



# Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessment **ADDENDUM**

**Region 48**  
(Peoria County)



Regional Council Manager: Kari Clark (she/her/ella)  
Phone number: (309) 393-2543  
Email: kclark@birthtofiveil.com  
Website: [www.birthtofiveil.com/region48](http://www.birthtofiveil.com/region48)

## 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

The Central Illinois Home Visiting Collaboration was not included in the original Region 48 Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessment. The collaboration includes accredited home visiting agencies in the area and referring agencies. Their goal is to increase enrollment in early learning programs, serve priority populations, and complete coordinated intake for home visiting. The role of coordinated intake is to reduce duplication of resources so that more families can be served. They conduct outreach to families who will most benefit from home visitation services.

## Early Childhood Education & Care (ECEC) Programs

Other feedback from community members centered on ECEC programs in the Region.

Peoria County is home to one of three Family Connects programs offered throughout Illinois, which provides one postpartum home visit by a nurse if the family wants to participate. The program is not considered a home visiting program since it only consists of one visit, but it is a support program for families.

Early Hard Start (EHS) is opening one center-based classroom for the upcoming school year once licensing is complete. This will increase the number of EHS sites to five. It will not create additional slots, as slots will be reallocated from home-based EHS to center based EHS. This transition is due to family feedback that center-based programs are more desirable.

Two community members provided the following quotes:

- “Licensing continues to be a barrier for people who wish to become a licensed family child care provider. With such a need present for more child care spots, you would think the licensing agency would want to help people through the process, not hinder them.”
- “It still stops me in my tracks that there is such a gap in available therapists for Early Intervention in our Region.”

## Early Childhood Education & Care (ECEC) Workforce

One community member noted that the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) scholarship is struggling to utilize its funding, so they have expanded scholarship opportunities to anyone who has ever worked in ECEC, including cooks and aides.

## 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.