

(<https://www.actforchildren.org/champion/join-movement/e-advocate>)

This Issue: BACK-TO-SCHOOL



It's that time of year again! Illinois children, parents, and teachers are heading back to the classroom. In this issue of eAdvocate, we discuss policies promoting access to programs for preschool and school-age children, as well as for student parents in need of child care.



School-Age Programs: Are you legally license-exempt?

In 2016, Illinois passed Public Act 99-699

([http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?name=099-](http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?name=099-0699&GA=99&SessionId=88&DocTypeId=SB&DocNum=2321&GAID=13&Session=)

[0699&GA=99&SessionId=88&DocTypeId=SB&DocNum=2321&GAID=13&Session=](http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?name=099-0699&GA=99&SessionId=88&DocTypeId=SB&DocNum=2321&GAID=13&Session=)), which made two significant changes to the Child Care Act, the statute that governs

Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) licensing.

- Programs serving only school-age children can be legally exempt from DCFS licensure.
 - These programs must promote child development and learning in some way, operate primarily during out-of-school time, and meet specific health and safety requirements. The basic requirements for all programs seeking this exemption can be found in this chart (row J). (<http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=38525>)
 - Additional requirements related to staff qualifications and training differ depending on whether or not the program receives Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) funds.
 - To receive CCAP funds from IDHS, license exempt school-age programs must comply with the health and safety training requirements for all CCAP providers. (<http://www.ilgateways.com/professional-development/ccap-providers>) IDHS requires a copy of the written verification letter from DCFS approving the program's exemption.
 - For those who do not receive CCAP, IDHS has adopted standards aligned with the After School Quality Standards. Programs will verify compliance as part of the request for exemption for DCFS.

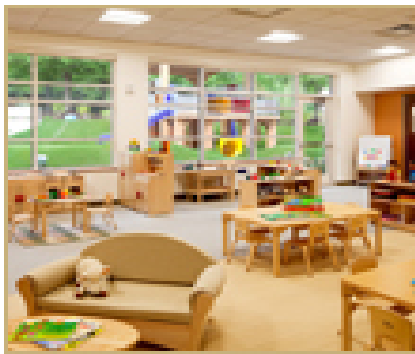
- All legally license exempt programs, under all exemption categories, must get written verification of exemption status from DCFS. Programs must submit an exemption request to DCFS, along with required documentation, including notarized statements affirming the program's compliance with:
 - a. Department of Public Health or local health department
 - b. Fire Marshal's fire safety standards
 - c. If operated in public school building, ISBE health and safety standards

Licensing Exemption Request forms: CCAP programs

(https://www2.illinois.gov/dcfs/aboutus/notices/Documents/CFS_672-6_License_Exemption_for_School-aged_Child_Care_Programs_CCAP_%28Fillable%29.pdf) and Non-CCAP programs

(https://www2.illinois.gov/dcfs/aboutus/notices/Documents/CFS_672-5_License_Exemption_Request_for_School-aged_Child_Care_Programs_Non-CCAP_%28Fillable%29.pdf)

Does your program fall under the school-age exemption, or one of the several other exemption categories? Make sure you have your exemption verification letter, which is valid for 2 years, on file, along with any other required documentation, in order to be in compliance.



Addressing Chronic Absenteeism in Preschool and School-Age Children

As children transition into those first school years, preschool through 3rd grade, one significant factor impacting their success, now and into the future, is attendance. Children have to be present and engaged in order to develop the foundational skills and knowledge promoted during these years. Research shows us that children who miss a lot of school early on may not be as prepared for future grades, making it harder to catch up over time.

(<http://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/preK-research-summary-FINAL-5.7.15-1.pdf>)

Illinois is taking a first step in addressing chronic absenteeism in preschool with House Bill 5771 (Rep. Chapa LaVia and Sen. Collins) (<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/fulltext.asp?DocName=&SessionId=91&GA=100&DocType=HB&DocNum=5771&GAID=14&LegID=111862&SpecSess=&Session=>),

passed by the General Assembly this legislative session and signed into law by Governor Rauner on August 13th. Under this new law, programs with Preschool for All (PFA) and Preschool for All-Expansion (PFAE) funds will collect data on chronic absenteeism (missing more than 10% of school days, for both excused and unexcused absences) among their students, and annually report this data to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). These programs are encouraged to provide resources and support for children and families at-risk of reaching or exceeding chronic absenteeism levels. Over time, the data collected by ISBE will help us to understand chronic absenteeism rates in preschool across the state and identify strategies moving forward.

As school starts up, preschool and school-age programs should consider strategies for promoting regular attendance among the children and families served. Attendance Works (<http://www.attendanceworks.org/>) has a number of helpful resources, including a toolkit for addressing absenteeism in early childhood, Early and Often: Showing Up in Preschool Matters 2.0 (<http://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/early-education-toolkit/>) and Bringing Attendance Home: Engaging Parents in Preventing Chronic Absence.

(<http://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/bringing-attendance-home/>)

★ Learn about IAFC's Community Impact team's work, including challenges and accomplishments, to prevent chronic absenteeism in the North Lawndale community. Download PDF (https://go.actforchildren.org/l/471011/2018-08-23/3wzvtv/471011/31413/IAFC__NL_Reads_Initiative__August_eAdvocate.pdf)



Child Care Assistance for Student Parents

In August 2017, after being locked out of the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) for more than 2 years, parents in need of child care assistance while enrolled in education or training programs (non-TANF) became eligible for services again. A full year later, and the CCAP caseload remains low, continuing to serve about 30,000 fewer children than in 2015.

With fall semester starting up, we need to ensure parents planning or hoping to enroll are aware that they could be eligible for child care assistance. Early childhood providers play a huge role in informing families through their everyday interactions. We also encourage you to think about the institutions and organizations you interact with - like colleges, churches, community centers - to encourage them to inform the families and communities they serve.

In Chicago, IAFC's Family and Neighborhood Partnerships and Family Resources teams are connecting with Chicago City Colleges to provide information and resources to student populations. Find out more about how IAFC's Family and Neighborhood Partnerships team engages with communities to connect families to early care and education programs (<https://www.actforchildren.org/for-families/family-support-services/family-neighborhood-partnerships/>).



Survey: Early Childhood Expulsion

Program administrators are eligible to participate in a research study about their administrative practices and knowledge about recently passed legislation impacting all licensed providers. Click here to access the brief online survey (https://uic.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dbzFhKMS5gkUrmR). Eligible administrators who complete the survey will receive a \$5 Amazon gift card. Responses will be accepted through August 31st, provided sufficient gift card funding. If you have questions or comments, you can contact the study's director, Dr. Kate Zinsser at the University of Illinois at Chicago (kzinsser@uic.edu) (<mailto:kzinsser@uic.edu>)

or 312-996-5494).