



## PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### ILLINOIS PUSHES FORWARD WITH IMPROVING EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Birth to Five Action Councils Forming to Gather Community Input  
Virtual Kick-off Events Set for Early February

As part of a broad, long-term effort to improve the State's early childhood education and care system, Illinois has committed to creating regional councils to promote the growth of high-quality early childhood programs across the State. A series of virtual, regional kick-off events will be held the first week of February to discuss the role of these regional councils, build regional stakeholders' knowledge of early childhood, and introduce data about existing services within each region.

In partnership with the state of Illinois, the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) has launched Birth to Five Illinois with the goal of recruiting family members, providers, advocates, business leaders, and other stakeholders to serve on Birth to Five Action Councils in each of the [39 educational regions](#) established by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) but operating independently. These councils will enable local residents and civic leaders to address early childhood needs within their own communities by gathering input that will inform local and state policy around early childhood needs and gaps, and leverage resources in their community to increase quality services.

In 2019, Governor JB Pritzker appointed a commission to analyze Illinois' early childhood programs and identify ways to improve them. The resulting [report](#) to the governor made a set of recommendations to make the system, "simpler, better, and fairer," and ensure all families in Illinois regardless of race, ethnicity, home language, and social circumstance have the services they need to prepare their children for school. Partnering with INCCRRA to launch the Birth to Five Action Councils across the State is one of several efforts currently underway. Illinois has also created an Early Childhood Transformation Team to help consolidate and streamline birth-to-five funding systems in Illinois, so they are easier to access for both families and providers.

Cicely Fleming, State Director for Birth to Five Illinois, said, "The bold transformation of the Early Childhood system in Illinois that the Commission called for starts by listening to the people in the communities who are providing services and the families who count on them. Illinois strives to be the best state in the nation to raise families, which requires that we provide accessible, high-quality early learning opportunities that are responsive to family needs and prioritize children we have historically marginalized."

The Birth to Five Illinois [virtual kick-off events](#) will be held from 6-7pm on February 1, 2, and 3, 2022. There will also be a Spanish session on February 5, 2022, from 10-11am. Registration is organized by county, and all are welcome to attend.

For more information on the Birth to Five Action Councils and the upcoming kick-off events, please visit our website: [www.birthtofiveil.com](http://www.birthtofiveil.com).

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