



HEAD START

ANNUAL REPORT

FY23 July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023





As I reflect on Illinois Action for Children's Head Start and Early Head Start programs in FY2023, I am reminded how powerful in-person connection is for families, children, caregivers, and teachers. While we report on our FY2023 success in these pages, I also want to share that the agency is celebrating a significant achievement in 2024: 55 years of service to families and children.

Our Head Start and Early Head Start programs enjoyed a good year, thanks to greater connection and collaborative community-building among children, teachers, and caregivers who returned to working together in person.

We were thrilled to welcome parents back to in-person volunteering. As public health restrictions loosened and more bus drivers became available, we also returned to providing reliable bus service for daily transportation and field trips. Now we can better help families with dual-enrolled children to attend programs at both IAFC and school district sites. We also hosted families and members of the public at Open Houses at each of our Early Learning Programs sites.

Families and parents continually inspire us, contributing to program success through:

- increased participation in our Early Learning Programs
- volunteering in classroom learning activities such as reading aloud and playing music
- developing leadership skills through volunteer service on councils, committees, and boards
- learning about national Head Start and Early Head Start efforts through training and networking sessions at the National Head Start Conference in Dallas, Texas
- attending end-of-year celebrations that honored families and parents at each Early Learning Center

At Illinois Action for Children, we are steadfastly committed to supporting parents in their roles as their child's first and most important teacher. This belief centers our mission and vision for children in 2024 and beyond. Please read this Annual Report to learn more about our progress.

Sincerely,

April Janney
CEO
Illinois Action for Children

About Illinois Action for Children

Our History

In 1969, Illinois Action for Children founder Sylvia Cotton asked a question no one else was asking: “What about the children?” That forethought was the beginning of our journey to help make a difference in the lives of families in Illinois.

Our Approach

By supporting children, we also support their families. That reasoning forms the basis of our work. It is a proven and effective means to address endemic poverty, which is the root cause of educational failure among American children in families with the least access to financial resources.

Our Path

IAFC exists today because we recognize that, to be self-sufficient, American families need access to high-quality, safe, and affordable child care. This allows parents to go to work with confidence, knowing that their children are in good hands. We lead the way in serving children and families, as distinguished by our “Strong Families, Powerful Communities” approach to child development.

What We Believe

We practice what we believe. Fundamental to our work is promoting all children’s safety, health, happiness, and education. Our efforts extend naturally to parents and child care providers, and the systems that support child development.



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About Head Start

Head Start and Early Head Start programs support children’s social and emotional development from birth to age 5. They do so by providing families with health and nutrition resources alongside additional services. Federally funded, Head Start and Early Head Start programs prepare children to succeed in school and in life through learning experiences tailored to their changing needs and abilities.

Head Start and Early Head Start programs champion children and families who have limited access to financial resources. These programs promote the highest standards of quality in delivering evidence-based and comprehensive early care and education.

Early Head Start programs provide educational, socialization, and supportive opportunities for expectant families and children up to three years old. Through both home- and center-based programs, families experience weekly home visits with Parent-Infant Educators, center-based biweekly socialization groups, opportunities to develop relationships with other children and families, prenatal support, other resources for parents and families, and a seamless transition from Early Head Start to Head Start programs.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Grantee

Illinois Action for Children

Program Number

05CH10105: Illinois Action for Children

Address

4753 N. Broadway, Chicago, IL 60640

Telephone

312.823.1285

Fax

773.561.2256

Head Start Director

Mark Barrett

mark.barrett@actforchildren.org

Agency Website

www.actforchildren.org

EL Website

<https://earlylearning.actforchildren.org>

Grantee Head Start and Early Head Start Site Locations

Chicago Heights

202 S. Halsted St., Lot C1
Chicago Heights, IL 60411

Harvey-South Holland

16515 S. Park Ave.
South Holland, IL 60473

Ford Heights

1055 Berkeley Ave.
Ford Heights, IL 60411

Dolton

721 Engle St.
Dolton, IL 60419

Through a respectful partnership with families, IAFCs Head Start and Early Head Start program locations apply an evidence-based approach to engage children and families with limited access to financial resources. Children benefit from warm, nurturing, and effective interactions; support for basic mental, dental, and physical health; and developmentally appropriate school readiness education. IAFC bases our multidisciplinary approach on leading-edge research and science about brain development.

Families participate in a variety of activities to support children's development and build strong parent-child relationships that align with each family's specific goals and needs. Additionally, IAFCs Head Start and Early Head Start site locations are now equipped to support full remote instruction if future situations arise that prevent in-person service delivery. Our Early Learning Programs provide parents, children, and staff with the equipment necessary to access lessons remotely. IAFCs curriculum also supports email delivery of lesson plans and activities to families.



374

Families Served



420

Children Served



356

Children Up-To-Date on Age Appropriate Health Care



61.60

Average Monthly Attendance per Site



“I strongly believe I would not have gotten as far as I did without the assistance and support of my IAFC Family Engagement Specialist.”

Curriculum and Program Model

IAFCs Early Learning Programs (ELPs) use Practice-Based Coaching (PBC), a cyclical approach to supporting effective teaching practices that lead to positive outcomes for children. Practice-Based Coaching components include focused observations and reflections, and feedback about teaching practices, actions, goal setting, and planning.

Our Early Learning Programs include both children with previously identified disabilities and their typically developing peers. This inclusive programming prepares children and their families for school at an earlier age.

During Fiscal Year 2023 (July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023), IAFCs Early Learning Programs continued their participation in *Lead Learn Excel*, which Start Early, an IAFC partner, facilitates. Through this work, IAFC is building capacity to develop high-quality classroom environments and teacher-child interactions and equipping early childhood professionals with systems and routines for continuous learning and quality improvement. Elements of *Lead Learn Excel* include data dialogues, team lesson planning, professional development, and peer learning communities, which support teachers as they work one-on-one with families to improve specific outcomes for each child in Head Start and Early Head Start programs. IAFC uses the following curricula, which are aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF) and the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards, in our Early Learning Programs:

- The Pyramid Model, which promotes healthy social-emotional development. Through the model's practice inventory, staff members' training needs are identified and a plan to address them is implemented, allowing the team to pinpoint specific skill needs across Early Learning Programs locations.
- Research-based Creative Curriculum, which aligns

with state standards for early learning. The Early Learning Programs team uses observations, pictures, videos, audio recordings, and children's work to assess and demonstrate children's competency in various learning domains that are essential for school readiness. Each year, following completion of three checkpoints, the team analyzes results, guides classroom and individual instruction, and plans for teachers' future professional development.

In addition, Parent Educators in IAFCs Home Visiting Program use Parents as Teachers, a research-based curriculum to increase parents' knowledge of early childhood development and improve parenting practices that prepare their young children for school readiness and success.

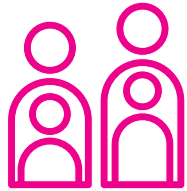
Our Home Visiting Program serves children under age three and their parents.

Regular screenings of children's hearing, vision, and overall social-emotional development help the team determine further evaluation needs. If a screening identifies a concern, IAFC refers children to the appropriate agencies and provides support to families throughout the evaluation process. The program model is firmly rooted in a two-generation approach that serves families.

Early Learning Programs staff partner with families to support each child's success. Teachers share Teaching Strategies' GOLD® Development and Learning Reports twice each year—in fall and spring—during parent-teacher conferences. Teachers and parents then discuss each child's strengths. When children transition, the parent-teacher conference focuses on planning for a smooth transition.

IAFC uses Teaching Strategies GOLD® to assess children receiving services through Early Head Start and Head Start programs. Our educators assess children's growth and development in 10 domains identified by Creative Curriculum. This assessment provides a clear, comprehensive view of each child's development, growth over time, and the resources and supports that they need to thrive.





374

Families served



306

Single-parent families



68

Two-parent families



185

Employed families



189

Not in workforce families



58

Father figures engaged



81

Families received at least one service

Family Engagement

Parent Committees and Policy Council, bodies of Early Learning Programs, continue to meet virtually to sustain high attendance. In-person meetings compete with families' work and school schedules and suffer low attendance. IAFC also engages families in supporting their children's learning through at-home activities, educational workshops/training sessions, family fun days, male engagement, Parent Cafés, and other parent-child interactive activities.

IAFC promotes families' leadership development through internal and external avenues. Through the Policy Council and IAFCs Board of Directors, families strengthen their leadership skills and voice. One parent was elected president of the Illinois Head Start Association's parent component; another was selected as a Parent Ambassador to advocate for early learning at the national level. Several families benefitted from participation in Illinois Head Start and National Head Start Associations' conferences. And, alongside IAFCs Human Resources staff, families participated in Early Learning Programs' employee candidate screening.

In early 2023, Illinois Action for Children's Early Learning Programs coordinated 12 virtual social-emotional learning (SEL) Parent Café sessions for 58 participants. The 75-minute sessions used established tools, such as Strengthening Families Protective Factors, Pyramid Model parent modules, and Be Strong Families Parent Café Cards, to provide a forum to discuss families' successes and challenges in supporting their children's early social-emotional learning. Through this setting, parents build support networks beyond school staff, which will help them sustain healthy parenting practices.

IAFCs Family Engagement staff are deeply committed to providing resources, working in partnership with families to help them achieve their goals and meet basic needs.

IAFC has expanded both the method and frequency of our communications with families. These methods now include an e-learning website, reminder texts, emails, phone calls, newsletters, virtual meetings, parent events, parent-teacher conferences, verbal reminders during drop-off/pick-up times, and fliers. IAFC customizes our written and verbal communications to reflect each family's preferred language.

Volunteer Opportunities Impact Stories

“

Harvey/South Holland Parent

“My son, H.C., attends the Illinois Action for Children South Holland Head Start Program. This program has been very instrumental in H.C.’s development. My son struggled with delayed speech. As a result, he mainly communicated with gestures and sounds. I was really concerned about his ability to grasp and articulate information. He required extra help, patience, and encouragement, and he got that in the South Holland Head Start Program. His teachers were very understanding and responsive to my son. They were consistent in their efforts to help H.C. and heavily influenced him as he got over his speech impairment. H.C. is now not only talking at a high level but also learning at a high level. I am thankful for all the assistance that my son received from this program.”

“

Chicago Heights Parent

“How can I thank Illinois Action for Children for such an amazing experience throughout my time in the early childhood program? It has been a privilege to serve as chair of the Parent Committee and Policy Council representative. I greatly enjoyed the opportunity to travel to Dallas, Texas, for the National Head Start Administration Conference. The experience was beyond amazing, from the precise planning to the patient staff to the unforgettable informational sessions daily.

I attended a session that dealt with trauma and recognizing the signs of trauma among youth. The session resonated with me because my concern is always on the well-being of my children and how they are adjusting to changes in their lives. The session was not only informative, but it also offered strategies.

The Parent Cafés were such a joy to be a part of every Tuesday. These meetings also helped me feel closer to my local site and part of my academic community, knowing there was a program of this nature in place that was concerned about my family and interested in my opinion. . . . I have a voice, and [I] am heard. Thank you for the Parent Cafés and the incentives [that] were just an added touch of love.”



“

Ford Heights Parent

“As a parent as well as a leader on several Illinois Action for Children platforms, I am beyond pleased with the program. I can remember like yesterday, taking my baby to the doctor for his first well-baby check and running into an IAFC table. I can’t forget the friendly and smiling faces that introduced me to the IAFC program. At the time my son was two weeks old, and we started with the home-based program at the Ford Heights IAFC site. I was a first-time mother and was overjoyed with how welcoming, helpful, supportive, and family-oriented the staff was.

I strongly believe I would not have gotten as far as I did without the assistance and support of my IAFC Family Engagement Specialist. The way the program advocated for my son and my concerns cannot be forgotten or compared. He is three years into the program and is excelling. As we grew within the program, I not only joined the Parent Committee but also was nominated as the Chair and Policy Council Representative. I had the opportunity to participate in two National Head Start Association (NHSA) Conferences from which I enhanced my knowledge in topics pertaining to parents and the program. I take pride in being a part of such a powerful community of people and look forward to many years to come.”

Early Learning Program Data

Teaching Strategies GOLD® provides IAFCs Early Learning Programs’ teachers and administrators with valuable data collected and reported three times a year to track each child’s progress. This data also helps assess progress in each classroom and each site, providing an overall snapshot of performance.

Teaching Strategies GOLD® covers all domains designed to assess school readiness in the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Outcomes Framework.

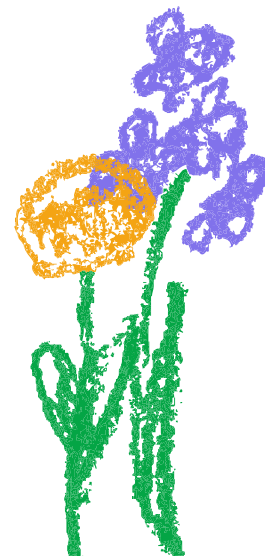
The data table for Early Head Start and Head Start provides results for the 2022-2023 spring checkpoint. We have highlighted children’s performance level by age in each development area. The percentages below show how many children met the expectations outlined in Teaching Strategies GOLD®.

Domain	Children Ages 0-3	Children Ages 3-5
Social-Emotional	72%	87%
Physical	78%	90%
Language	72%	86%
Cognitive	89%	88%
Literacy	89%	89%
Mathematics	50%	87%

Populations Served

IAFCs Early Learning Programs emphasize recruiting and enrolling children and families who may be furthest from opportunity attainment.

Unhoused children	12
Unhoused families	12
Children under the care of a guardian	1
Single parents	306
Two-parent families	68
Parents with disabilities	18
Children in foster care	9
Number of families receiving WIC	288
Number of families receiving TANF	25
Number of families receiving SNAP	263
Number of children with an IEP	21
Number of children with an IFSP	14





“I am thankful for all the assistance that my son received from this program.”

Financial Position Statement

As of June 30, 2023

ASSETS

Current Assets	\$ 11,044,873
Noncurrent Assets	\$ 11,505,997
Total Assets	\$ 22,550,870

LIABILITIES

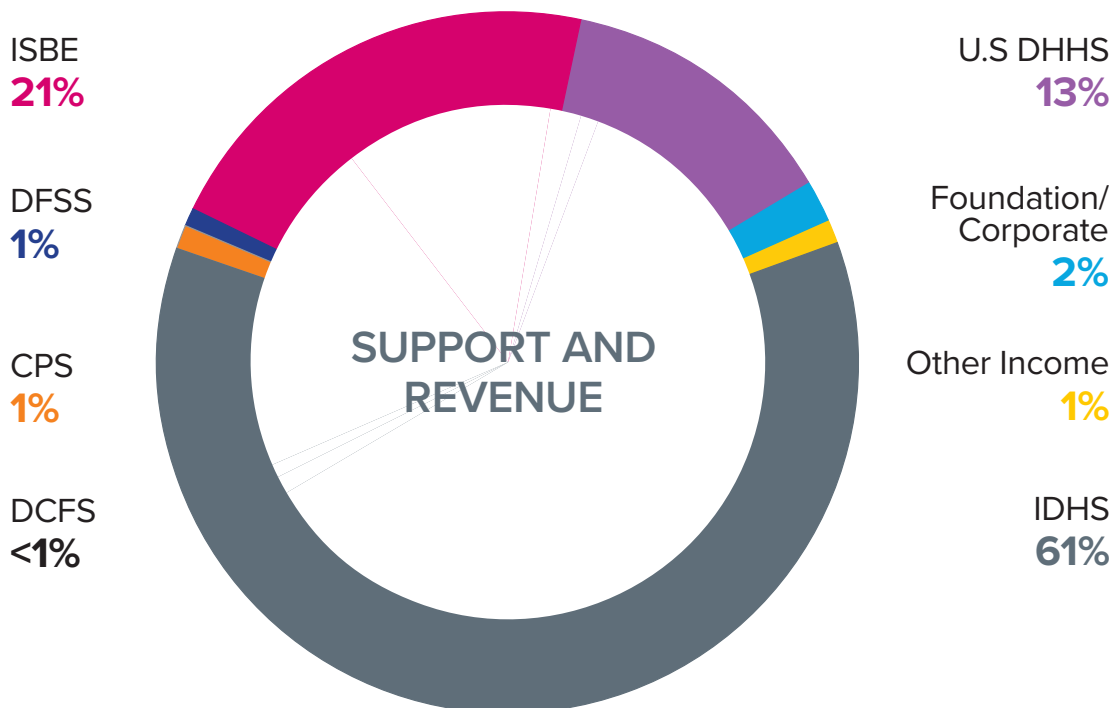
Total Liabilities	\$ 15,915,462
Total Net Assets	\$ 6,635,408
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 22,550,870



SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Government Contracts

IDHS	\$ 27,782,812
DFSS	\$ 1,107,298
CPS	\$ 517,299
DCFS	\$ 293,296
ISBE	\$ 15,267,578
U.S. DHHS	\$ 7,271,978
Foundation/Corporate	\$ 5,315,682
Other Income	\$ 574,255
Total Support and Revenue	\$ 58,130,200



EXPENSES

Program Services

Parent Services	\$ 9,002,080
Provider Services	\$ 26,460,577
Certificate	\$ 17,395,768
Public Policy and Advocacy	\$ 874,315

Supporting Services

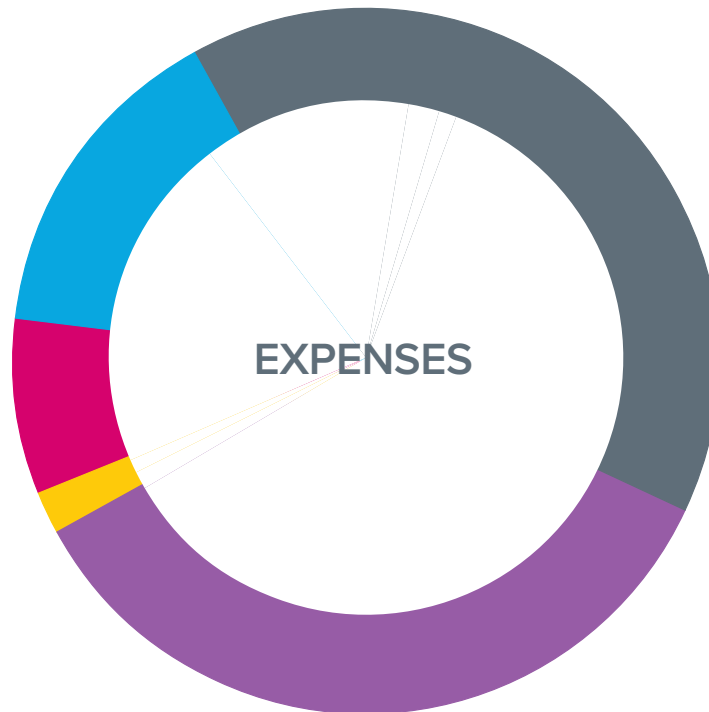
Fundraising/Marketing/Outreach	\$ 152,671
Management and General	\$ 3,674,638
Total Expenses	\$ 57,560,049
Change in Net Assets	\$ 570,151

Parent Services
15%

Management and General
8%


Public Policy and Advocacy
2%

Fundraising/
Marketing/Outreach
<1%



Provider Services
40%

Certificate
35%

A close-up photograph of a woman with long dark hair and a young child with curly hair, both smiling and looking at an open book. The woman is on the left, and the child is on the right. The book is open in the foreground, showing some green and blue pages. The background is softly blurred.

“The whole purpose of education
is to turn mirrors into windows”

– Sydney J. Harris



Illinois Action for Children is a catalyst for organizing, developing and supporting strong families and powerful communities where children matter most.

www.actforchildren.org
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