



PRESS RELEASE

For more information, contact:

Maggie Koller (she/her)
Communications Manager
(309) 233-0434
mkoller@birthtofiveil.com

May 17, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ILLINOIS MAKES STRIDES BUILDING REGIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD INFRASTRUCTURE

Regional Council Managers Hired in 17 of the State's 39 Regions
Gathering Interest for Regional Councils

According to [the report](#) of the Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Funding, "The beating heart of an effective ECEC system is the community, and in order to provide for community input, the Commission urges creation of a formal community and regional infrastructure."

In response to this recommendation, the State has partnered with the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) to build this equity-driven statewide regional system, [Birth to Five Illinois](#), comprised of staff and local Councils that will amplify family, provider, and community voices in the state policy-making process and give local and state leaders a more accurate understanding of the early childhood gaps [in each region](#).

Since the [official statewide launch](#) in February 2022, Birth to Five Illinois has been building the foundation for this new initiative. The recent hiring of Leslie Price, Data Strategist, rounds out the leadership on the [Birth of Five Illinois State Team](#).

On May 23, 2022, 17 of the 39 [Regional Council Managers](#) will be onboarded and begin their work in each region to: 1) hire Data/Admin and Family and Community Engagement staff, 2) stand up a Birth to Five Family Council and a Birth to Five Action Council, and 3) with the support of Illinois Action for Children, complete a Regional Scan.

Birth to Five Illinois welcomes the first cohort of Regional Council Managers:

Region 3	Amy Robinson	Bond, Christian, Effingham, Fayette, Montgomery Counties
Region 4	Livia Bane	Boone & Winnebago Counties
Region 9	Caitlyn Scarbro	Champaign & Ford Counties
Region 12	Ann Oswalt	Clay, Crawford, Jasper, Lawrence & Richland Counties
Region 16	Samantha McDavid	DeKalb County

Region 17	Carol Weisheit	DeWitt, Livingston, Logan & McLean Counties
Region 19	Valerie Varju	DuPage County
Region 21	Tonya Frehner	Franklin, Johnson, Massac & Williamson Counties
Region 26	Paul Larson	Fulton, Hancock, McDonough & Schuyler Counties
Region 30	Zena Madison	Alexander, Jackson, Perry, Pulaski & Union Counties
Region 31	Kimely Stewart	Kane County
Region 34	Dane Cruz	Lake County
Region 41	Tammy Wrobbel	Madison County
Region 44	Samantha Marcellis	McHenry County
Region 49	Emily Cummings	Rock Island County
Region 50	Stephanie Herling	St. Clair County
Region 53	Felicia Farden	Mason, Tazewell & Woodford Counties

Cicely Fleming, State Director for Birth to Five Illinois, said, “The hiring of the Regional Council Managers marks an important milestone in this work. Part of our mission is to mobilize communities to build and sustain equitable access to inclusive, high-quality early childhood services, particularly for those who have historically been marginalized. By hiring managers within each region who understand the localized strengths and challenges, we can build upon existing relationships and tailor solutions that reflect the thoughts and needs of the community members.”

Birth to Five Illinois will be onboarding a second cohort of Regional Council Managers in June 2022. There are several regions for which applicants are still being sought; qualified individuals who live or have experience within one of the open regions are encouraged [to apply](#).

To date, over 11,000 individuals have been engaged. Over 400 of those interested Illinoisans have completed an Interest Form for the Birth to Five Action and Family Councils that will be established in each of the 39 regions. We are seeking parents and caregivers to serve on their region’s Family Council (see [Family Council Interest Form](#)) and family members, early childhood providers, advocates, local elected officials, business representatives, and school board members, among many others to serve on their region’s Action Council (see [Action Council Interest Form](#)).

Information and Interest Forms are available in English, Spanish, and Polish on the Birth to Five Illinois website: www.birthtofiveil.com.

###

About Birth to Five Illinois

Birth to Five Illinois’ mission is to create a statewide regional infrastructure that will amplify input from communities in the development of policies and funding priorities. We mobilize communities to build and sustain equitable access to inclusive, high-quality early childhood services for all children and families in the state of Illinois.