A Case for Support
50 Years in the Making

Illinois Action for Children is a catalyst for organizing, supporting, and developing strong families and powerful communities where children matter most.
Over the last half century we have made great progress, yet there is still a great deal to be done.

Chicago: 1969
A small group of passionate, politically active women led by our founder, Sylvia Cotton decided to take action in response to the way poverty was adversely affecting urban families. That’s what drove Sylvia and her colleagues to ask the question no one else was asking...

“What about the children?”
That simple question led to the formation of a grassroots organization that would eventually become Illinois Action for Children (IAFC).

For five decades, IAFC has worked to ensure that all children in Illinois—especially children living in poverty—have access to high-quality early childhood care, education, and other vital resources—and that parents are supported as they work to achieve economic self-sufficiency and stability.

In Illinois, 43% of children are living in poverty or deep poverty and 10% are living in extreme poverty.

America’s poorest working families spend more than one third of their household incomes on child care.

Communities fragmented by poverty lack systems that connect and deliver resources to families when and where they need them.

Wealth inequality is at an historical high—the average net worth of upper income families is now 75 times higher than that of low-income families.

Job growth has been concentrated in low-wage jobs, most that don’t include benefits such as paid sick leave, paid family and medical leave, and flexible work schedules.

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With your support, we can help every child gain access to the quality opportunities they deserve.

We all must work to break the cycle of endemic poverty that leaves children behind from the moment they are born. We must come together and build our communities so that all children and their families, regardless of race, nationality, or socioeconomic status, have access to high-quality early care and education opportunities and strong systems of family and community support that allows them to achieve their potential.

“Children’s social class is one of the most significant predictors—if not the single most significant predictor—of their educational success.”
—Economic Policy Institute

“Early childhood education has the potential to reduce ability gaps (and subsequently, the achievement gap) by permanently bolstering social and emotional skills as well as IQ.”
—Sustaining the Benefits of Early Childhood Education Experiences: A Research Overview, Rebecca E. Gomez
Children experiencing poverty benefit the most from quality early childhood programs—especially programs like ours that include nutrition and wellness initiatives, engagement and education opportunities for parents, and involvement with community stakeholders.

**Your contributions to IAFC** allow us to provide disadvantaged children with equitable, quality early opportunities—a solid early care and education foundation that prepares children to succeed today, and long into the future.

**The impact of your generosity is meaningful and measurable.** Each year, IAFC transforms the lives of more than 170,000 children and families and nearly 40,000 early childhood professionals throughout the state.

**Leading Effective Public Policy and Advocacy Initiatives**

IAFC is rooted and continues to engage in impactful advocacy that influences systems change and advances policies that benefit and empower children, families, early care and education, and communities.

**Building Strong Community Systems**

Families, teachers, and communities all play a critically-important role in ensuring successful outcomes for children. When these connections are strong, children flourish. For more than a decade, IAFC has been building and improving community-based systems of early childhood services across the state. These deeply connected systems enable communities to reach the most fragile families and ensure their children, ages birth to five, enroll in and regularly attend high-quality early learning programs.
IAFC has an unwavering commitment to narrowing the ever-widening educational achievement gap, which has increased nearly 40 percent in the past decade alone. Our two-generation approach of “supporting children by supporting families” has grown extensively over time and includes our Early Learning Programs, which serve more than 1,100 children and their families annually in under-resourced south and southwest suburban Cook County communities.

IAFC’s services include:

- **Early Learning Centers** comprised of Head Start/Early Head Start, Preschool for All, and Prevention Initiative programs that are significantly augmented by an intensive parent engagement program and nutrition, health, and mental health services.
- **Home Visiting Professionals** offer one-on-one education and support for pregnant women and mothers with children birth through age three.
- **Early Learning Partners** for which we provide certified teachers, professional development, and other supports to enhance their quality and ability to serve the most at-risk children and families.

Additional IAFC services connect families throughout Cook County to resources for finding, qualifying, and paying for child care and early education programs.

IAFC’s goal is to expand beyond the limits of federal and state funding to provide the children and families we serve with the best-in-class services they need and deserve.


- **174,365** Total Children and Families Served
- **113,823** Children Served
- **60,542** Families Served
- **36,142** Early Care and Education Providers Served

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The next 50 years will bring new challenges—and new opportunities to make a difference.

IAFC has ambitious and transformative plans for the next 50 years. However, we are keenly focused on the progress that, with your generosity, we can make now in:

- **Educating parents about the importance of a strong foundation in early education** and helping them find and enroll their children in affordable, high-quality programs.

- Augmenting the scope of our programs to **provide personalized, intensive parent engagement** and support—helping even more of Illinois’ most at-risk families meet critical needs.

- Enhancing early childhood mental health services to **help early learning professionals effectively manage, mitigate, and prevent behaviors** that can disrupt learning in the classroom.

- Continuing to strengthen state and national policies so that all **children receive a high-quality early education**—no matter where they live.

- Increasing the number of degreed/credentialed early childhood professionals to **fill the gap in Illinois’ growing teacher shortage**.

- **Launching an emergency fund for families** so they have the necessities to keep them safe, healthy, and moving toward their goals while ensuring their children attend school each day.

[Image: woman holding her pregnant belly]
Celebrate the 50th anniversary of IAFC by helping us create a brighter future for children, families, and the communities we call home.

We have a tremendous opportunity to again make Illinois a leader in early childhood care and education. It won't be easy and we can't do it alone. But it is imperative for the future of our children, families, and communities who need us now more than ever before.

Future generations are counting on us. We’re counting on you. Let’s work together to create brighter futures for everyone.

Our work continues thanks to the ongoing support of people like you.

Investing in our children is one of the best investments we can make.

- Investment in high-quality care and education can reduce the behavioral problems of children by 67 percent.
- Significant investment in quality early childhood programs has higher short- and long-term returns on investment (ROI) than any other academic time period.
- Access to child care increases mothers’ workforce participation by 83 percent.
- Without access to early childhood literacy, children are four times as likely drop out of high school—costing $300,000 in lost tax revenue per child.

Contributions can be made online or for more information, please contact:

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