



# Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessment **ADDENDUM**

## **Region 3**

(Bond, Christian, Effingham, Fayette, &  
Montgomery 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.

## Local Community Collaborations

A new Collaboration was started between the Clay County Health Dept and the Effingham County Health Department. The Collaboration received a Birth to Five Illinois Planning Grant, and they are using the funds to introduce the Integrated Referral and Intake System (IRIS) to Caly and Effingham Counties. The Collaboration will use the money for the initial start-up for partnering programs/agencies and provide training opportunities for staff.

## Early Childhood Education & Care (ECEC) Programs

Two community members offered the following feedback on affordability and access to ECEC programs.

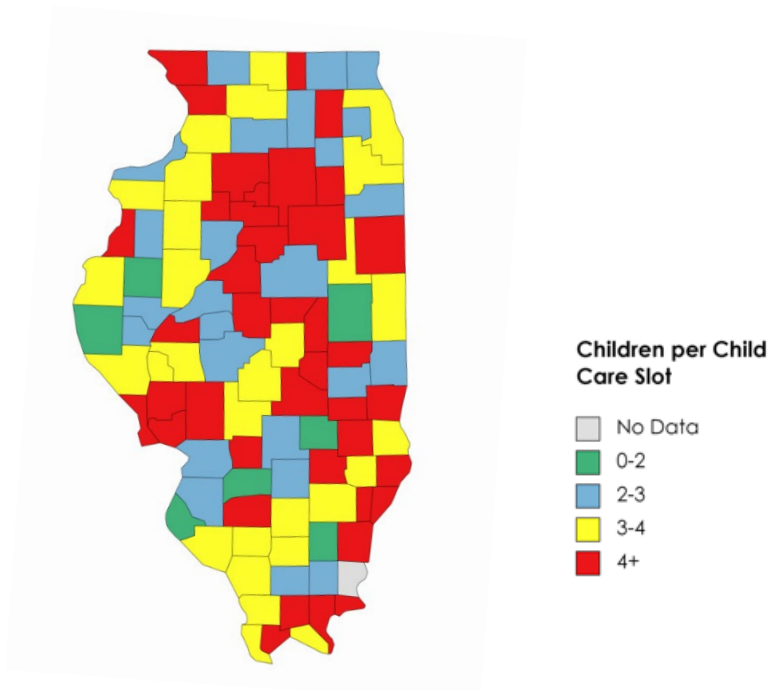
- “CCAP [the Child Care Assistance Program] should go off net income and not gross income. Many families have high insurance costs coming out of their checks, money they never see. Why is this included as their income when this is not an optional expense?” - Early Childhood Coordinator (Effingham County)
- “Why are we required to operate off waitlists? They [services] do not benefit children and families when they are expected to sit on these waitlists.” - Community Member (Bond County)

## Slot Gap

Community members noted that programs open and close often, making it difficult to track how many programs and slots there are at any given time. Additional feedback noted that some licensed in-home providers stopped taking children during the COVID-19 pandemic-related shutdowns but are slowly starting to re-open or increase enrollment, so those numbers are changing.

The map below shows the number of children per child care slot. Counties are colored red for four or more children per slot, yellow for three to four children per slot, blue for two to three children per slot, green for zero to two children per slot, and grey for no available data.

*Figure 1: Map of Number of Children Per Child Care Slot, by County*



Source: IECAM  
Created By: Birth to Five Illinois

Below are tables for each Regional county showing the change in population of children age five and under, the reported capacity of licensed child care programs, and the number of children per slot. The population of children ages five and under, along with the reported capacity for licensed child care centers and homes, were pulled from the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM) for the years of 2020 and 2022. The number of children per slot was achieved by dividing the population of children ages five and under by the licensed capacity.

*Table 1: Slot Gap Numbers for Bond County*

<b>Bond County</b>	<b>IECAM 2020</b>	<b>IECAM 2022</b>
Population Five and Under	515	746
Licensed Capacity	72	538
Children Per Slot	7.15	1.39

Source: IECAM  
Created By: Birth to Five Illinois

*Table 2: Slot Gap Numbers for Christian County*

<b>Christian County</b>	<b>IECAM 2020</b>	<b>IECAM 2022</b>
Population Five and Under	912	2346
Licensed Capacity	166	1015
Children Per Slot	5.49	2.31

Source: IECAM, Erikson Risk and Reach Report  
Created By: Birth to Five Illinois

*Table 3: Slot Gap Numbers for Effingham County*

<b>Effingham County</b>	<b>IECAM 2020</b>	<b>IECAM 2022</b>
Population Five and Under	1570	2648
Licensed Capacity	634	1533
Children Per Slot	2.47	1.72

Source: IECAM, Erikson Risk and Reach Report  
Created By: Birth to Five Illinois

*Table 4: Slot Gap Numbers for Fayette County*

<b>Fayette County</b>	<b>IECAM 2020</b>	<b>IECAM 2022</b>
Population Five and Under	849	1449
Licensed Capacity	137	972
Children Per Slot	6.19	1.49

Source: IECAM, Erikson Risk and Reach Report  
Created By: Birth to Five Illinois

*Table 5: Slot Gap Numbers for Montgomery County*

<b>Montgomery County</b>	<b>IECAM 2020</b>	<b>IECAM 2022</b>
Population Five and Under	771	1672

Licensed Capacity	125	990
Children Per Slot	6.16	1.69

Source: IECAM, Erikson Risk and Reach Report  
Created By: Birth to Five Illinois

## Additional Community Feedback

One community partner reflected on the number of children who have been reported as experiencing abuse.

- “I had no idea we had so many children experiencing abuse in this area. How do we help?”  
- Greenville Women’s Alliance President (Bond County)

## 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.