

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

This Issue:

2020

In this month's issue of eAdvocate we celebrate the victories of Illinois' early childhood field in 2020. This year was unprecedented and challenging beyond any of our expectations, but we are thrilled to share the successes you helped make possible. We could not have done this without you.

2020 Illinois Early Childhood Victories



Provider rate increases in July: At the beginning of this fiscal year, all providers serving children on the CCAP program received a reimbursement rate increase. Rather than an across the board increase for centers, larger increases were targeted to age groups in regions that were farthest away from meeting the cost of care. While we recognize these increases do not help meet the true cost of care, it is a clear step in the right direction.

Decreased co-pays for families: The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) provided critical relief for families during 2020, especially for essential workers in the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic. From mid-March through June, when emergency child care was open only for children of essential workers who had to be working outside of the home, all essential workers—regardless of income—were eligible for CCAP and were required to pay just \$1 monthly co-payments. When those emergency provisions ended in July 2020, and co-payments increased, the new co-payment rates were capped so that no family would pay more than 7 percent of their monthly income for child care. This brings families’ costs down to what is commonly considered “affordable” child care. While we know that any jump in payments was still challenging for many, this step provides additional critical relief in a year of financial insecurity and moving forward.

Child Care Restoration Grants: In June, Governor Pritzker announced a significant grant program for Illinois child care providers. The Child Care Restoration Grant program dedicated \$270 million of the state's Coronavirus Urgent Remediation Emergency (CURE) Fund to support the economic health of child care providers. While this program has ended, the CCRG supported 5,000 child care centers from July through November.

And there was also...



2020 Census: Though the 2020 Census was more different than we could have ever predicted, IAFC and partners worked tirelessly to ensure historically undercounted communities were counted. Though great adversity, our agency embedded Census outreach across departments to promote a fair and accurate count. The collaboration, creativity, and nimbleness that went into our Census efforts helped lead Illinois to be #7 in the country for the 2020 Census self-response.

2020 Election and voter registration: The 2020 election, much like many events this year, was unlike any election that preceded it. Thanks to your efforts and participation in early voting, Illinois had a 126 percent increase of early voters compared to the 2016 election, and mail-in ballots were up 116 percent from the previous election as well.

Launch of the Family Advisory Committee: The plans to create the Family Advisory Committee (FAC) had been in the works for years. Thanks to the hard work of the parents and advocates of the Family Engagement Implementation Subcommittee of the Early Learning Council, we now have 16 parents representing every region across the state. These parents will be active in 2021! They'll be meeting monthly and participating in advocacy, leadership trainings, and more all to ensure that the parent and family voice is heard at the Illinois early childhood policy development table.

Let's not forget...

Launch of the Early Childhood Funding Coalition: At the beginning of the year the Coalition was an idea, and now there are over 120 organizations and individuals working diligently to advocate for more equitable, transparent, and full funding for Illinois' youngest children. The coalition will carry the momentum from this year into 2021 as the Governor's Funding Commission's recommendations begin to take shape. If you have not already, **join us here!** (<https://go.actforchildren.org/l/471011/2020-07-23/nnp8m>)



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Release of *Searching for Child Care: Stories of Cook County Mothers* report: This report (<http://3ia2qo49aq3t30ap983kxt9x-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/SearchingforChildCare-LRv2.pdf>) elevates the voices of working moms and highlights the shortcomings of our child care system in meeting the needs of today's families – families that work non-traditional hours, have children with special needs, earn low pay and often do not have family and friends available to help when the system falls short. These mothers' experiences can be a guide to building a child care system that serves *all* families.

891 of you participated in our virtual webinars and events! As the whole world had to pivot to virtual learning and communications, the ECE community in Illinois showed up! 891 of you participated in our virtual workshops, action alerts, workforce webinars and Fall into Action. Thank you for your participation and input let's keep this momentum going into 2021!

Launch and release of the *All Children All Families* strategic plan: For the first time ever, the Sylvia Cotton Center for Research and Policy Innovation powered by Illinois Action for Children released a [proactive and aggressive policy agenda](https://www.actforchildren.org/news_post/children-families/) (https://www.actforchildren.org/news_post/children-families/) for ensuring racial, gender, and economic equity for child care and early education programs in Illinois.

Keep your eyes open for upcoming information on our free virtual Spring into Action workshops in 2021!

Thank you for your advocacy for all Illinois' children and families! We look forward to our continued partnership with you in the new year.



