

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

This Issue: Advocate From Home

In this week's issue of eAdvocate, we focus on advocacy from home. Whether it is staying up to date on child care resources, filling out the Census, or making time for a quick social media post, staying informed and active is critically-important during this unprecedented time. We also hear from care provider Emnet Ward, HR Director at Eyes on the Future Child Development Center, in our Provider Spotlight.

Important Resources During COVID-19

Our Illinois Action for Children's COVID-19 (<https://covid19.actforchildren.org/home>) microsite is the place to go for CCAP updates, resources for finding and providing child care to essential workers, state and federal supports, and policy updates that you can take action on.



The Illinois Office of Early Childhood Development continues to provide resources for providers, families, and communities on their website (<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/OECD/Pages/default.aspx>). Recently added to their site is an Emotional and Well-being Toolkit for Children, Families, and Caregivers (https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/OECD/Documents/SEL%20toolkit_final%204.28.20.pdf). The multi-media tool kit has items available in English and Spanish.



The 2020 Census is Still Happening!

Illinois' 2020 Census count is still underway, and Illinois' 2020 Census response rate as of May 3, 2020 was 61.8 percent – this is lower than our state's 2010 response rate (https://2020census.gov/en/response-rates.html?cid=20423-%2Bcensus%20%2B2020%20%2Bresponse%20%2Brates:sem.ga:p:dm:en:&utm_source=sem.ga&utm_medium=p&utm_campaign=dm:en&utm_content=20423& 70.5 percent). One of the most impactful ways for us to prepare for the future of early childhood resources is to make sure all of our families, friends, and neighbors are all filling out the Census. Federal, state, and local governments rely heavily on Census data even when preparing and responding to pandemics. You can still be counted online or fill out your paper questionnaire!

For more information, please visit our Census page (<https://www.actforchildren.org/census2020/>).



More Advocacy from Home

Now, more than ever, it is important that we stay virtually connected to our friends, advocacy partners, and elected officials. Advocate from home with these tips and keep an eye out for an upcoming virtual advocacy event!

Have five minutes or less?

- Follow Illinois Action for Children on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram
- Follow your elected officials on social media
- Share social media posts with friends about:
 - Completing the 2020 Census online
 - Advocating for \$50 billion for early childhood in the next federal COVID-19 relief bill
- Thank a provider, essential worker, elected official, and yourself for the ongoing support of children and families during the pandemic.



Provider Spotlight: Emmet Ward, HR Director, Eyes on the Future Child Development Center

1. In what ways has COVID-19 affected your business the most?

What has happened to us is common among many agencies; we had to close our doors to ensure everyone's health and safety. Sadly, we're not able to do what we love the most which is to have the students onsite learning new concepts and building routines.

We are experiencing additional stress with this shutdown because we are set to lose some vital Preschool For All and Prevention Initiative funding from the Chicago Department of Family Support Services (DFSS) at the end of June. We hope that will change so that we can continue to provide the highest quality care and services. However, we are uncertain of how funding shortages and this pandemic will ultimately affect the positive impact we hope to have in Rogers Park.

2. How have your daily activities interacting with children and families changed during this time?

Our teachers have gotten creative with YouTube channels and hosting things like virtual circle time and reading books to children. They're trying to give parents daily calls to see what their material needs are, and then they connect them with things from the school. We've organized certain days for families to pick up food or we do drop offs for diapers and wipes.

We've really slowed down, and we let [families] know we're still here.

My role as an HR Director would not be possible without the incredible vision of Azieb Gebrehiwet and the tireless dedication of our teachers, our family support specialists, our dynamic leadership team and support staff. Everything we do is a collaborative effort. It's the only way we can serve more than 250 children and families in 19 classrooms.

3. How do you think this public health crisis will affect the children you serve?

In the early years, children really thrive off routines. It's one of the most important things you can do to support emotional functioning, language and cognitive skills. We can all relate to that: when our daily routines getting disrupted, it's also been hard for us [as adults]. This will be the biggest challenge for our children. I think families understand and appreciate more of what teachers are doing in providing routine for their children for an entire day. Even now, we are making plans for when the stay-at-home order is released because we need to figure out what the kids will have missed for the last two months.

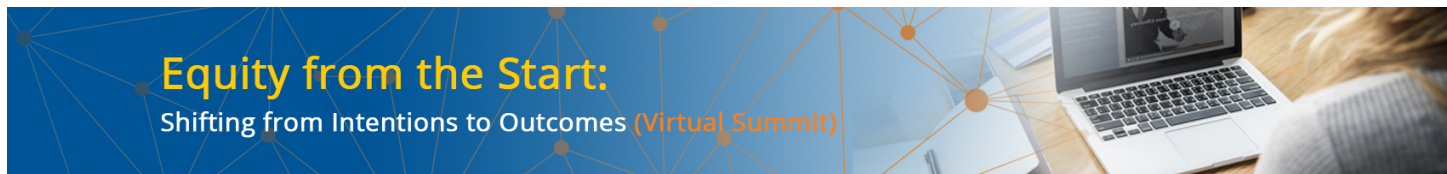
4. What activities or communications are you incorporating with families regarding the Census?

Yes! We've been reaching out to families to let them know it's really important to count their children. We recently did a food pick up for families and in their package, they received information about why the Census is important. We are also doing a picture campaign where families can take a picture together if they complete the Census and we post it to our internal website.

5. What has helped you in terms of self-care during social distancing?

Taking the time to slow down. Prior to shutting down, we're running 100 miles a minute. It's difficult to get a chance to breathe, think, and reflect on what you're doing. You're just putting out fires and checking things off a list. Now I've been telling myself, "If you can accomplish one key thing in a day, you've done a lot of work!"

Even though it's hard to stay at home, having a moment to slow down and appreciate the things we tend to ignore has helped me to stay a little saner. Just realizing the pace our society has been moving at has been so fast...burn out becomes an accepted part of our existence. Maybe we don't do things with joy, we're overstimulated and rushing to the next deadline. So, taking this time to slow is important.



Virtual Community Systems Summit June 8-12

Illinois Action for Children along with the Illinois State Board of Education, the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, and the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies are going to miss seeing you all in person for the Partner Plan Act Conference this year. However, our Community Systems team is looking forward to convening with you during our virtual summit, Equity from the Start: Shifting from Intentions to Outcomes, from June 8-12, 2020.

To learn more and register for individual sessions, click here (<https://www.partnerplanact.org/ppa/virtual-summit>).