

Raising Our Voices: Shaping Tomorrow

June 20, 2024

Questions & Answers

Some statements have been edited for clarity. Please direct follow-up questions or corrections to David Faich, Policy Manager for Raising Illinois: DFaich@RaisingIllinois.org.

Will there be a recording sent out?

Yes. The full live recording is available on the [Raising Illinois events webpage](#).

How should parents and providers initiate or join a conversation about preschool licensing?

Because Raising Illinois advocates for our state's prenatal-to-three system of supports, our coalition's early learning priorities focus on infant-toddler care. Parents and providers can learn more about [Raising Illinois' goals for this area](#), join our policy work groups, sign up for our mailing list, or follow us on social media. For specific concerns about licensing, individuals can attend [an open meeting of the Illinois Department of Human Services' Child Care Advisory Council](#), which allows time for public comment.

Will the new state agency serve all types of programs, including home-based early learning providers? Many of us are forced to take on additional expenses or close our businesses because of funding gaps in current programs like the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

Family Child Care is a crucial part of our state's mixed delivery system for early learning, especially for infants and toddlers. We know home-based educators face unique challenges with accessing resources. Our coalition is working to make sure both FCCs and center-based programs have a seat at the table—not just in our policy work groups, but in the statewide decision making that is happening now for the new Department of Early Childhood.

How will the new state agency transition affect local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies?

The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA), which oversees local CCR&Rs, will become part of the new Illinois Department of Early Childhood. It will continue to operate without any programmatic changes for the next two years.

The Smart Start Workforce Grant, slated to open July 1st, now disqualifies programs who receive funding through Head Start/Early Head Start, Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), or Prevention Initiative/Preschool For All. In the past, these programs qualified for the other variations of the workforce grants. Is there any reason why federally funded programs are no longer qualified? Since we are talking about increasing early childhood educator salaries in the state, how is this equitable when many programs have mixed funding?

Programs that receive funding through CCAP are eligible for the new Smart Start Workforce Grants. However, you are correct that other public funding streams disqualify participation. We absolutely agree that many programs do not have equitable access to state funding opportunities. We are optimistic that, with the new agency transition, Illinois will continue to improve at making these opportunities better for all providers and families.

Are Coordinated Intake or other child referral services moving to the new agency?

Yes! Coordinated Intake is currently administered by the Bureau of Home Visiting at the Illinois Department of Human Services. This will transition to the new Illinois Department of Early Childhood on July 1, 2026.

How will the new agency manage the Early Intervention waiting list and how will the agency work with community organizations to improve messaging and help reach more families?

We are deeply concerned about the growing waiting lists for Early Intervention (EI) services. Addressing this problem cannot wait for the new agency to launch. We are continuing to advocate for greater investments to increase compensation for EI providers and service coordinators so that we can improve our state's EI workforce crisis and serve all eligible infants and toddlers who desperately need these services. This includes providing families with information about how to access EI and what to do if they are not receiving services in a timely manner.

Since the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) is moving to the new agency, does that mean they will no longer be a part of the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies?

There will not be any programmatic changes to CCAP as part of the new agency transition. While we do not yet know exactly what may change once the new agency

begins operating on July 1, 2026, we all have the opportunity to inform this process through the state's regional listening sessions and our coalition's community conversations!

I worry that even with all the efforts to include the WHOLE state, there are places in our state that are seldom included when individuals are nominated to participate in various formal advisory roles. Is there representation on these advisory committees from the southern, southwest, central, and northeast areas of the state? How will the needs assessments from the Birth to 5 Illinois Regional Councils be used to inform the transition to the new agency?

Raising Illinois wholeheartedly agrees about the need to ensure that no part of our state goes underrepresented in the early childhood decision-making process. We also recognize that the Birth to Five Illinois Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessments are a valuable tool for informing the transition efforts that are underway. Our coalition is supporting the Early Childhood and Care Transition Advisory Committee (TAC) with their regional listening sessions and we invite individuals and organizations from every region of the state to join us. Raising Illinois currently represents over 200 ZIP Codes, but we are always looking to engage and learn from local communities that are not yet included in our advocacy.

Are the All Our Kids collaboratives moving to the new agency?

Yes, the All Our Kids Network initiative is currently administered by the Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Early Childhood and will likely become part of the new agency as well.

Will the Universal Newborn Support Systems expansion sit in this new agency?

Currently, Universal Newborn Support Systems (UNSS) models operate only in the City of Chicago, Peoria County, and Stephenson County. The Illinois Department of Human Services administers the federal Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) grant to develop ways to scale UNSS to more communities. If the state receives funding to continue ECCS, it may operate under either the new agency or the Illinois Department of Public Health.

We can't care for infants and toddlers if we don't have enough teachers and staff. We don't have enough teachers and staff because they aren't paid enough. Some families

also struggle to access programs because they lack transportation. What is being done to make these things better?

Raising Illinois agrees wholeheartedly that infant-toddler care and learning faces unique challenges, and the crisis in families' ability to access this care is even more acute than for preschool. We are committed to continue working with infant-toddler educators in both home- and center-based settings to uplift and address these challenges. Educator pipeline, workforce compensation, transportation, equity in public funding opportunities, and developmentally appropriate care are all critical issues for our field. Today's conversation does not end today, and we encourage everyone viewing to get involved in opportunities to provide input on the new agency's transition plan. We also welcome folks to share their ideas for Raising Illinois' next policy agenda through our upcoming community conversations this summer and fall!

What is the new law that will make it easier for new parents to get help for substance abuse issues after giving birth without being afraid?

This new legislation is Senate Bill (SB) 3136, which creates the Family Recovery Plans Implementation Task Force Act. The explicitly stated purpose of SB 3136 is to advance the best interests of infants with prenatal substance exposure. Currently, when an infant is born in Illinois with a positive toxicology screen, this is an automatic indication of child neglect and the birthing parent is at risk of losing their parental rights. The new task force will develop recommendations for Illinois to implement a model for serving infants with prenatal substance exposure that is less punitive for families.