

# Illinois

## State profile



### Illinois A snapshot

**Number of children from birth to age five:** 983,603  
Approximately 40% are low income.

**Population:** 12.8 million  
5th most populous state

#### Racial composition:

63.3% White, non-Hispanic/Latino  
14.8% African-American  
16.2% Hispanic/Latino  
4.8% Asian

#### Early childhood state funds:

(statistics as of FY2013)

- \$300 million in Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) funding appropriated to the Illinois State Board of Education • \$73 million for Part C
- Approximately \$465 million for child care
- \$20 million in home visiting services funded through the Illinois Department of Human Services

The Early Childhood Block Grant funds include state support for Preschool for All, home visiting and center-based infant/toddler programs (approximately 14% of these funds is spent on birth to age three programs, the majority of which are home visiting. The remainder is spent on center-based programs.

NOTE: Funds for maternal/child health, child health insurance, Medicaid, etc. are not listed in this total.

**County-based state:** No

**Governor:** Democrat

**State legislature:** Democrat

### Illinois BUILD structure

#### BUILD Initiative home

The Ounce of Prevention Fund leads the work of Illinois BUILD.

#### State leads

Nancy Radner  
*Director, Illinois Policy*  
Ounce of Prevention Fund

#### Working inside and outside state government

While the Illinois BUILD Initiative is led by a private organization, state leaders have emphasized a whole systems approach, in which state government leaders are regularly full collaborators in Illinois BUILD activities.

### BUILD Initiative priorities

The Illinois BUILD Initiative is currently working to:

- Improve quality through the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) including emphasis on infant/toddler programs.
- With partner organizations, lead early childhood advocacy efforts.
- Support professional development initiatives.
- Support local community partnerships through effective state policies and practices.
- Eliminate barriers to access to Part B and C.
- Emphasize skills and knowledge for working with culturally and linguistic diverse children in programs.
- Support the work of Illinois Early Learning Council committees.
- Support Chicago birth to age five strategic planning efforts.



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## State and local level early childhood governance structure

### State level governance structure

The Office of Early Childhood Development, located in the governor's office, was put into place in 2009 to provide support and leadership at the state level for an integrated system of early childhood services. The office includes a director and project managers.

The Illinois Early Learning Council (ELC) is another key component of the state early childhood leadership structure. It is comprised of the key public and private early childhood leaders in the state. The council does not have specific decision-making authority as it is advisory. However, its work plays a vital role in driving early childhood decision-making.

Essentially, the Office of Early Childhood Development is the voice within the governor's office on early childhood issues, and the Early Learning Council is the lead for the public/private partnership that supports the state's early childhood efforts. The governor's deputy chief of staff co-chairs the council.

### Local level governance structure

The state does not have a local level governance structure – although it continues to work to build local level collaborations to support early childhood system building efforts. This includes the All Our Kids (AOK) Early Childhood Network, which exists in 14 communities. Each AOK Network community receives state grants to bring providers together to review and improve communication and collaboration in areas as diverse as developmental screening to developing program inventories.

Other community coalitions have developed across the state, but they are not part of a specific network. The federal Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) grant will fund some additional community efforts.

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currently serves 19% of all three-year-olds and 31% of all four-year-olds and is funded through the state's Early Childhood Block grant (ECBG). The ECBG, which has increased steadily, includes an at least 11% set aside for evidence-based programs serving infants, toddlers and

families. In many cases, these funds are blended with child care and/or Head Start to provide full-day programs for working parents. As ECBG expands access to preschool, it also expands access to these other linked services.

### Other ECE notes of interest

The state's capital program includes a \$45 million appropriation to support the construction/expansion of early childhood facilities in high need communities across the state.

In 2005, Illinois became the first state in the nation to unionize home-based child care providers through an executive order signed by the governor and codified by the legislature. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the state negotiated a 39-month contract, providing increases in child care subsidy reimbursements, a tiered reimbursement system, and health insurance assistance for family child care, and family, friend and neighbor care providers.

Using an advocacy campaign – Equal Access to Quality Care – the SEIU used the established framework to make gains for home-based providers. In addition, a substantive increase for child care centers was enacted even though centers were not unionized.

## Early care and education

### QRIS overview

Illinois Quality Counts, the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), was launched in 2007 and is implemented statewide. It is undergoing a significant change as part of the state's application for Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge resources. The goals under the proposed changes will be to expand the QRIS from four to five levels, bring the state pre-k program into QRIS and expand participation to all licensed child care programs.

#### Percentage of participating providers

14.6% Centers  
2.4% Family Homes

#### Head Start/pre-k in QRIS?

There is limited participation. Most are part-day programs and not eligible. It is anticipated that the revised QRIS will emphasize the inclusion of Head Start and state pre-k.

### State pre-k investment

In 1985, the state began a pre-k at-risk program as part of education reform. Preschool for ALL (PFA) was passed in 2006 as the state's universal part-day pre-k for three and four year olds, providing for at-risk children first. It



Over \$64 million was netted in across-the-board rate increases for all Illinois child care providers, regardless of union affiliation. This practice of parity continued until July 2012 when, due to state fiscal issues, centers did not receive a rate increase though the union contract had an increase for home providers.

## Early learning standards

Illinois has long had early learning standards for children ages three to five but only began working on its birth to age three standards in 2011. The state is now in the final stages of editing the infant/toddler standards. The ages three to five standards are being revised through the Illinois State Board of Education. All standards will be integrated into existing training systems for training around the standards. Illinois is also developing a plan to have them available electronically beyond just a PDF to be downloaded. The Illinois Early Learning Council's System Integration and Alignment Committee is developing a plan to align and integrate the standards.

## Professional development system

Gateway to Opportunities is a professional development system which includes a continuum of training, education and ongoing supports as well as a defined career lattice. The frame begins with level 1 (paraprofessional) and extends to level 6 (graduate degree) and includes a Gateways to Opportunity Registry. This system also includes a credentialing program, the Infant Toddler Credential and the Illinois Director Credential. The state also has a preschool to grade 12 certification for school principals.

Gateways to Opportunity Scholarship funds are available for working practitioners earning additional degrees and/or credentials. Great START (Strategy to Attract and Retain Teachers) pays wage supplements for higher levels of education/training for providers who remain in the same program for a period of time.

There are other training programs that also serve early learning programs within the state.

## Assessment

### How is assessment being used within the early childhood system?

Formative assessment is used in Preschool for All and will be used in the higher level standards of Quality Counts. The state's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant has placed greater emphasis on assessment.

### Kindergarten entry assessment

Illinois is launching a pilot of its kindergarten entry assessment (KEA) in 2012 with plans to expand statewide by 2014. The state's KEA will utilize teacher observational assessments repeated over time to yield valid information. The process will provide aggregate statewide data to inform policy, guide classroom instruction, align early childhood and K12 systems, and strengthen professional development opportunities. The state will be using DRDP-SR, an assessment tool developed by WestEd and the BEAR Center at UC Berkeley for use as California's kindergarten entry assessment.

## Health/mental health/nutrition

Illinois' health strategies have focused on five main areas:

- Enhancing maternal health through perinatal care
- Improving access to health care for young children
- Broadening well-child care beyond physical health
- Promoting children's social and emotional health in all settings
- Addressing children's oral health

Within these areas – through concerted efforts in the past two decades – advocates, providers and public/private community coalitions have made significant progress, as outlined in examples below. They have leveraged public funding by incubating ideas into initiatives and then embedding them within state funded programs.

Illinois has raised the visibility of maternal health, its connection to young children's development and the need to improve access to perinatal care. Public/private initiatives have led to Medicaid policy changes including:

- A medical home initiative
- Significant reimbursement changes that promote access to and the delivery of comprehensive care

The state Medicaid agency has also provided financial support for a psychiatric consultation phone line and training on perinatal health for primary care providers.

The state Medicaid agency has implemented pilot projects, such as targeted perinatal case management for women who had low-birth weight infants, to inform future enhancements.



The state Medicaid agency has made policy changes to promote quality well-child services while supporting providers in incorporating developmental services into their practices. Additionally, the state Medicaid agency has added developmental screening, social emotional screening and perinatal depression screening as approved reimbursable services during well-child visits.

A statewide organization, Enhancing Developmentally Oriented Primary Care, or EDOPC, was developed to offer training and technical assistance to primary care providers on developmental issues.

The Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership is building a mental health system with appropriate providers for children from birth to age 18.

Caregiver Connections provides mental health consultation for child care providers through the Child Care Resource and Referral Network (CCR&R).

The Assuring Better Child Health Development (ABCD) III Project focuses on creating efficient systems linkages to support healthy child development. It particularly emphasizes improving referral and care systems.

Project LAUNCH (Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children's Health) increases coordination services for children from birth to age eight.

Illinois established its All Kids statewide insurance program that allows parents to enroll their children in a public program with a sliding scale. Parents at higher income levels pay the full cost of coverage. Results show that when health insurance is available for children, more parents seek assistance and All Kids has increased participation for other

programs, including Medicaid, as well. However, in 2012, due to the state's fiscal crisis, they lowered eligibility to 300% of federal poverty level.

## Family support/ engagement

Illinois invests more state money in home visiting than almost any other state – more than \$40 million across two state agencies and including the birth to age three set-aside. In addition, the Early Learning Council's Home Visiting Task Force works in collaboration with the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development and the Department of Human Services to oversee implementation of the state's Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) grant.

This initiative builds upon a previous Evidence-Based Home Visiting grant funded through the Children's Bureau and is used to develop Illinois' home visiting infrastructure and increase access to services for at-risk children and families. Illinois has currently secured over \$7 million in formula funding to expand access to home visiting services in high-risk communities, in addition to \$12 million over four years of competitive funding for the expansion and evaluation of doula\* and Fussy Baby Network enhancements to home visiting programs.

Illinois uses a variety of evidence-based home visiting models, including: Early Head Start, Healthy Families Illinois, Nurse-Family Partnership and Parents as Teachers.

*\* A trained community-based professional who provides continuous support to the mother and her partner before, during and just after birth.*

## Cross-sector linkages

### Early learning, health, mental health and family support

The Early Learning Council is seen as the foundation for emphasizing cross-sector linkages within Illinois' early childhood system. Its Systems Alignment and Integration Committee is a key part of this effort. The ELC has also recently created a new workgroup focusing on health and another focused on linking home visiting and the health system that will emphasize cross-sector linkages. Other specific examples of cross-sector linkages include:

- The AOK community networks, which connect early learning with health and family support as part of a comprehensive approach to work in communities.
- The data workgroup, which works to develop a data warehouse that connects most aspects of the early childhood system.
- The Children's Mental Health Partnership and Project Launch, which connect with Strengthening Families.
- Strengthening Families Illinois, which includes tools and training that are embedded into the practice of the Child Care Resource and Referral Network, AOK Networks, Birth To Three Institute, Head Start and Early Head Start.

## K-12 linkages with the early childhood system

Illinois has created the position of assistant superintendent for early childhood within the Illinois State Board of Education. The state is also developing a plan for a data system that will ultimately link birth to grade 12



data with other early childhood data programs and a new requirement has been passed that will require bilingual education beginning in pre-k through grade 12. Recent reforms have the current Illinois Education longitudinal data system going from birth through 12th grade.

Illinois is developing a pre-k to grade 12 Principal Certification program which requires that principal preparation programs address student learning and instructional activities from pre-k to grade 12.

The state is in the midst of revising its teacher licensing and certification process. Illinois currently has a birth through grade three certification and a kindergarten to grade nine certification. That is being reconsidered in the revision process. Once the final revisions are made, this will also result in changes to the higher education curriculum. Formative assessment will likely be incorporated into the higher education curriculum as part of these revisions.

## Assuring racial, cultural and linguistic responsiveness

Illinois places a strong emphasis on the need to create a system that is responsive to the needs of children from varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Following are a number of initiatives that emphasize this priority.

Illinois' definition of "children of limited English-speaking ability" includes three and four-year-olds participating in state-funded preschool programs and assures services for English language learners.

The state's Early Learning Council has been working since 2008 to develop strategies to assure greater cultural and linguistic diversity among the state's early childhood workforce, within the higher education curriculum and in actual practices.

The Illinois State Board of Education has also adopted rule changes recommended by the council that will go into effect in 2014 focused on preparing teachers to be culturally competent. Several universities have now adopted changes to their curriculum in response to the new rule changes.

ISBE has also passed new principal preparation rules that require principals to have content information in their coursework about early childhood, special education and English Language Learners.

Trainers for Gateways to Opportunity, a professional development system, are now required to develop Culture, Language and Ability Diverse (CLAAD) competencies for all of the trainings in the Early Childhood Registry and to incorporate those competencies into their trainings.

The state is currently undertaking a planning process to develop agreement around a set of guiding principles by which all decision-making related to early learning programs will be considered through a lens that considers the racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of children and families.

### BUILD Illinois Funders

*Irving Harris Foundation*

*McCormick Foundation*

*JB and MK Pritzker Family Foundation*



## About the BUILD Initiative



The BUILD Initiative helps states create comprehensive early childhood systems – coordinated, effective policies that address children's health, mental health and nutrition, early care and education, family support, and early intervention. BUILD's vision is at the center of an emerging and vibrant state-based policy movement in the early childhood development field. We work with those who set policies, provide services and advocate for our youngest children to make sure that they are safe, healthy, eager to learn and ready to succeed in school.

Visit [www.buildinitiative.org](http://www.buildinitiative.org).

09-12