

INCREASE FUNDING FOR EARLY INTERVENTION (EI) BY \$60 MILLION IN FY26

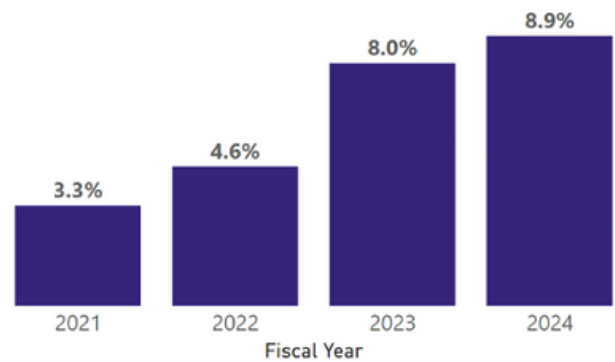
Raise provider reimbursement rates substantially this coming fiscal year

The Early Intervention (EI) program provides a range of family-centered developmental and social-emotional services to infants and toddlers who have or are at risk for significant developmental delays and disabilities. These critical services improve developmental outcomes for young children, support families to better meet their child's needs, and reduce future educational and health costs to our communities and the state by minimizing the need for special education services. **EI is an entitlement for families** and serves children from all income levels and in every county across the state.

SERVICE DELAYS ARE HISTORICALLY HIGH AND HAVE NEARLY DOUBLED SINCE FY22

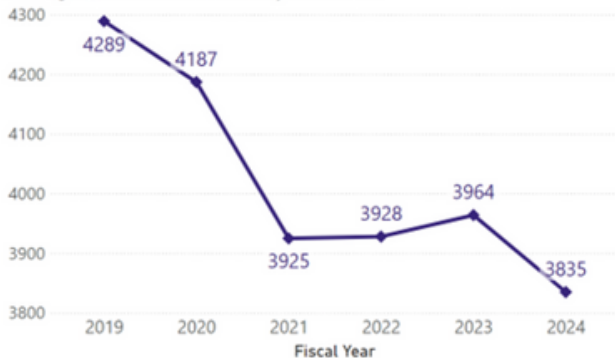
While the EI program's caseload continues to increase, the loss of EI therapists and service coordinators is having a substantial impact on the provision of timely services. **Thousands of families across the state are currently on waiting lists for the EI services they are legally entitled to receive, and the service delay percentage has nearly doubled to historically high levels.**

Average Service Delays by Fiscal Year



THE EI WORKFORCE IS IN CRISIS

Average Number of Providers by Fiscal Year



Service delays are tied directly to the program's ongoing workforce crisis. Most EI providers must cover their own health insurance and travel costs, and are not compensated for missed or canceled appointments. These challenges, among others, are leading providers to leave EI and work instead in hospitals, schools, private practices, or other settings that offer higher pay. The system has **lost nearly 500 providers** over the past 5 years. Recent cross-state research and cost modeling findings show that **Illinois provider reimbursement rates are significantly lower than other states, and far below the true cost of delivering services.**

BABIES CANNOT WAIT – INCREASE FUNDING AND RAISE PROVIDER REIMBURSEMENT RATES

The Illinois General Assembly has an opportunity to address the Early Intervention program's stubbornly high service delays and workforce crisis. **We urge the legislature to increase funding for the Early Intervention program by \$60 million in the FY26 budget, allowing IDHS to authorize a substantial rate increase for providers,** and ensuring a commitment to Smart Start Illinois by including significant multi-year investments for Early Intervention. More therapists will leave the program entirely without immediate action, causing further harm to infants, toddlers, and their families. **The time to act is now.**



For more information, please contact:

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*Data provided by the Illinois Department of Human Services
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SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

AARTS Center at Rush University Health System
Access Living
Advance Illinois
American Heart Association
BCDI Chi-Metro
Carole Robertson Center for Learning
Chamber of Mothers Chicago
Child and Family Connections
Clearbrook
COFI / POWER PAC IL
Collaboration for Early Childhood, Oak Park, IL
CU Early
Early Childhood Consulting
Early Intervention Research Group at Northwestern University
Early Intervention Services, Inc.
Educare
Erikson Institute
Esperanza Health Centers
EverThrive Illinois
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Illinois
From U University
Illinois Action for Children
Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Illinois Developmental Therapy Association
Illinois Head Start Association
Jewish United Fund
Kids Above All
Kids Out Loud Pediatric Therapy
Latino Policy Forum
Lawndale Christian Health Center
Legal Council for Health Justice
LIFT, Inc.
Little Sprouts OT for EI
Metropolitan Family Services
Mission: Readiness Illinois
National Louis University
Peoria County Bright Futures
Prevent Child Abuse Illinois
PrimeCare Community Health Center
ReadyNation Illinois
Rush University Children's Hospital
The Day Nursery
The Goddard School North Aurora
The National Service Office for Nurse-Family Partnership and Child First
University of Illinois Chicago