



## PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## GROUNDWORK COMPLETED FOR STATEWIDE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

Council Managers Now Hired in all 39 Regions of Illinois

Illinois has committed to building a statewide regional and community infrastructure to improve quality, equity, and access to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programs and services across the State, particularly for families who have been historically marginalized.

This new early childhood system, named [Birth to Five Illinois](#), officially launched in February 2022 to fulfill a recommendation from the [Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding Report](#) that Illinois design a system that centers family voice and racial equity in the allocation of funding. The hiring of 39 Regional Council Managers, one in each of [the State's 39 regions](#), marks the completion of the foundational level of this new statewide system.

Seventeen Regional Council Managers joined Birth to Five Illinois in May 2022. Eight additional Managers onboarded in June 2022. On July 18, 2022, Birth to Five Illinois will welcome the final 14 [Regional Council Managers](#) to the Birth to Five Illinois team:

Region 1-A	Edna Navarro Vidaurre	City of Chicago
Region 1-B-D	Ilinca Wallace	North Cook County
Region 1	Bridget English	Adams, Brown, Cass, Morgan, Pike, Scott Counties
Region 8	Lou Ann Hayes	Carroll, Jo Daviess & Stephenson Counties
Region 13	Heather Pruett	Clinton, Jefferson, Marion & Washington Counties
Region 20	Janice Crow	Edwards, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Pope, Saline, Wabash, Wayne & White Counties
Region 28	Dianna Saelens	Bureau, Henry & Stark Counties
Region 32	Liz A. Gibson	Iroquois & Kankakee Counties
Region 39	Heather Seitz	Macon & Piatt Counties
Region 45	Candace Gardner	Monroe & Randolph Counties
Region 47	Abby Hoskins	Lee, Ogle & Whiteside Counties
Region 48	Kari Clark	Peoria County
Region 51	Ashley Earles	Sangamon & Menard Counties

Region 56      Keven Kerr

Will County

Cicely Fleming, State Director for Birth to Five Illinois, said, “Providing the necessary infrastructure, including staffing, ensures the prioritization of family needs. Hiring a Regional Council Manager in each of the State’s regions marks a monumental step towards operationalizing equity and amplifying input from communities in the development of early childhood policies and funding priorities.”

These Regional Council Managers are local professionals who live and/or work and have connections within their communities. Fleming also stated, “We are excited that this statewide leadership team has been established so we can shift focus on hiring the two additional staff for the regional offices and formalizing the Councils that will represent the diverse voices in each region.” More than 500 Council Interest Forms have been submitted to date.

Just as the prior cohorts, this third cohort of Regional Council Managers will soon be hiring Family and Community Engagement and Administrative Support staff within their region ([several regional positions have been posted](#)), as well as establishing both a Birth to Five Family Council and a Birth to Five Action Council. The first deliverable for the Birth to Five Illinois Councils is to complete a Regional Scan, or needs assessment, of the regional ECEC service landscape.

All Illinoisans interested in joining their region’s [Birth to Five Council](#) are encouraged to complete an Interest Form.

- [Family Council Interest Form](#)
- [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](http://www.birthtofiveil.com).

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### ***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.*