Illinois Action for Children is a catalyst for organizing, developing and supporting strong families and powerful communities where children matter most.
About

Illinois Action for Children

Our History
It started back in 1969 when our founder, Sylvia Cotton, asked the question no one else was asking, “What about the children?” — that was the beginning of our journey to help make a difference in the lives of families in Illinois.

Our Path
Illinois Action for Children exists today because of the recognition that American families, to be self-sufficient, need access to quality, safe, and affordable child care so parents can go to work with confidence that their children are in good hands. We lead the way in the service of children and families, distinguished by our “Strong Families, Powerful Communities” approach to child development.

Our Approach
Our broad approach to supporting children by supporting families is a proven and effective means to address overarching issues of endemic poverty, which are the root cause of the educational failure of America’s poorest children.

What We Believe
We practice what we believe. Our work begins with promoting the safety, health, happiness, and education of all children. By nature of our cause, our work extends to parents and family, child care providers, and the systems that support child development.

Sincerely,

Maria Whelan
President and CEO
Illinois Action for Children

This has been a tremendous year of opportunity and growth for Illinois Action for Children’s Head Start and Early Head Start programming in Chicago’s south suburbs.

Building on our first year’s extensive community outreach, we have transitioned our Chicago Heights location to a beautiful site on the campus of Prairie State College. We have achieved full enrollment and enhanced the quality of our programs at all sites. Our crowdfunding campaign raised funds to build a desperately-needed playground in Ford Heights, serving children from our program and from the Vera Yates housing development.

Our Head Start and Early Head Start programs identify, assess, educate, and serve the following groups: children with disabilities, homeless families, families in the child welfare system, families living in extreme poverty (less than 50 percent of FPL), dual-language learners, and low-income pregnant women, particularly teens.

In our home visiting programs and in each Illinois Action for Children Head Start/Early Head Start classroom, our teachers and staff prioritize the social, emotional, and cognitive development of each child. As importantly, we also support the role of parents as their child’s first and most important teacher. We know that no one cares more about a child than her parent, and we share a simple but powerful goal with them: the success of their children in school and in life.

Since Head Start opened its doors nationally in 1965, more than 32 million young children have received the many benefits of being in such a nurturing learning environment. Today, Head Start is recognized as a model preschool program for addressing the needs of the whole child.

We are proud of the progress that we have made in the last year but we know that there is so much more work to be done...and we cannot wait to do it. Please take time to learn about the vitally-important endeavor that we are undertaking in these communities as we continue to expand our scope of organizing, developing, and supporting strong families and powerful communities where children matter most.

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Introduction

Head Start is a federally-funded program that promotes the school-readiness of young children from low-income families through local programs.

Head Start programs support the mental, social, and emotional development of children from age three-to-five. In addition to education services, Head Start programs provide children and their families with health, nutrition, and other services. Head Start promotes the highest standards of quality in the delivery of evidence-based, comprehensive, early care and education services to low-income children and families.

Early Head Start programs provide access to real educational opportunities for expectant families and children up to three years old. Early Head Start (both home- and center-based programs) includes Parent-Infant Educator visits to the home once per week, a socialization group twice per month at centers, opportunities to develop relationships with other children and families, resources for parents and families (including prenatal support), and a seamless transition from Early Head Start to Head Start programs and services.

General Information

Agency/Grantee: Illinois Action for Children
Program Number: 05CH10105: Illinois Action for Children
Address: 4753 N. Broadway, Suite 1200, Chicago, IL 60640
Telephone: 773.564.8865
Fax: 773.561.2256

Head Start Director Name: Bryan Stokes II
Head Start Director Email: bryan.stokes@actforchildren.org
Agency Website: www.actforchildren.org

Families Served:

478

Children Served:

637

Children Up-To-Date on Age Appropriate Health Care:

411

Average Monthly Attendance per site:

67.09%
IAFCs Early Learning Program implements Practice Based Coaching (PBC), a cyclical approach for supporting teachers’ use of effective teaching practices that lead to positive outcomes for children. The coaching cycle components include: conducting focused observations, facilitating reflections and feedback about teaching practices, action steps, and planning goals.

During FY 18, the Early Learning Program team participated in Lead Learn Excel, facilitated by the Ounce of Prevention. Lead Learn Excel extends beyond classroom environments. The objective is to equip early childhood professionals with systems and routines to support continuous learning and quality improvements. Data dialogues are structured group conversations that help management and teachers understand, develop and work with their data through a reflective process. Data dialogues, team lesson planning, and peer learning communities guide the Early Learning Programs team through strategic planning, embedded professional development, and improving child outcomes.

Virtual professional development, through a partnership with Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, provides teachers with a customized, innovative platform to engage in practical experiences that enable them to integrate new skills into daily routines. Mixed-reality technology simulates classroom experiences and interacts with participants to practice in a differentiated and learning environment.

Curriculum and Program Model

The Creative Curriculum for Preschool remains the primary curriculum for our center-based Early Learning Programs. The Parents as Teachers curriculum guides the work of Parent Educators in our home visiting program for children under the age of three. Each of these curricula is aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework and the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards.

The program model is firmly rooted in a two-generation approach that supports, celebrates, and empowers families. Early Learning Program staff works in partnership with families to support the success of each child. Parent-teacher conferences are held three times a year, during which the Teaching Strategies Development and Learning Reports are shared. Teachers and parents focus these discussions on each student’s strengths. If a transition is to occur during the next year, the final conference focuses on planning for a smooth transition.

Children receiving Early Head Start and Head Start services are assessed using the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment tool. Illinois Action for Children’s educators assess children’s growth and development in 10 domains identified by The Creative Curriculum. This assessment data provides program staff and families with a clear and comprehensive picture of each child’s development, growth over time, and the resources and supports that they need to thrive.
Family and Community Engagement

Program Impact:

IAFCs Early Learning Programs partnered with a diverse group of community organizations, nonprofit agencies, businesses, and professionals this year to help families receive the education, services, referrals they needed. Highlights include:

- **Family Well-Being**: Families received education on home safety, health, and financial literacy through their Early Learning Program.
- **Positive Parent-Child Relationships**: Families participated in Child Development/Milestones workshops, along with interactive family-child classroom and at-home activities. Father Focus Groups and Purposeful Father Engagement Workshops allowed men to share fathering and nurturing techniques with their peers.
- **Families as Lifelong Educators**: Families observed, guided, promoted, and participated in the everyday learning of their children at home, school, and in their communities.
- **Families as Learners**: Families received referrals and resources to continue their adult education, including monthly session on: financial literacy, health, nutrition, child development/behavior/discipline, domestic violence, mental health, disabilities, and social services.
- **Family Engagement and Transitions**: Families of children transitioning to kindergarten were supported by Early Learning Programs staff, school districts, and peer families to ensure smooth transitions for their children from one education environment to another.
- **Family Connections to Peers and Community**: Parents and families formed connections with peers and mentors in both formal and informal social networks that were supportive and/or educational.
- **Families as Advocates and Leaders**: Through parent meetings, Board meetings, and Parent Ambassadors, Early Learning Program families were able to advocate on behalf of their children and their Program. Families learned about the Individual with Disabilities and Education Act (IDEA) from their own Early Learning Program.

Volunteer Opportunities

The Early Learning Program partnered with UCAN and Canon USA, among other community organizations, to create powerful volunteering projects that enhance the programs while engaging families and Chicago-area organizations and companies.

UCAN offered the Foster Grandparent Program, which provided assistance to teachers by bringing volunteer aids into the classrooms. Canon USA volunteers worked with Early Learning Program parent ambassadors to beautify their center through an afternoon of gardening and landscaping.

A Parent’s Story: LACHAR

“Illinois Action for Children’s Early Learning Program has helped me more than I could have ever imagined.

In 2013, I was hit with one of the heaviest blows of my life; I lost my first daughter. This was the start of what seemed to be the longest fall to the deepest pit — I began my battle with depression and anxiety. While still grieving the loss of my daughter, I became pregnant with twins, and the progress I made with overcoming depression came to a halt. Post-partum hit me like a ton of bricks and it seemed to be bottomless pit.

I didn’t begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel until I received news that there was an Early Learning Program opening in my town. It was then that my twins were introduced to the home-based program. The following school year, all three children were placed into the center-based program (my twins are now four-years-old now my youngest is one-year-old).

While in the Early Learning Center, my children were able to build stronger bonds with children their own age, and I was able to begin to work on myself and engage with people who could understand my struggles to help me find myself again. As I shared my experiences, I also began to help others to open up so they could receive the support they needed, too.

I became very engaged at the Center. I was elected the Parent Committee Chairperson at the site level, and became the Chair of the Policy Council. In 2018, I was chosen to be one of Parent Ambassadors for the Illinois Head Start Association (IHSA).

By sharing my experiences, I have been able to help others open up and receive the help they need to keep the chain of support growing stronger.”

—Lachar, IAFC Early Learning Programs Parent
Early Learning Program Data

Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) provides IAFCs Early Learning Program teachers and administrators with valuable data that is collected and reported three times a year to track each child’s progress. This data also helps assess progress in each classroom and each site, providing an overall snapshot of performance.

The domains covered by TSG are designed to assess all of the domains of school readiness in the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. Results for the spring checkpoint 2017-2018 are provided in the data table for Early Head Start and Head Start. Children’s performance level by age in each of the areas of development is highlighted.

The percentages below show how many met expectations outlined in Teaching Strategies GOLD.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Children Ages 0-3</th>
<th>Children Ages 3-5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social-Emotional</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Populations Served

Illinois Action for Children’s Early Learning Program places special emphasis on recruiting and enrolling children and families that may be furthest from opportunity attainment.
# Statement of Financial Position

**As of June 30, 2017**

## Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Assets</td>
<td>$8,053,643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncurrent Assets</td>
<td>$924,178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$8,977,821</strong></td>
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</table>

## Liabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Liabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Net Assets</td>
<td>$4,471,248</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$8,977,821</strong></td>
</tr>
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## Support and Revenue

**Government Contracts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contract</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IDHS</td>
<td>$25,505,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFSS</td>
<td>$381,745</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPS</td>
<td>$365,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCFS</td>
<td>$149,054</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISBE</td>
<td>$8,757,517</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S. DHHS</td>
<td>$5,566,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation/Corporate</td>
<td>$897,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Income</td>
<td>$571,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Support and Revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>$42,195,066</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Expenses

### Program Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent Services</td>
<td>$6,434,182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provider Services</td>
<td>$17,032,795</td>
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<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>$14,544,575</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Policy and Advocacy</td>
<td>$731,110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Supporting Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising/Marketing/Outreach</td>
<td>$82,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management and General</td>
<td>$3,248,754</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Total Expenses

- Total Expenses: $42,074,322
- Change in Net Assets: $120,744

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www.actforchildren.org
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