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News and updates from the  
Early Childhood Department



**Illinois**  
State Board of  
Education

OCTOBER 2023

## From the Director's Desk



## **ISBE Anticipates Exceeding the Smart Start Illinois Goal of Funding 5,000 New Seats in Preschool Deserts in FY 2024!**

We knew that we had to approach the fiscal year 2024 Early Childhood Block Grant Request for Proposal (RFP) differently from our previous RFP rounds if we were going to be successful in reaching the Smart Start Illinois goal for Year 1 of expanding access by 5,000 seats.

Prior to the release of the FY 2024 RFP, we engaged stakeholders in listening sessions during which we gathered feedback on the previous RFP. We used that information to determine the best way to approach the FY 2024 RFP.

We heard things such as:

- The narrative question was repetitive.
- The application read as if it was geared toward school districts.
- Obtaining data was difficult.

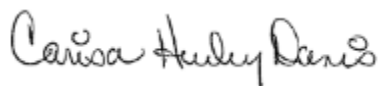
So we shored all that up, eliminating repetitive narrative questions, updating language in the RFP to ensure that it included community-based organizations (CBOs), and further showing that CBOs are encouraged to apply. We even provided priority points for CBOs that applied. As you know, this RFP was designed to eliminate deserts, so we provided a link in the application to a desert map on our website. The goal was to make it easy for applicants to obtain and understand the information and not have to search for the data this year. Additionally, after releasing the RFP we hosted three technical assistance webinars this year (rather than one as in the past). One of the webinars was specifically targeted for CBOs.

Additional support for applicants was provided by the [Birth to Five Illinois](#) regional team. Birth to Five Illinois was available throughout the application window to assist applicants with accessing and understanding data; connecting applicants to grant-writing support, where possible; and assisting community-based providers, such as family child care homes, with identifying opportunities for collaboration partners to apply for funding. We are excited because all of our efforts were successful as ISBE exceeded our goal of expanding access by 5,000.

There were some lessons learned in the FY 2024 RFP round that will help improve the FY 2025 process. ISBE will provide additional guidance to potential applicants on GATA prequalification requirements and budget development in FY 2025. Additionally, we will provide more information, support, and guidance pertaining to the family child care model. Moreover, we know that grant writing is a barrier for some programs that might want to apply so we are providing Grant Writing 101 webinars prior to the release of the RFP. Lastly, we will continue to work on streamlining the narrative questions. We value your feedback as we prepare for the FY2025 RFP. Please feel free to email any recommendations you have to my attention at [earlychi@isbe.net](mailto:earlychi@isbe.net).

Thank you for all you do for the youngest learners in Illinois.

Sincerely,



## Prevention Initiative

### **FY 2024 Prevention Initiative Compliance Checklist**

The [FY 2024 Prevention Initiative Compliance Checklist](#) has been posted under the "News and Updates" dropdown on the ISBE Early Childhood webpage. All programs should ensure that they are meeting compliance requirements each year. Please see the resources on the [ISBE Early Childhood Prevention Initiative webpage](#) for additional information and guidance.

### **FY 2024 Prevention Initiative Program Monitoring**

FY 2024 Prevention Initiative program monitoring notifications were sent on Aug. 15. All programs scheduled for an FY 2024 monitoring visit should have received an email notification. Emails were sent to the authorized official and program contact as listed in the most recent approved grant. Please contact your authorized official for questions regarding the email monitoring notification.

All updated documents to assist with monitoring preparation are posted on the [ISBE Prevention Initiative webpage](#). Monitoring visits will consist of the review of the Prevention Initiative Compliance Checklist and a quality site visit review using the Home Visiting Rating Scales for home visiting programs and/or the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale observations for center-based programs. If your program is scheduled for a visit, you will be contacted by a representative of the Vander Weele Group LLC to introduce the monitoring process and set the monitoring window. Please contact the Early Childhood Development Department with any questions.

### **ISBE FY 2024 Prevention Initiative Forum**

Start Early, in collaboration with ISBE, is excited to announce a revised state-level conference to support Prevention Initiative high-quality services in Illinois. This series will be presented in six 90-minute webinars that will be offered throughout FY 2024. The conference series began on Sept. 21 and will conclude on May 9, 2024. There are four sessions remaining, and all will be held virtually. Please mark your calendars accordingly. Registration can be found [here](#).

## Preschool for All/Preschool for All Expansion

### **FY 2024 Preschool for All/Preschool for All Expansion Compliance Checklist**

The [FY 2024 PFA/PFAE Compliance Checklist](#) has been posted on the ISBE Early Childhood webpage. All programs should ensure that they are meeting compliance requirements each year. Please see the resources on the ISBE Early Childhood [PFA webpage](#) and [PFAE webpage](#) for additional information and guidance.

### **FY 2024 PFA/PFAE Program Monitoring**

Monitoring notifications have been sent out to all programs that are scheduled to have a visit this school year. In the near future, the contractor will reach out with information on the overall process and initial paperwork. Programs will then be notified three to four weeks before the three-week monitoring window. At that time, three black out days may be selected. Please send any questions to [earlychi@isbe.net](mailto:earlychi@isbe.net).

### **Pyramid Model**

The Pyramid Model provides a framework for supporting Illinois' commitment to promoting healthy social-emotional growth for young children. Early Childhood

Professional Learning (ECPL) provides free access for PFA/PFAE program staff to online courses on the Pyramid Model (available in both English and Spanish), Culturally Responsive Practices to Reduce Implicit Bias, and Wellness. For more information, please email [Erin Kalanick](mailto:Erin.Kalanick@ecpl.org) or call 406-698-5231 and mention ECPL.

### **Administrator Meeting**

Mark your calendars for the Illinois State Board of Education In-Person Statewide PFA and PFAE Administrators' Meeting. The meeting is scheduled for **April 22-23, 2024**, at the I-Hotel and Conference Center in Champaign. Please share some ideas for topics by clicking on [this link](#). Watch for email communications for additional information. We are excited to host this in-person event again.

## **Early Childhood Special Education**

### **Early Childhood Transition List**

The Early Childhood Transition List, located as a system within the Student Information System (SIS), is a planning tool that districts can use to be aware of students who are currently enrolled in Early Intervention at 25 months old. A district is responsible for all children on this list, even if Early Intervention does not reach out. The district also should update student data on this list on a monthly basis after the child turns 3. Please contact [Kristy Doan](#) or [Jillian Davis](#) with any questions.

## **Kindergarten/KIDS**

### **Mastering Kids Summit**

The seventh annual Mastering Kids Summit [registration is live!](#) We are offering two sites this year. On **Friday, Dec. 8**, the summit will be held at Tinley Park Convention Center and on **Wednesday, Dec. 13**, it will be held at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Join fellow kindergarten teachers, district and school administrators, KIDS coaches, and partners. This provides an opportunity to network, learn from experts and peers across the state, and gain practical insights you can use in your classroom and school. See flyer [here](#) for more information.

## **Professional Development**

- [Tantrum vs Meltdown ... Strategies to Support Children with ASD and other Challenges](#) – **Nov. 9, virtual**
- [Session 3 Prevention Initiative Forum PI Compliance Checklist](#) – **Nov. 30, virtual**
- [Including Children with Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities](#) – **Dec. 6, Bloomington**

### **Inclusion Planning Series**

This [Early CHOICES planning series](#) is based on the Inclusive Inquiry Cycle: Self-Study and Planning Guide - Inclusion of Children with Disabilities and reviews each

stage of planning for an inclusive program. Teams will think through the process to increase access to inclusive environments for preschoolers. [Register here](#). Dates are **Dec. 6 and Jan. 17, March 6, and April 24, 2024**.

Please visit [Early Childhood Professional Learning](#), [STAR NET](#), [Early CHOICES](#), and [Start Early](#) for complete professional development listings.

## Dates to Remember

### November

**10** SIS enrollment due



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**Illinois**  
State Board of  
Education



The Illinois State Board of Education is the State Education Agency for Illinois. Our mission is to provide each and every child with safe and healthy learning conditions, great educators, and equitable opportunities by practicing data-informed stewardship of resources and policy development, all done in partnership with educators, families, and stakeholders.

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