Summary*

### **Welcome**

Erin initiated a meeting open to the public, with a focus on discussing preliminary findings and themes. The meeting was structured around participant roles, starting with parents and caregivers, then moving to providers, educators, school district staff, state staff, advocates, higher education, and legislators. Erin also emphasized the importance of community agreements, which had been revised based on feedback. She encouraged active participation and the use of interpretation if needed. The meeting also included a Padlet for workgroup members and the public.

### **Preliminary Findings and Themes**

Erin led a discussion on the themes that emerged from two engagement opportunities: the "ChiByDesign" report and the regional listening sessions. The themes were accessible and affordable services, communication and coordination for cohesive support, and consistent and culturally responsive relationships. Erin emphasized the importance of these themes for the new Illinois Department of Early Childhood and sought feedback on what resonated, what was missing, and potential solutions. She also highlighted the similarities between the findings from the two engagement opportunities.

Erin continued the discussion about potential short-term solutions to address issues within the team. She clarified that the team should still dream big and consider all possible solutions. She emphasized that the ideas generated would be shared with other workgroups to push and pull on them collectively. One member raised a question about whether short-term fixes could lead to sustainable solutions, to which Erin responded affirmatively. The team was encouraged to think about any immediate solutions or ways to address the themes discussed.

### **Feedback by Participant Role - Parents & Providers**

The meeting focused on the challenges faced by parents in accessing early childhood education and care services. The participants discussed the lack of transportation, the complexity of the system, and the need for better coordination between programs. They also highlighted the importance of local collaborations and the need for a

navigator to help parents navigate the system. The idea of a single point of entry for families was also discussed, with the suggestion that this could be a trusted entity in the community that connects families to early childhood education and other resources. The participants agreed that this concept could be a potential solution to the challenges faced by parents.

One parent shared her experience of seeking a bilingual child care for her infant and the challenges of finding a bilingual doula. Another workgroup member emphasized the need for intentional language use in preschool settings, balancing home language with English exposure. A parent agreed, noting that parents want their children to learn English while maintaining their home language. The team acknowledged the importance of addressing misinformation about bilingual children's development.

Erin discussed the challenges faced by providers in serving children with disabilities, families in rural areas, and children who speak languages other than English. She highlighted the issue of a lack of adequate resources, staffing problems, and the struggle to meet complex needs. A parent and provider agreed, emphasizing the importance of addressing the teacher shortage and the need for better support for teachers. It was suggested to cross-reference the work with the "Birth to 5" initiative and highlighted the need for better communication and coordination between different organizations. One parent shared her experience with the "AOK" network and the Iris referral platform, emphasizing the importance of building relationships at the local level.

### **Final theme: Focusing on Equity and Communication**

Erin led a discussion on the last theme – Prioritizing Equity through access and affordability, communication and coordination, and relationships. She encouraged workgroup members to share their thoughts and ideas on these themes via a Padlet before the next meeting. Erin also mentioned that the next meeting would be scheduled for January, with details to be shared on the Illinois Department of Early Childhood website.

### **Public Comment**

N/A

Erin thanked everyone for their participation and encouraged further communication via email or the Padlet.

### **Next Steps**

- Workgroup members to add feedback on Padlet for Equity theme (slides 22-24)
- Erin to send out a Doodle poll to schedule 2025 workgroup meetings.
- Erin to distribute meeting minutes to workgroup members for feedback.
- Erin to post approved minutes, PowerPoint, and other materials on the Department of Early Childhood webpage.
- Workgroup members to consider solutions for issues raised, including transportation, language access, and workforce challenges.