

STATE OF ILLINOIS

OCT

14

Co-designing the New Illinois Department of Early Childhood

THE CHIBYDESIGN TEAM



PROJECT UPDATES

STATE OF ILLINOIS

Meet the Project Team

PROJECT UPDATES

CARING. BOLD. DYNAMIC.

Project Team



Surbhi Kalra
Design Lead



Clara Asumadu
Sr. Service Designer



**Kendell
Miller-Roberts**
Design Researcher



Fredo Vega
Design Researcher



Maria Castro
Co-Design
Collaborator, Caregiver



Amanda Haro
Co-Design
Collaborator, Parent



Sara Cramer
Co-Design
Collaborator, Parent

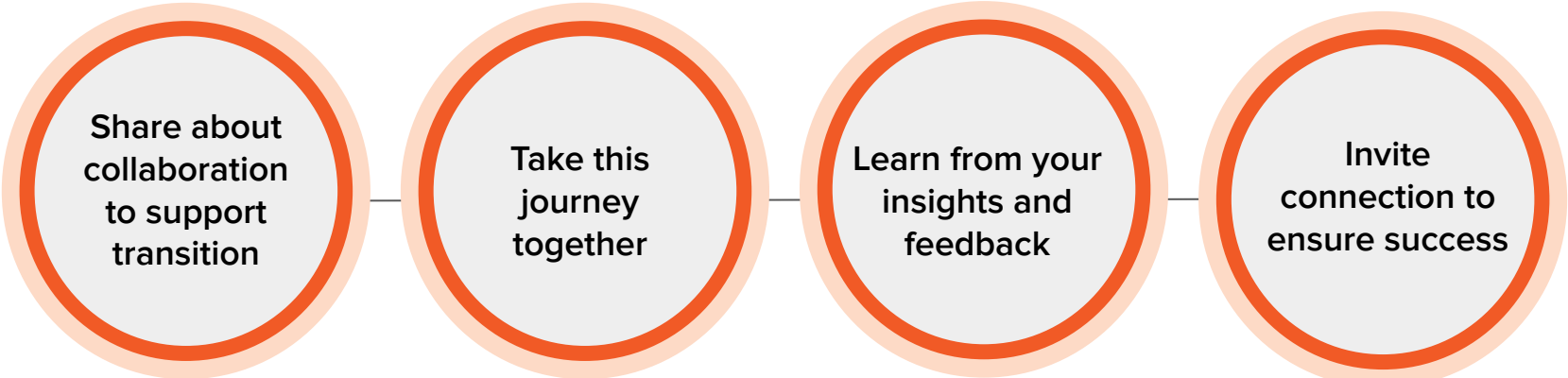


Jason Bednar
Co-Design
Collaborator, State of
Illinois, ISBE



Chris Rudd
Founder + CEO

Why are we here?



Share about
collaboration
to support
transition

Take this
journey
together

Learn from your
insights and
feedback

Invite
connection to
ensure success

Goal:

**Make early childhood
education and care services
simpler, better, and fairer for
families with young children.**

Deliverables:

Service blueprint 1 from a parent
journey POV with pain points
and opportunity areas to
innovate

New/recommended service
innovations for the Illinois
Department of Early Childhood

Service blueprint 2 from a
provider agency POV with pain
points and opportunity areas to
innovate

Approach:

These three approaches direct the development of the above three deliverables

Understand current Parent
experience engaging with the
agencies that oversee early
childhood to identify points of
interaction, pain points and
opportunities to innovate

Research with employees from
three state agencies - DCFS,
IDHS, ISBE to understand their
needs, processes and service
offerings

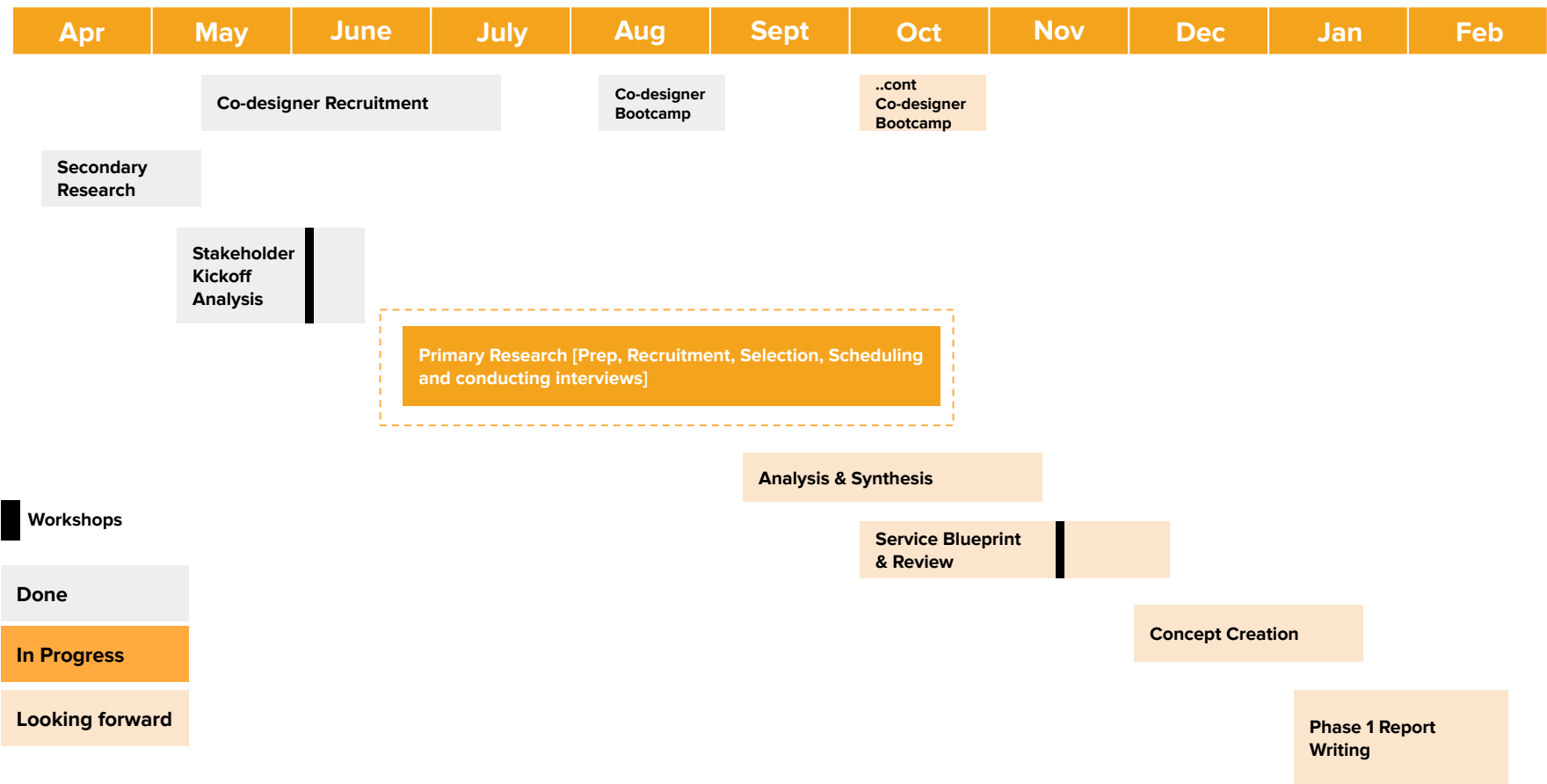
Understand current Provider
experience engaging with the
agencies that oversee early
childhood to identify points of
interaction, pain points and
opportunities to innovate

STATE OF ILLINOIS

Project Timeline and Engagement Activities

PROJECT UPDATES

Phase 1: Apr 2025 - Feb 2026



What have we completed?

1

**Secondary
research**

2

Client kick-off

3

**Co-design
Collaborator
recruitment and
bootcamps**

4

**Participant
recruitment and
Interviews**

STATE OF ILLINOIS

Secondary Research

PROJECT UPDATES

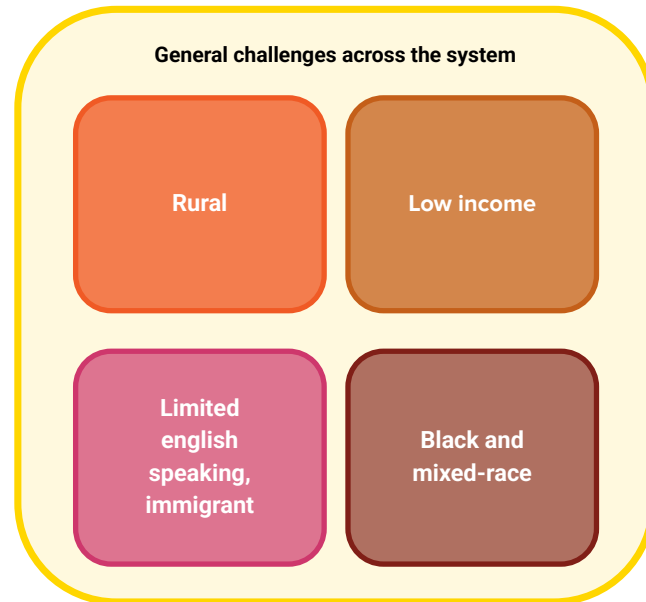
SECONDARY RESEARCH

Understanding Landscape

The different systemic challenges within early childhood, across services, span across funding, investment, provider shortage, delayed timelines, etc.. The section here elaborates on those challenges and how it impacts the lives of families, disproportionately impacting rural, low income, Black/mixed race, LEP and immigrant families and communities. We also understand that these various communities also overlap and intersect.

The team used this to guide the creation of primary research and conversate with lived experience to uncover the topics in detail.

Communities disproportionately impacted by these challenges (in no particular order)



SECONDARY RESEARCH KEY LEARNINGS

 Overwhelming referral process	 Transportation barrier to care in rural areas	 Immigrant families feel unequipped for early care	 Lack of comprehensive data collection to inform policy	 Lack of representation deters families of color from seeking support
 Lengthy child care assistance enrollment	 Lack of investment exacerbates access to care in rural areas	 Limited outreach for immigrant families	 Early childhood rigidity, accessibility, cost disadvantage low-income families	 Unequal access to early childhood care for Black families
 Insufficient support for providers fuel high workforce turnover	 Provider shortage  forces families to choose between care and employment	 Systemic Inequities leading to misdiagnosis for Non-English speaking children	 Misaligned support for low income, Black and mixed race communities	 Misconceptions about early childhood professionals as 'babysitters'
 Workforce shortage  exacerbating early  intervention support	 Lack of investment in non-English speaking communities	 Stigma around developmental disabilities hinders support for children	 Stereotypes continue to deter low-income, Black and mixed-race communities from government support	 Systemic inequities burden families of color

KEY:

Communities disproportionately impacted by these challenges

 Rural

 LEP, immigrant

 Black and mixed-race

 Low income

 General Challenges

SECONDARY RESEARCH KEY LEARNINGS

 Overwhelming referral process	 Transportation barrier to care in rural areas	 Immigrant families feel unequipped for early care	 Lack of comprehensive data collection to inform policy	 Lack of representation deters families of color from seeking support
 Lengthy child care assistance enrollment	 Lack of investment exacerbates access to care in rural areas	 Limited outreach for immigrant families	 Early childhood rigidity, accessibility, cost disadvantage low-income families	 Unequal access to early childhood care for Black families
 Insufficient support for providers fuel high workforce turnover	 Provider shortage  forces families to choose between care and employment	 Systemic Inequities leading to misdiagnosis for Non-English speaking children	 Misaligned support for low income, Black and mixed race communities	 Misconceptions about early childhood professionals as 'babysitters'
 Workforce shortage  exacerbating early  intervention support	 Lack of investment in non-English speaking communities	 Stigma around developmental disabilities hinders support for children	 Stereotypes continue to deter low-income, Black and mixed-race communities from government support	 Systemic inequities burden families of color

KEY:

Communities disproportionately impacted by these challenges

-  Rural
-  LEP, immigrant
-  Black and mixed-race
-  Low income
-  General Challenges



Early childhood rigidity, accessibility, cost disadvantage low-income families

Long wait lists, rising child care prices, and traditional hours incorporated by the child care centers significantly limit access for families with fluctuating work schedules to access care for their children efficiently. These challenges are further compounded in low-income and Black and mixed-race communities, where limited availability of services forces caregivers to access care at a distance or lean on family often at the expense of their work stability and overall well-being.

Even when high-quality child care is available, the price can exceed the cost of median rent or even college tuition. **The average annual cost of center-based child care for an infant and a 4-year-old is nearly \$18,000, which amounts to 42 percent of the median income for a typical African American family.**

About 70% of rural Illinoisans live in a child care desert, forcing tough choices on parents: Some drive 100 miles a day or more to find care, others leave the workforce.

More than one in four Black parents have received help paying for child care from grandparents or other family members (26%).

"The developmental [therapist] had to go to my dad's house in Alsip and meet with him because, they wanted to do it during work hours and I was working. But if I didn't have my dad, he [son] would have been in regular daycare, we probably wouldn't have been able to do it,"- Single parent of a 4 year old with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder).

"And then he [husband] goes with my daughter to school, she's in first grade. And then halfway throughout the day at about 10:30, my husband goes and picks him up, takes him home. And then every other week he has speech therapy at the local hospital that my husband takes him to. But that was the only way that we could get him. We had to decide does he get preschool services or does he stay at the in home child care."- Parent of a 4 year old.

02

Transportation barrier to care in rural areas.

The lack of civic infrastructure to bridge the already existing gap to travel long distances for care makes transportation a significant financial and emotional strain on families in rural communities. Many miss out on timely care due to circumstances beyond their control, further exacerbating stress and inequity.

Families in rural Williamson County report 3-hour round trips for therapies, compounded by lack of public transit and seasonal road closures.

A Southern Illinois mother shared: “We missed 4 sessions last winter because roads were iced over. By spring, my son lost ground.”

Families in rural ZIP codes face 3x longer travel times to reach EI providers. Poor broadband access limits telehealth effectiveness.

Our in home daycare was amazing. Our in home daycare was great. But then he started. He was an early intervention and then he turned three and then our daycare was outside of the, outside of the school boundaries. So we didn't have transportation to get my child to his daycare. - Parent of a 4 year old in a rural community

Our other in home child care person that we found lived two miles outside of the district boundaries for bus transportation. So the school wouldn't make an accommodation to go to two miles outside of the district lines to drop him off.” - Parent of a 4 year old in a rural community.

STATE OF ILLINOIS

Stakeholder Kickoff and Identification

Category	Stakeholder Name and Role	Contact Information	Person Referring	Referral Contact Information	Notes/Comments
FAMILY AND CAREGIVER VOICE					
20 KIDS FIRST Chicago	Jessica Lanas		Lneryl Flores	9	
STAKEHOLDER AND REFERRAL SOURCE HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED					
1 Families receiving CCAP funding	IDHS DEC-Patricia Rooney	Patricia.Rooney@illinois.gov c: (312) 350-3457	Mike Garner Jones at IDHS		Patricia Rooney can get you in contact with CCR&Rs that can get you in contact with families
2 Foster Families	Solange Morrisette	Solange.Morrisette@illinois.gov	DCFS or Purchase of Service organization Brightpoint-Janice Moenster, Caritas		
3 Greater East St. Louis Early Learning Partnership	Evan Kraus	ekrauss@eastidealligned.org	Janice Moenster		
4 Brightpoint (to reach child welfare-involved families)	Jaime Russel	jrussel@brightpoint.org, emedere@bri	Janice Moenster, Mendy Smith, Emily Medere, Lesley Schwartz	jmoenste@brightpoint.org or 618-401-6370	
5 COFI (Community Organizing and Family Issues) - POWER PAC IL	Ellen Schumer Tracy Occomy Crowder Deputy Director, Policy and External Affairs Pronouns: she/her	phone: (312) 736-5541			
6 Families managing the IEP (Individualized Education Plan) and IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) process	Lori Orr at IDHS DEC				
7 Refugee and Immigrant populations non-English Speaking, not only Spanish - Alignment Rockford for Rockford Area,	Emily or Antonio Ramirez				
8 Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) families	Lori Orr, DHS DEC, In Winn. County: Cheryl Floyd WCHD Igria Patricia Broome IDHS DEC who can				

Kickoff assisted us in participant outreach for both families and staff within early childhood services-providers, intermediaries and state.

Overall Targeted Outreach Strategy:

We will connect with the stakeholders from identified organizations or referral (as marked) to connect us to providers across the state.

Total number of Provider interviews - 33

Phase 1- 8

Phase 2- 25

Regional Representation for Phase 1:

Region 1- 1
Region 2- 2
Region 3- 2
Region 4- 2
Region 5- 2

*Note regarding regions:

For organizations that serve all of Illinois: While we are indicating a preferred region with each organization to ensure regional diversity, we are open to being connected with providers throughout Illinois depending on which region each organization has strong connections in.

[We have utilized this IDHS link to identify regions](#)

Internal- overall I was mostly looking to prioritize region 1 4 and 5 since 2 and 3 are covered by ywca and SAL, so I looked at our intermediary sheet to see how we assigned regions and tried to apply that with providers since we'd wanna speak to providers who serve these different family types. for SEIU, I put region 4 as preferred because for intermediary group, we have them in region 2&4 for LEP families, and since ywca covers region 2, then I thought region 4. for brightpoint, we have them in regions 2-5 in intermediary groups for low income families and immigrant families, and since we have representation for region 2 from ywca and region 4 for seiu, then I thought region 5. and then the last one was region 1 so I just assigned that to birth to five it's not particular to the org but more so trying to capture the different family types we had from the intermediary group

Organization Type	Organization Name	County/Region	Stakeholder Contact	Referral	Notes
Network of families, advocates and providers	Birth to Five	*preferred region: Region 1	cfleming@birthtofiveil.com	Ann	they are helpful in all the cases. would recommend asking help in all the places
	YWCA Northern Illinois	Winnebago, Region 2	Rachel	Ann	Ann to connect
	SEIU	*preferred region: Region 4	Maria Del Carmen Macias MariaDelCarmen.Macias@seiuill.org	Bri Stormer bri.stormer@actforchildren.org, note: Diana McClarien can facilitate	has the YWCA Child Care Provider Services network
CCR&Rs and Direct Providers	SAL// Skip A-Long Childhood Centers (part of SAL)	Region 3	Marcy Mendenhall MMendenhall@salcommunityservices.org	N/A	SEIU can help you reach Spanish-speaking providers & families
	Brightpoint	*preferred region: Region 5	Janice Moenster jmoenste@brightpoint.org	N/A	can reach out to her and Loredia directly
					could be useful for home visiting

STATE OF ILLINOIS

Participant Breakdown

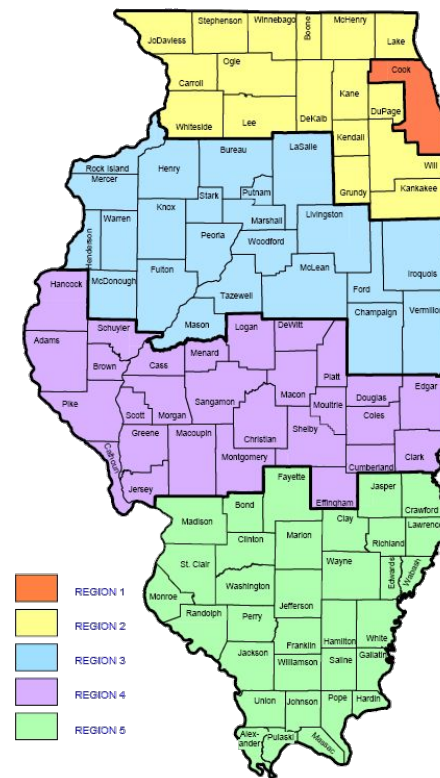
PROJECT UPDATES

PARTICIPANT CRITERIA AND BREAKDOWN

Participant Breakdown

As we prepped for outreach and interviews, our goal is to ensure we have **perspectives that represent diversity in voices (culture, language, etc.), counties, regions, and services received/provided across Illinois.**

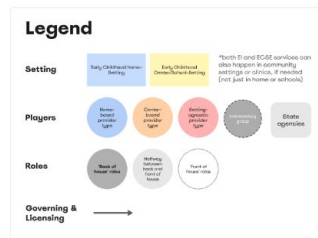
Our learnings in Phase 1 will inform Phase 2 while Phase 2 will fill in the gaps and build upon the learnings of Phase 1.



Illinois EC Services Ecosystem Map

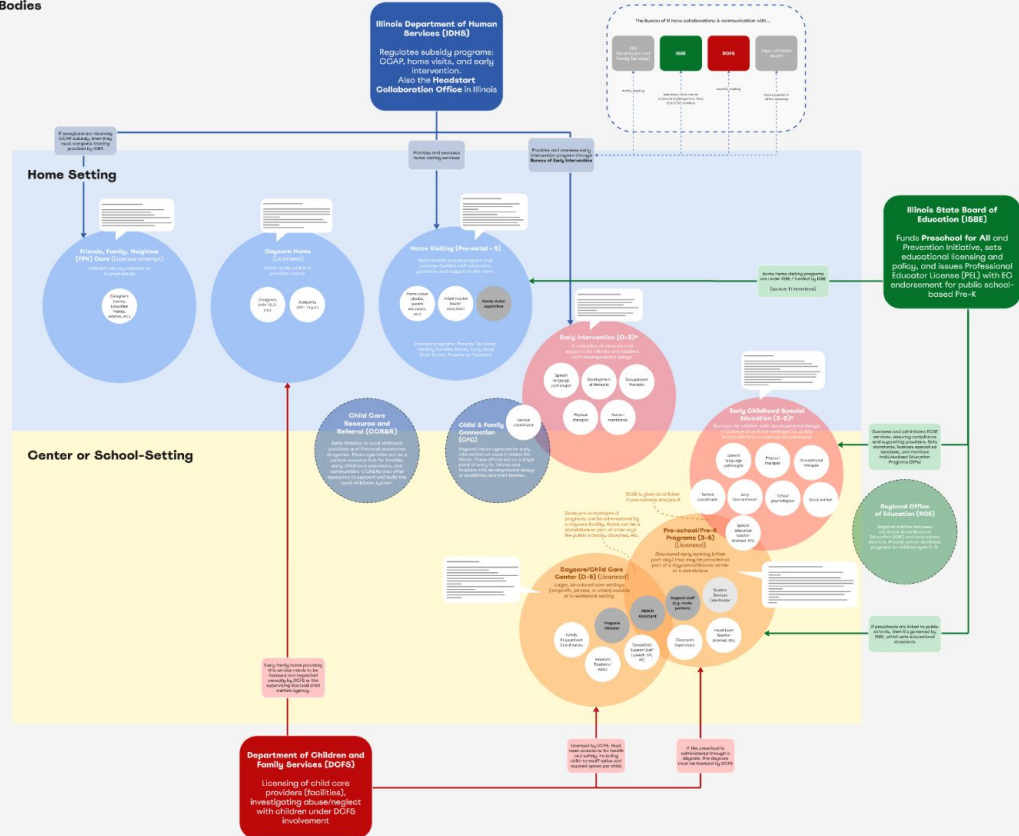
This map illustrates the landscape of early childhood (EC) services by showing the different provider types, the roles within the workforce, and the settings in which services are delivered.

It also highlights the three primary state departments—IDHS, ISBE, and DCFs—along with major intermediary organizations, to provide a more complete view of the regulatory environment and key players shaping the ecosystem.

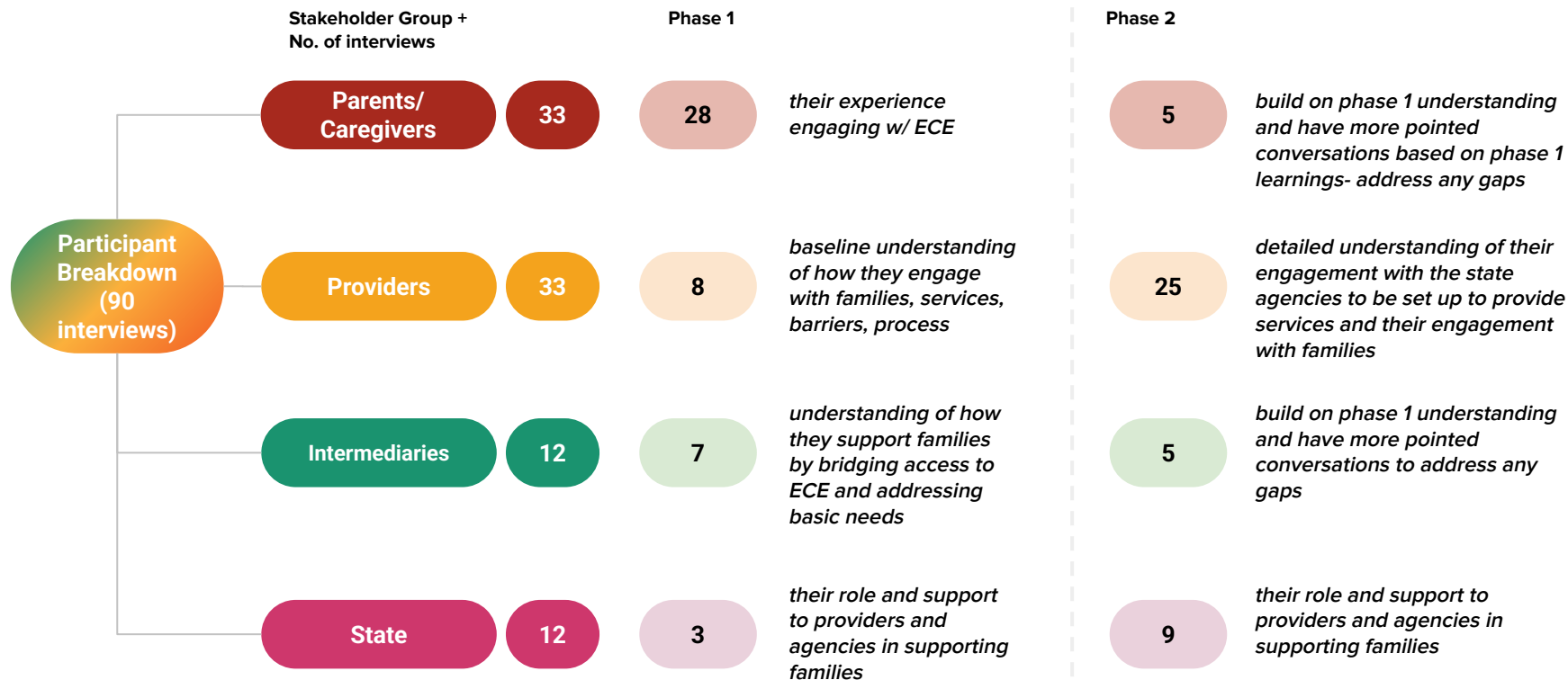


Note: This map does not include the funding sources.

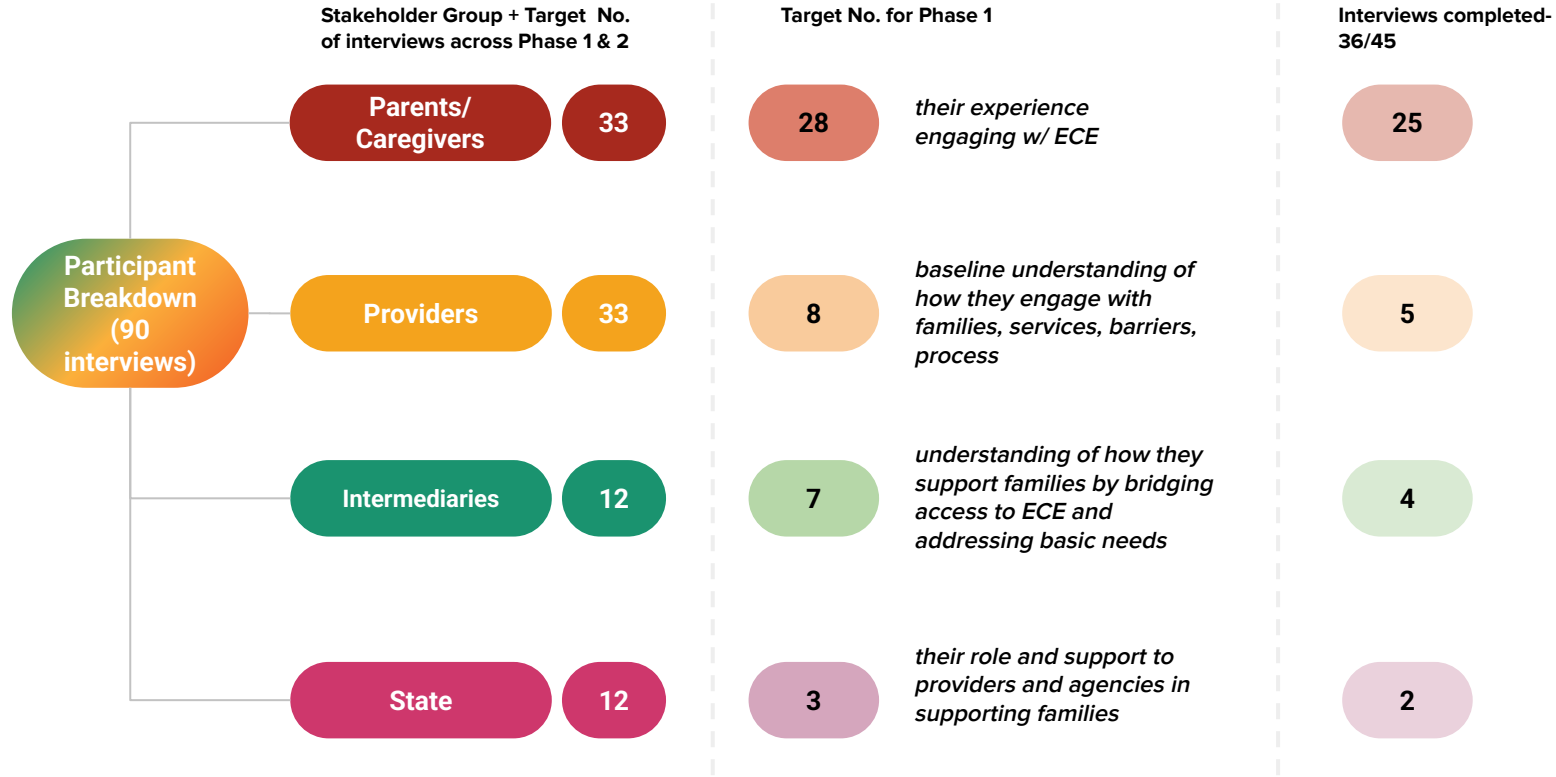
State & Regulatory Bodies



PARTICIPANT CRITERIA AND BREAKDOWN



PARTICIPANT CRITERIA AND BREAKDOWN



STATE OF ILLINOIS

Preliminary Learnings from 1:1 conversations

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Preliminary Learnings

Gaps in information keep families from timely access to care

Many parents only learn about childcare services, supports, and resources in their community by chance—often too late, or not at all. Both parents and providers lack awareness, leaving families to shoulder the burden of piecing together information through word of mouth, relentless advocacy, social media, or a fortunate encounter with someone in the know. Without clear or consistent channels for information, families experience delays or miss out on critical services altogether.

Quote:

"I fired the pediatrician because I found out that she was supposed to tell me about early intervention. All of those times she was supposed to tell me. And I then found out I could have self referred to early intervention. Had she just told me about it, I could have self referred. Then I was really upset, oh my gosh, because that's what I did. I just self-referred. I just called the number. And it was so seamless. It was just the easiest process."

- A parent of a 5 year old child who has complex disabilities or special needs

Lack of workforce diversity fuels racism and microaggressions

Families of color report experiencing racism and microaggressions in childcare settings, often tied to a lack of cultural diversity among providers. They often feel excluded and mistreated, forcing them to make difficult choices between culturally sensitive providers and accessible care that may be more affordable or even nearby

Quote:

"They wanted her [daughter] to come in and have an English language evaluation because in their system they put her down as a non English speaker even though she had been there at their school during the pre K program. So a lot of that assumption, I'm assuming, is because my husband is multilingual. And it was actually very challenging."

- A Black parent in a multilingual household

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Preliminary Learnings

Families inevitably have to self navigate despite being shared resources

Parents often have to navigate much of the care process on their own. While intermediaries or service coordinators may share resources, there is little guidance or true collaboration to help parents thoroughly explore options and identify the best solutions for their child(ren).

Quote:

"He [a disabled single father], basically needed help on finding a place. He needed help with managing and watching his child and also to finding a way to provide for his child. So it was just a lot. Only thing I could do, and I just felt so sad about it, was just, refer him, you know, and check in when I can."

- An intermediary staff member serving predominantly low-income families

Lack of system coordination and collaboration burden families

Parents—especially foster and adoptive parents caring for children with high needs—are often burdened with managing communication between the various systems involved in the child's life. Instead of being supported by these systems, they are left coordinating them to ensure their child receives timely care.

Quote:

"Especially when he was in care, you know, of course we were interacting with DCFS and his caseworker and sharing information with them and the court and his guardian ad litem. And then it was like the same information to the early intervention team and then to his healthcare team and then to his child, childcare team. And none of them talk to one another. So it was always me having to like give that same information across all these different people."

- A single parent of a 3 year old with complex disabilities and special needs

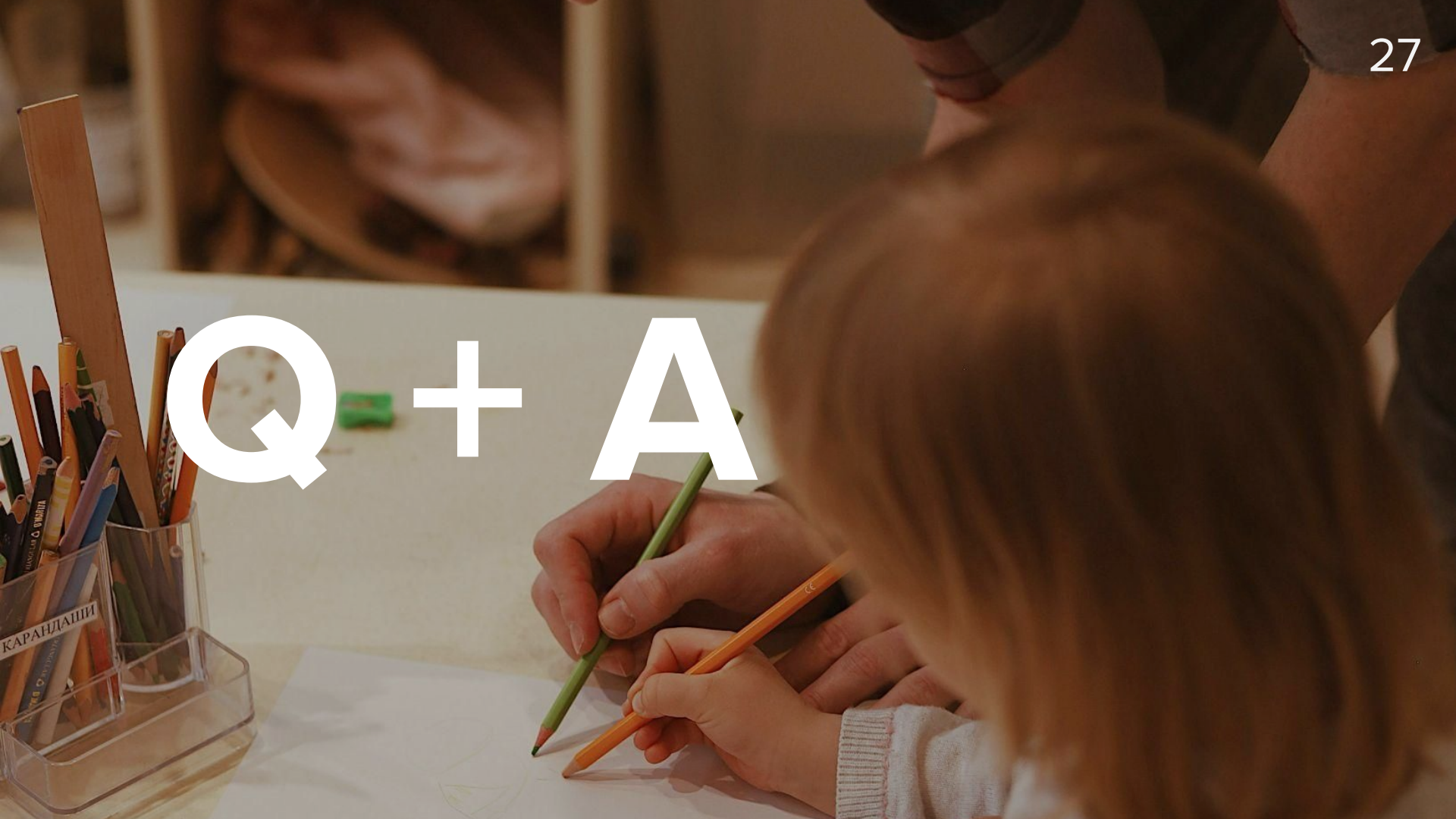
Phase 1 October 2025

Analysis and Synthesis

Conducting analysis and synthesis of the data we have collected from our 1:1 conversations

Service Blueprint Workshop

Preparing for a Workshop for mid November to receive feedback from parents, providers, intermediaries and other stakeholders on the blueprint.



Q + A

Discussion Questions

What stands out to you from this shareout?

As we head into our synthesis process, what are you curious to learn more about?

CONNECT WITH US

website. www.chibydesign.com

email. surbhi@chibydesign.com

social. [**f**](#) [**@**](#) [**in**](#) [!\[\]\(c60ce5f1586b7dcb9ed6bccf6949cf15_img.jpg\)](#)