

eAdvocate Newsletter June 2023



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This Issue: June eAdvocate

This month, we celebrate our wins from the 103rd General Assembly legislative session and update you on the latest on available grants, scholarships, and advocacy opportunities! Don't miss the graphic below highlighting the most significant wins for early childhood so far this year.

Illinois General Assembly Passes Smart Start Illinois

On May 27, 2023, the Illinois General Assembly adjourned as state lawmakers passed the budget for fiscal year 2024. Governor J.B. Pritzker signed the budget into law on June 7, 2023, at Christopher House in Chicago.

We are pleased to see funding at historical levels that will go into early childhood education and care programs through the Smart Start Illinois Initiative and applaud Governor Pritzker's vision and passion for supporting Illinois' youngest children. This multi-year plan will ensure that families raising children in Illinois will have access to quality home-visiting, early intervention, child care, and preschool before entering kindergarten, and provide more stable funding for providers to recruit and retain qualified teachers through first-in-the-nation Workforce Compensation Contract grants.

Read more about the [FY24 budget](#).

2023 Early Childhood Legislative Accomplishments and FY24 Budget

PPA 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.



Apply for Preschool Funding!

Deadline: **June 30!**

isbe.net/preschool



Deadline Extended for FY24 Early Childhood Block Grant Applications to June 30

The FY24 Early Childhood Block Grant application deadline has been extended to **4 p.m. June 30**. The FY 2024 state budget includes an additional \$75 million to expand access to preschool across the state. The application prioritizes providers in identified [preschool deserts](#) where children have limited access to financial resources and lack sufficient access to publicly funded preschool. A wide range of providers from school districts, to child care centers, to community-based organizations are eligible to apply.

Access the application, technical assistance webinars, and other resources on the [ISBE website](#).

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SMART START TRANSITION GRANTS



Smart Start Transition Grants

The Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Early Childhood is excited to announce Smart Start Transition Grants. These grants will be 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. Applications for the first round of grants will open on July 3 and close July 31.

[Visit the site](#) for details, tip sheets, technical assistance videos, and more. If you have questions, you can email

grants@inccrra.org.

ECACE Scholarship Applications Open Now

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.

Apply by August 7, for priority access to funding! For more information, including full eligibility criteria, a list of participating institutions, and to apply, visit www.isac.org/ECACEscholarship.

Federal Policy Updates

On June 3, 2023, [President Biden signed H.R. 3746, the "Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023,"](#) suspending the nation's debt ceiling and averting a potential default on the federal government's debt. The legislation preserves increases to funding for the FY 2023 Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), but it cuts funding for non-defense programs and imposes new work requirements on older Americans who receive food stamps through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and those who receive aid from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF).

Today, Congress is working on developing appropriations bills for FY24 and there are still opportunities for you to advocate for robust funding in child care and early learning:

Take Action

- [Urge lawmakers to support annual funding for child care - Child Care Aware® of America](#)
- [Tell Congress to oppose cuts to critical programs for families | Think Babies™](#)

Join the Public Policy & Advocacy Team!

Are you passionate about supporting the early childhood workforce and Illinois families while collaborating in advocacy? If that's you, please consider the two open positions with our team.

- [Senior Policy and Engagement Associate](#)
- [Assistant Director of Advocacy](#)

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: PPA Project Manager Elizabeth Wilson; Director of Policy Michael Kim; Policy Associate Joselle Escobar; and VP of Public Policy, Advocacy and Research Angela Farwig.

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