

eAdvocate Newsletter August



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By **HL Admin** posted 12 days ago

In This Issue: August eAdvocate

This month, we welcome a new member to our team and update you on the latest available advocacy opportunities! Don't miss other resources in this newsletter including available grants, scholarships, and advocacy opportunities.

Introducing IAFCs New Assistant Director of Advocacy

We're excited to welcome Neoma Nagahawatte as our Assistant Director of Advocacy.

Most recently, Neoma co-managed the Partnership for Equity and Education Rights in Illinois (PEER IL), a coalition of parents, lawyers, policy experts, and community organizations fighting for full and fair public school funding. Neoma has over a decade of experience working on issues of gender, race, ethnic violence, and education through a progressive policy and advocacy lens. She comes to Illinois Action for Children as a CPS parent and Chicago resident with first-hand experience navigating access to safe, quality early childhood education and affordable childcare in Illinois.

In her role, Neoma will help oversee IAFCs advocacy programming to improve community engagement in early child care and education at the grassroots level and lead the direction of the We, the Village Coalition.

Welcome Neoma!

IDHS Provider Compensation Contracts Survey

Starting in October 2024, IDHS is launching Child Care Workforce Compensation Contracts, which will provide stable, ongoing funding for qualifying child care providers to increase child care worker wages. IDHS is conducting a provider survey to ensure that the contract awards consider the real, current costs that providers face. The results of the survey will be used to inform award amounts.

The survey gathers information about staffing, benefits, rent/mortgage, and other expenses, which will be used to estimate the typical cost of providing child care in Illinois. It supplements the information that was recently gathered on the Salary and Staffing Survey. Unlike the Market Rate Survey, it collects information on providers' actual costs, not the tuition or fees that they charge.

The deadline to complete the survey is August 31, 2023. Providers can access the survey through these links:

- [Survey for Centers](#)
- [Survey for Homes](#)

- [FAQs about the survey are available here](#). If you or your providers need additional assistance, please fill out this [Help Request form](#).

Smart Start Transition Grants



The first round of the Smart Start Transition Grants is closed. However, applications for the second round will open on October 2, 2023, and will go until October 31, 2023. These grants are administered by INCCRRA and will transition licensed child care programs from the Strengthen and Grow Child Care grants to Smart Start Child Care in the future. Smart Start Transition Grants focus on providing stable and predictable funding in order to improve quality and support workforce development.

Go to the [website](#) for details, tip sheets, technical assistance videos, and more. If you have questions, you can email grants@inccrra.org.

Illinois State Board of Education Budget Hearings

Every year, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) holds several hearings in October to help shape its budget request for the coming fiscal year and hear from advocates across the state to identify funding needs in higher education, K-12, and early childhood education and care programming in Illinois. Stay tuned for how you can participate and provide testimony, but you can find more information on ISBE's [website](#). See below for hearing dates:

- Oct. 3 – in person / Springfield – 4 to 7 p.m.
- Oct. 5 – virtual – 4 to 7 p.m.
- Oct. 30 – virtual – 1 to 4 p.m.

Take Action TODAY!

- [Protect Federal Funds that Support Early Childhood Systems Building in Illinois](#)

We need you to take action today to help ensure the [Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five \(PDG B-5\) program](#) stays funded through federal FY 2024! The PDG B-5 program is a \$315 million competitive federal grant designed to improve states' early childhood systems by building upon existing federal, state and local early learning and care investments.

is the time to call or email your congressional staff to ask them to protect and prioritize the PDG B-5 program before it is eliminated!

- **Protect Head Start & Early Head Start Federal Funding**

Currently, [the proposed FY 2024 budget](#) cuts funding for Head Start (HS) & Early Head Start (EHS) by \$750 million from the previous year and puts the care of 80,000 children at risk who currently use HS or EHS nationwide. This has a significant impact on critical services for children and families, and we need you to tell Congress not to cut Head Start Funding in FY24!

[Take two minutes to email your members of Congress asking them to oppose cuts to Head Start that would harm the children and families we serve.](#)

IAFC Advocacy and Provider Site Visit Interest Form

Are you interested in participating in more advocacy opportunities? Are you an early childhood provider interested in hosting a site visit with your state legislator? [Fill out this form](#) to tell us about your advocacy interests and to provide your information for a future site visit. Site visits are an excellent opportunity to show off your program to a state policymaker and encourage them to keep supporting families, young children, and the workforce that supports them. For questions or more information, contact Joselle (Josie) Escobar at joselle.escobar@actforchildren.org.

ECACE Scholarship Applications Open Now

The priority deadline for applications has passed, but ECACE is still taking applications depending on available funding!

If you work or have worked in early childhood education and you're seeking additional credentials and/or a degree in early childhood education, you may be eligible for the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) Scholarship Program. ECACE scholarships are available for people with degrees or credentials in early childhood education and may cover partial or the total cost of attendance after other financial aid is received. Note: costs include tuition and fees, transportation, room and board, and books and supplies. The scholarship program has been expanded to participants who are also seeking post-bachelorette degrees or credentials.

For more information, including full eligibility criteria, a list of participating institutions, and to apply, visit www.isac.org/ECACEscholarship.

Family Advisory Council (FAC) Updates

The Family Advisory Council (FAC) committee meetings are beginning monthly meetings again! The FAC is a group of diverse parents from throughout the state who add parent voice, perspective, and experience to the early childhood system and policy landscape through participation in the ELC and its committees. FAC meetings are held monthly and are open for anyone to attend. The next meeting will be held on . Check out the [calendar](#) to register for the next upcoming meetings here.

In the News: ECACE report shows that more early childhood workers are attending colleges and universities

On August 23, the Illinois Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity released its first [annual report](#) and found that since 2020 about 500 additional students who already work in early childhood education have enrolled in bachelor's degree and applied associate programs, an increase of about 18%. The report also found an increase in the number of Latino and African American child care professionals who enrolled in college since 2020. Read more in the article [here](#)

New Report: 2023 Report on Child Care in Cook County

Newly released by our IAFC Research Team, the [2023 Report on Child Care in Cook County](#) examines the state of child care for the year ending June 2022. In particular, the report looks at the effect of the pandemic on child care slots within Cook County regions, the affordability of care, and trends related to some of the hardest-to-find care – including infant care and care during non-traditional hours.

You can view our full report here: [Full Report](#) | [All IAFC Research Reports](#)

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Please follow our [new Facebook page!](#)

We recently lost thousands of community member followers when our original Illinois Action for Children page was hacked and lost. We appreciate your support as we try to rebuild our presence and reconnect with our valued community. Click the link to follow our [new Facebook page!](#) We appreciate your help.

eAdvocate is a monthly digital newsletter from Illinois Action for Children's Public Policy and Advocacy Team (PPA). It includes the latest early childhood policy news and connects you to tools and resources to help effectively advocate for children and families. Our team includes: Assistant Director of Advocacy Naoma Nagahawatte; Policy Associate Joselle Escobar; Director of Policy Michael Kim; and VP of Public Policy, Advocacy and Research Angela Farwig.

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CONTACT

US

Phone: 312-823-1100

Fax: 312-823-1200

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