



# Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessment **ADDENDUM**

## **Region 17**

(Dewitt, Livingston, Logan & McLean  
Counties)



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## Introduction

In 2021, the Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Funding issued a report with findings that highlighted the inequities in ECEC funding in Illinois and the need to create a better statewide infrastructure to support ECEC professionals, expand services and programs for families and caregivers, and increase enrollment in ECEC programs. The report focused on the importance of addressing racial inequities and the need to include local voices in the conversation funders and decisionmakers were having about ECEC.

The experiences and knowledge families, caregivers, and Early Childhood professionals gain while navigating the complexities of the State's ECEC system is valuable, and understanding their lived experience in the local context is vital for decisionmakers to ensure communities have access to the programs, services, and supports they need. To this end, Birth to Five Illinois was created to harness family and caregiver voices in ECEC and serve as a bridge between the communities and policymakers so family, caregiver, and professional experiences can guide the decisions made to expand or enhance services across the State.

## Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessments

Between August 2022 and May 2023, Regional Teams throughout the State met with their local Action Council and Family Council to talk about Early Childhood data and hear about their experiences with ECEC programs and services. They also conducted focus groups, interviews, held community listening sessions, and conducted surveys to gather additional feedback from caregivers, ECEC professionals, and priority populations in their Region. A community report, the Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessment, was completed in June 2023. However, recognizing that not all community members had a chance to provide their feedback on data or share their experiences in the original Regional Needs Assessment, additional feedback was collected through community events and meetings, and this Addendum was created to complement the existing report. The new information provided by community members, agencies, organizations, and other community stakeholders is listed below.

## Early Childhood Education & Care (ECEC) Programs

One community member noted that applying for a Preschool for All (PFA)/Preschool for All Expansion (PFA-E) grant is not pursued because it involves too much paperwork and requires classrooms that are too large. They said that schools can operate their own and keep classrooms smaller (10-12 students) and not have the behavioral issues a large classroom could invite. "The amount of paperwork required for the PFA/PFA-E programs is too prohibitive. We have our own preschool in our district and have small, blended classrooms, which the teachers appreciate. They feel they can TEACH rather than always be doing paperwork." - Superintendent (Logan County)

One parent also said that before and after school care is difficult to find due to the shortage of child care slots. A home provider gave feedback on Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) payments, saying that the delay in payments providers experience may be an additional driver of the slot gap in the Region.

### **Early Childhood Education & Care (ECEC) Workforce**

Community members provided additional feedback regarding the licensing of child care providers. They said the interpretation of the licensing regulations causes increased expenditures and undue stress for providers, and prospective providers feel licensing regulations are too restrictive.

### **Next Steps**

As Regional Teams continue their conversations with caregivers, ECEC professionals, and community stakeholders, their stories and experiences with ECEC programs and services will be recorded and shared with state and local agencies, legislators, funders, and decisionmakers. We hope our work will contribute to reimagining an Early Childhood system that is more equitable for all families and support the incredible work ECEC professionals do every day.