

Illinois For Early Education

An Agenda for Illinois to Deliver on the Promise of High-Quality Early Childhood Education for Our Children, Families, and Economy

Illinois and our local communities continue to make innovative advancements in early childhood education. In this Agenda, we share Illinois AEYC's continued commitment to evolve into a high-performing, and inclusive organization, by providing services for a more diverse, equitable, high-performing, and inclusive profession. As Illinois builds out its new early childhood systems, Illinois AEYC commits to engaging with stakeholders, organizations, and coalitions to advocate for equity for the early childhood workforce.

Illinois AEYC recommends that Illinois:

- Hear and represent the voices of all families.
- Continue to embed and integrate the National Association for the Education of Young Children's accreditation for early learning and higher education programs in our state's policies with the quality rating and improvement systems to focus on ensuring that children have access to high-quality early childhood education.
- Establish policies and work with state agencies to promote children's social and emotional and behavioral health with the goal of eliminating the use of suspension and expulsion in early childhood education.
- Ensure that all quality improvement and assessment strategies are developmentally appropriate and designed to address the needs and strengths of all children and families, including children with developmental delays/disabilities and children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- Support and incentivize high-quality programs to blend funding streams.
- Strengthen and align state professional development and preparation systems to ensure that they include quality assurance mechanisms, support workforce diversity and provide equitable access.
- Address compensation parity.

Implement CCDBG with Intention—and Funding

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) reauthorization was passed with strong bipartisan support by Congress in 2014. As states implement the updated law, Illinois AEYC recommends they

- Authorize and appropriate additional and sufficient funding, with the support from federal funding, to implement the requirements for health, safety, and quality without cutting the number of children and families served or cutting services to those who receive them.
- Make progress toward the recommended level for reimbursement rates for providers set at the 75th percentile of current market rates.
- Tier reimbursement rates to financially reward the highest quality programs while providing additional support to lower quality programs so they can improve.
- Use quality set-aside funds to support training and professional development, alongside methods such as wage supplements and tax credits, to keep educators in the field once they have received additional training and education.
- Be intentional about linguistically and culturally appropriate outreach and application processes, particularly for marginalized families, families of color, and those who are multiple language learners.

Help “Every Student Succeed” by Investing in Early Learning

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was passed with strong bipartisan support by Congress in 2015. As states and districts implement the new law, Illinois AEYC recommends that Illinois:

- Actively and intentionally reach out and engage diverse groups of early childhood educators as stakeholders in developing and implementing state and district plans.
- Use funds to improve and expand early childhood programs.
- Create professional development plans and joint training opportunities that include early childhood educators and administrators.
- Include chronic absenteeism, which is a measure of how much school a student misses for any reason, as an indicator of school quality taking into consideration equity issues.
- Use early childhood assessments for developmentally appropriate purposes only—namely, to inform and improve educator’s practices.