

## In This Issue: January eAdvocate

Happy New Year! This month, we are sharing highlights from the past year and updating you on the latest resources for providers, educators, and families. Before we jump in, we'd like to thank all of our readers for keeping up with eAdvocate every month. We will continue to bring you early childhood policy news and share opportunities to stay engaged in advocating for children and families across the state and nation.

## 2023 Year-In-Review from the Public Policy, Advocacy, and Research Team

[Link to graphic](#)

## Thank you for attending 2023 Fall Into Action

Thank you to everyone who attended our Fall into Action event on December 6! We had over 110 participants who tuned in and, because of your participation, we had many great discussions regarding the future of the new early childhood agency and how we can advocate for a better early childhood system in IL.

Please find the slides and recording below to pass along to those who couldn't make it. We also have a short survey that will help us improve our upcoming events.

## [Fall into Action 2023 Slides](#)

## [Fall into Action 2023 Webinar Recording](#)

We also ask that you complete a short survey to help us improve our upcoming events:

## [Fall Into Action Survey](#)

We're feeling motivated for our policy and advocacy work in 2024, and we hope you are too! Please email [advocacy@actforchildren.org](mailto:advocacy@actforchildren.org) if you would like to get plugged into our work and advocacy opportunities.

## Updates on the Fiscal Year 2025 Early Childhood Block Grant

- **[Grant Writing 101](#)**: ISBE's Early Childhood Department announced weekly Grant Writing 101 webinars. The webinars will occur every Tuesday at 6 PM and Thursday at 10 AM for 1 hour starting Thursday, January 4, 2024. While these trainings will focus on ISBE's Early Childhood Block grant for entities outside the City of Chicago, this webinar will provide a greater understanding of government grants and tips on crafting strong proposals. Each session will be interactive, so please bring your questions.
- **[Stakeholder Engagement](#)**: Are you a current ECBG grantee interested in participating in focus groups hosted by ISBE to provide feedback? Please fill out the Stakeholder Engagement Form to register for focus group dates in January.

- **Partnership Interest Form for Family Child Care Home Providers/ECBG & PFA:** If you are a family child care home provider interested in partnering with an administrative agent to offer either the Prevention Initiative program or the Preschool for All program, please fill out the **Partnership Interest Form**.

The ECBG provides funding for Preschool for All, Preschool for All Expansion, and Prevention Initiative programs. For more information, visit [www.isbe.net/ecbg](http://www.isbe.net/ecbg). Questions may be directed to 217-524-4835 or [ecrfp@isbe.net](mailto:ecrfp@isbe.net).

## Join the IDHS- Division of Early Childhood Town Hall

On Tuesday, January 16 from 1-2:30 pm CT, IDHS-Division of Early Childhood (DEC) is hosting a virtual town hall to share accomplishments from calendar year 2023. See the flyer below and click here to register- [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_LEHK6TJ\\_R-iX99mgmrrY5w#/registration](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_LEHK6TJ_R-iX99mgmrrY5w#/registration)

## Make Your Voices Heard on Early Childhood Programs

Calling all parents, caregivers, and community members across Illinois! Please complete [a survey](http://go.uillinois.edu/EarlyChildhoodSurvey) on your views of early childhood education in the state of Illinois. You do not have to have children or know anything about early childhood to complete the survey. We want to hear all voices! Please complete the survey here: <http://go.uillinois.edu/EarlyChildhoodSurvey>.

This survey is being conducted by researchers at University of Illinois, in partnership with the state of Illinois, to improve early childhood education in Illinois.

## Interested in the New Proposed Rules for Head Start?

The Office of Head Start is proposing significant changes to the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) to ensure fair compensation is a key component of high-quality early care and education. The proposed changes are designed to stabilize the Head Start workforce and improve the quality of the comprehensive services that Head Start families count on.

- Attend a listen hosted by the Illinois Head Start Association on Jan. 13 at 10 am over zoom! This is a chance to learn more about the major updates in the proposed rules for Head Start and share your thoughts. See the flyer below.
- Submit comments: The proposed rule changes are now open for public comment in the Federal Register until January 19, 2024. [Click here](#) to review summary of the proposed rule changes, and [click here](#) to submit your comments and provide feedback on the new rules!

### Smart Start Transition Grants



Applications for the second round of Smart Start Transition Grants are now closed. The third round will open on January 2, 2024, and will go until January 31, 2024. These grants are administered by INCCRRA and will transition licensed childcare programs from the Strengthen and Grow Childcare grants to Smart Start Childcare 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](mailto:grants@inccrra.org).

### Tell Congress to Stabilize Childcare Now!

Emergency funding that stabilized child care across the nation expired, and Congress still needs to pass a final budget that continues funding and invests in children, families, educators, and providers. Without immediate action from Congress, states will lose critical funding to continue efforts to uplift the workforce, lower costs for families, and increase access to childcare. [Click here to tell your elected officials to prioritize and invest in childcare as they debate emergency funding and annual spending bills!](#)

*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 Neoma Nagahawatte; Senior Policy and Community Engagement Specialist Bri Stormer; Policy Associate Joselle Escobar; Director of Policy Michael Kim; and VP of Public Policy, Advocacy and Research Angela Farwig.*