

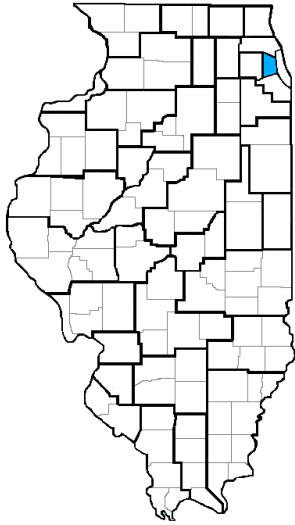
ACTION PLAN



Region 1-B-B

Cook County (West)

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Letter from Family & Action Council Members

The communities throughout our Region helped lead discussions by providing information through focus groups, interviews, community meetings, and surveys, and we are grateful for their help in developing our Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessment and Addendum, both produced in 2023. Their voices and passion for improving the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system to make it more equitable for all children, caregivers, and families are the driving force behind our work and are evident in this Region 1-B-B Action Plan.

Council members and others in the community had a chance to share their experiences with ECEC programs and services and add their input to the next steps, detailed in this Action Plan, to move the needle on several recommendations identified in our Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessment.

We especially want to thank the following community members for their support in developing our Regional Action Plan:

- Chris Tokarski and Brittian Ayres with Illinois Action for Children for sharing their time, energy, and expertise as guest speakers in our Council workgroups as we created goals to address the needs of our community.

It is our hope that the Action Plan will create equity, increase opportunities and support, and be a step forward in creating positive change in the communities across our Region.

We are excited to present our Regional Action Plan to our community partners and families and look forward to working with everyone to implement the recommendations included in the Plan.

With gratitude,

Birth to Five Illinois: Region 1-B-B Family & Action Council Members

Action Plan Development

Between fall 2022 and spring 2023, the Action Council, Family Council, and Regional Birth to Five Illinois Team reviewed quantitative and qualitative data related to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services, programs, and supports and worked together to create an [Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessment](#) to highlight the experiences of families and caregivers in the Region. The report includes recommendations to improve ECEC opportunities at both the local and state level to make the system more equitable for all children. Councils developed an Action Plan based on several prioritized recommendations that will be used to help communities across the State raise awareness of ECEC services, expand the reach of services and resources to families, and advocate for better access to programs.

This Action Plan is aimed primarily at caregivers, community stakeholders, policymakers, elected officials, state agencies, and potential funders. It is our hope that caregivers find opportunities to talk about their experiences and become advocates for ECEC to help drive long-term, sustainable change in their communities. We also hope that community stakeholders build off the results of the Action Plan and help lead the efforts as we reimagine the ECEC system at the local level. We hope these plans provide an easy entry point for policymakers, elected officials, state agencies that administer ECEC programs, and funders to support community-led efforts, lending their expertise and support to bringing the plans to fruition.

How this Document is Designed

Each recommendation has an Action Plan that is rooted in Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI),¹ a method that involves setting SMART goals, gathering feedback, evaluating progress on a regular basis, and making data-driven decisions. SMART is an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.² Council members developed SMART goals for each recommendation they chose and identified key partners who could help implement each goal. They determined how long it might take and the steps needed to achieve the goal.

Councils were asked to think about the potential risks, barriers, and solutions for each recommendation. They also considered who else needed to be engaged in the work to be successful and what funding may be needed to fully implement the Action Plan. In this document, only state agencies, elected officials, and state agency representatives in public service roles are listed by name. This list only identifies those individuals who may be instrumental in pushing the Action Plan; it does not imply their commitment or obligation to do so. Local and regional organizations and individuals were considered but are not listed, which allows Regional Teams and Councils to engage with community members in a collaborative manner.

¹ See <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK559239/> for more information.

² See <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/nc-smart-goals-fact-sheet.pdf> for more information.

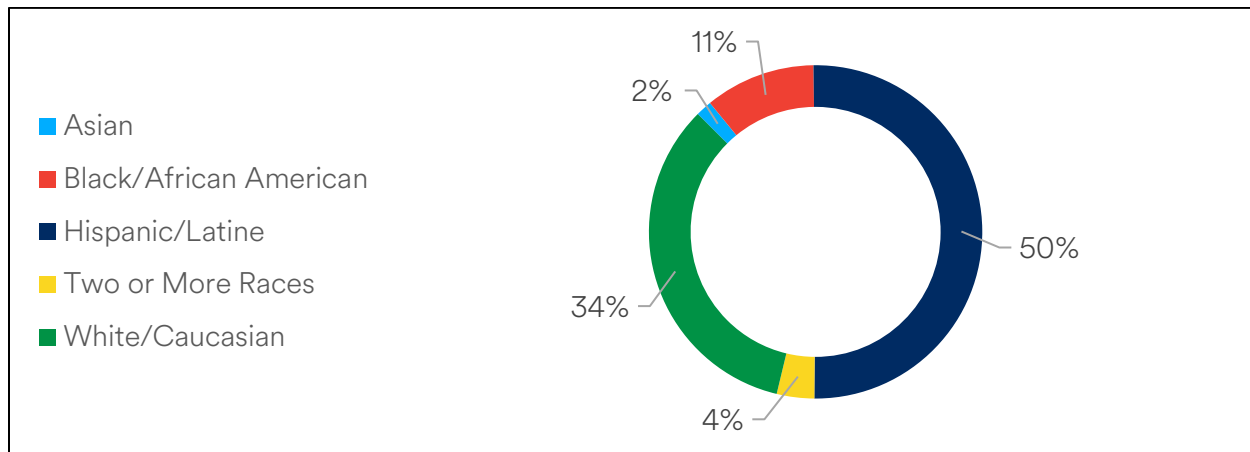
Action Plans will be reviewed in the summer with the community to discuss progress toward the SMART goals, potentially identify new goals and steps to meeting them, and talk about next steps for implementing the recommendations.

Region 1-B-B

Region 1-B-B is located in Cook County and includes the cities of Bellwood, Berkeley, Berwyn, Broadview, Brookfield, Burr Ridge, Cicero, Countryside, Elmwood, Forest Park, Franklin Park, Harwood Heights, Hillside, Hines, Hodgkins, La Grange, La Grange Highlands, La Grange Park, Lyons, Maywood, McCook, Melrose Park, Norridge, North Riverside, Northlake, Oak Park, River Forest, River Grove, Riverside, Rosemont, Schiller Park, Stickney, Stone Park, Westchester, and Western Springs, among others.

In 2022, the total population of the Region was 562,582; 38,312 were children birth through age five. The Region is racially and ethnically diverse, with most children identified as Hispanic/Latine (Figure 1). There are communities in the eastern part of the Region near Berwyn and Cicero, as well as the northwestern part of the Region near Northlake, Franklin Park, and Melrose Park that are comprised of those who self-identify as Hispanic/Latine. Additionally, in the central part of the Region, in and around Maywood, Hines, Hillside, and Westchester, there are communities where the predominate self-identified race is Black/African American.

Figure 1: Percentage of Children Aged Four and Under by Race/Ethnicity³



Source: IECAM
Created by: Birth to Five Illinois

Across the Region, there are 14,634 slots in publicly funded, licensed, and license-exempt child care centers and homes for children birth through age five (Table 1). Currently, Region 1-B-B does

³ Other races/ethnicities have too small of numbers to be represented in the chart: American Indian and Alaska Native, 82; Other, 136 people.

not have enough spots available for families who might want to enroll their young child in an ECEC program.

Table 1: Number and Capacity of Early Childhood Education and Care Programs

Program Type/Name	Ages Served	Number in Region	Capacity/ Funded Enrollment
Early Head Start	Ages Birth to Three	18	514
Head Start	Ages Three to Five	12	495
Preschool for All	Ages Three and Four	62	3,845
Preschool for All Expansion	Ages Three and Four	10	300
Licensed Child Care	Ages Birth to Twelve	96	7,276
Licensed Family Child Care	Ages Birth to Twelve	176	1,838
License-Exempt Child Care	Ages Birth to Twelve	5	366

Source: IECAM
Created by: Birth to Five Illinois

For additional data and information, please access Region 1-B-B's Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessment at: www.birthtofiveil.com/region1bb/#report.

Recommendation 1



Expand service delivery for children and families with developmental delays and/or disabilities.

This recommendation was created based on feedback from Council and community members who reported long wait times for evaluations, needing to travel outside the Region to access services and supports for their children, and providers being unable to meet the needs of children with developmental delays and disabilities.

SMART Goals

SMART Goals	What steps will be taken to meet the SMART goal?	How will you know when the SMART goal has been achieved?
<p>Between winter and summer of 2024, raise awareness of the demand for services for children in Region 1-B-B to receive timely evaluations and assessments to identify developmental delays in one or more of the following areas of development: physical, cognitive, speech and language, social or emotional, and self-help skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a committee or group to do a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis of current guidelines related to evaluations and assessments. • Create a plan to disseminate guidelines. The guidelines will go to community organizations, Child and Family Connections, school districts, Community Collaborations, medical professionals, as well as state and local government agencies. • Enhance information sharing between education and medical professionals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee has been created. • SWOT analysis of guidelines has been created. • When there is a common understanding <i>in writing</i> of a documented processes across all stakeholders. • There have been community meetings that include both ECEC professionals and caregivers. • Community members have met with school administrators and providers to discuss evaluations and the needs of families.
<p>During the remainder of FY24 and throughout FY25, explore the possibility of the creation or assignment of a “hub” that provides information electronically, including systems and supports available to children with delays/disabilities and their families through information sharing and/transparency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Birth to Five Illinois: Region 1-B-B Team, in collaboration with community partners, will bring together community members to discuss and plan for the creation of an information hub for parents, caregivers, and providers to share information about disability services, resources, and supports. • Talk with parents and caregivers to understand where they get information about disability evaluations, assessments, services, and support. • Plan community meetings to bring together disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one survey has been conducted. • Opportunities for feedback have been offered to parents and providers through conversations, meetings, etc. • Parents and families are made aware of the “hub” and know how to navigate and contact.

	<p>service providers to discuss the development of a centralized information hub, using information from parents/caregivers to inform how it is created and accessed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find community partners to help support the development of the hub. • Work with community partners to identify funding to build and launch the hub. 	
<p>By spring 2025, develop and establish a standing group/council that provides a voice for families and programs with children from birth to five years old with developmental delays/different abilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit knowledgeable membership from the ECEC workforce. • Establish mission/vision/charge. • Recruit ongoing members representative of the special needs community. • Create a needs document/SWOT analysis of the ECEC landscape. • Present the document to the state and local government agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The document is disseminated to state and local government agencies. • Data collection and reporting have been assessed and modified to collect desired outcome measures.

Risks & Barriers

Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation	Proposed Solutions to Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation
<p>No one is open to supporting the development of, or providing information for, the new hub.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation or assignment of a task force to research components of organizations the hub wants to include.

Additional Engagement with State Organizations, Agencies & Individuals

Council members and Regional staff identified additional community organizations, agencies, and individuals and what role they might need to play in implementing the Action Plan SMART goals and/or recommendation. Local organizations, agencies, and individuals are still being contacted

and their specific role is being defined at this time, so they have not been listed as a part of the Action Plan.

Possible Funding Sources

The Council members did not identify additional possible funding sources to support this recommendation.

Community

Council members identified community groups who are currently working on similar goals and recommendations: DuPage County school systems and Children and Family Connections (CFC) #7. One lesson they learned from this work that was shared with the Regional Councils and Team is that community buy-in is essential to implementing and sustaining the work.

Recommendation Implementation

Council members said they will know the recommendation is fully implemented when parents/caregivers have shorter travel times to access services and supports, and providers can offer additional, appropriate supports to children with developmental delays and disabilities.

They also predicted that by fully implementing the recommendation there will be a reduction in preschool expulsions, an increase in Kindergarten readiness, better academic outcomes for students overall, and all children will have access to services without undue delays.

Recommendation 2



Advocate to improve the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) processes by reviewing the eligibility requirements to meet the unique needs of families and improving processing and payment systems for providers.

SMART Goals

SMART goals	What steps will be taken to meet the SMART goal?	How will you know when the SMART goal has been achieved?
<p>By December 2024, increase the number of site-administered contractor agencies in Region 1-B-B.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) to find out the process of becoming a site contractor and the requirements. • Outreach to providers/agencies who might meet the requirements to increase awareness. • Providers/agencies apply. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are two new contractors throughout Region 1-B-B.
<p>By December 2024, promote awareness of technical assistance and support via “CCAP Days” where Child Care Resource & Referral Agency (CCR&R) staff go to local organizations to provide accessible support to providers and families in Region 1-B-B communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a partnership with the CCR&R. • Put parameters in place for CCAP days. (Scale and frequency that makes sense for a staffer to come out given CCR&R's staff limitations, and what resources need to be provided by the local agency/approval process). • Local agency schedules a "CCAP day". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been 12 CCAP Days held in Region 1-B-B.
<p>By June 2025, utilize state-provided training materials or sessions for parents and providers in Region 1-B-B to familiarize them with the entire CCAP online process.</p>	<p>Hold individual meetings with these agencies to check their availability or whether they have current capacity with the labor force.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check the current training materials. Do they need to be updated? • Include video tutorials, user guides, checklists, or workshops to ensure everyone understands how to navigate the system efficiently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When materials have been provided to parents/caregivers and providers in Region 1-B-B

<p>By December 2024, implement a feedback mechanism for training and from trainers about the process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a form to provide a link for participants to provide feedback, which can be sent out through various channels. • Create a QR code for the link to receive feedback. • Create open forums for discussion/feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A feedback form has been created and is being used with trainees. • A mechanism has been established to collect feedback from trainers.
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Risks & Barriers

Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation	Proposed Solutions to Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation
<p>Resource limitations on providers/agencies to take on additional tasks/do the work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If resources are the major barrier, a Region-wide grant proposal to pilot/kickstart this effort.
<p>Provider resource limitations around staffing, funding, training of staff, and/or limitation of language/access supports.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present Illinois Action for Children with an outline of needs to see if they can expand and support. • If resources are the major barrier, a Region-wide grant proposal to pilot/kickstart this effort.
<p>People may not be able to attend the training or have the technology to access the training.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide reminders for the training(s) through various mediums that meet the needs of the community.
<p>Feedback forms are not being utilized.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect feedback from in-person attendees before they leave the training. • Follow up with individuals about submitting feedback. • Having a feedback form that can be easily accessible across various channels.

Additional Engagement with State Organizations, Agencies & Individuals

Council members and Regional staff identified additional community organizations, agencies, and individuals and what role they might need to play in implementing the Action Plan SMART goals and/or recommendation. Local organizations, agencies, and individuals are still being contacted and their specific role is being defined at this time, so they have not been listed as a part of the Action Plan.

Possible Funding Sources

The Council members identified two potential additional funding sources that may be able to support the full implementation of this recommendation: CCR&Rs and IDHS.

Community

Council members identified that Illinois Action for Children is currently working on similar goals and recommendations. One important lesson they conveyed to the Council members is that there are barriers to applying for and receiving funding. While this frustration is consistently heard from providers, locally there is little being done to address the challenges with the CCAP system.

Recommendation Implementation

Council members said they will know the recommendation is fully implemented when there is an increased use of the CCAP website, and families and providers are receiving assistance from community providers.

They also predicted that by fully implementing the recommendation:

- Families and providers will experience ease of use with the online system and application processes, decreasing stress on users.
- Providers will be educated and versed in CCAP policies and procedures.
- Quicker turnaround for informing families of their status on the completed application.
- There will be more trust in the application process.

Recommendation 3



Expand Local Community Collaborations.

This recommendation was created based on feedback from Action and Family Council members and community partners. While there are two Local Early Childhood Community Collaborations

in the Region, their reach is limited. Other communities in the Region would benefit from the expansion of the existing Community Collaborations, or the establishment of their own.

SMART Goals

SMART Goals	What steps will be taken to meet the SMART goal?	How will you know when the SMART goal has been achieved?
By December 2024, identify populations that demonstrate shared needs within services that Collaborations provide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the groups that have needs, including demographic information such as age. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When community feedback has been gathered from the community partners and community members.
Throughout FY24 and FY25, support Collaborations in the Region in expansion efforts through facilitating connections between existing Community Collaborations, new Collaborations, and community partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine what entities already have access to collaborations and partners. Create a comprehensive resource guide for the Region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the resource guide is completed.
By December 2024, identify needs in Region 1-B-B that existing Collaborations are planning to offer services for, and partner with them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect data via surveys, parent and provider interviews, conversations with administration, and mapping of school districts to municipalities. Work with Community Systems Statewide Supports (CS3) to identify Collaboration types and sub-services for surveys. Meet with existing Collaborations to learn about strategic directions. Create a report of findings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When a comprehensive report is completed summarizing the findings from data collection and meetings.

Risks & Barriers

Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation	Proposed Solutions to Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation
Language barriers, data discrepancies, technology literacy, resources available, and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support with technology and workshops.

little information about families and/or their needs.	
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Additional Engagement with State Organizations, Agencies & Individuals

Council members and Regional staff identified additional community organizations, agencies, and individuals and what role they might need to play in implementing the Action Plan SMART goals and/or recommendation. Local organizations, agencies, and individuals are still being contacted and their specific role is being defined at this time, so they have not been listed as a part of the Action Plan.

Possible Funding Sources

The Council members noted that additional possible funding sources to support this recommendation might be municipal funds, Birth to Five Illinois Implementation Grants, and private, philanthropic donors.

Community

Council members identified community groups who have been and are currently working on similar goals and recommendations:

- All Our Kids (AOK) Network: Cicero
- Collaboration for Early Childhood of Oak Park and River Forest
- Illinois Action for Children Community Systems Statewide Supports (CS3)

Two important lessons these organizations conveyed to Council members and Regional staff about their work is that relationships with community partners and caregivers is essential, and that funding to establish and maintain this work has been difficult to obtain.

Recommendation Implementation

Council members said they will know the recommendation is fully implemented when Kindergarten readiness measurements improve, there are better outcomes for children who need access to Early Intervention and Special Education supports, and there is data to demonstrate the outcomes of community outreach.

Council members also predicted that by fully implementing the recommendation:

- Pregnant people will receive prenatal care, depression screening, and physicians will see less substance abuse during pregnancy.
- Babies will be born healthy, full-term, and the Region will see a reduction in infant deaths.
- Children will meet benchmarks for Kindergarten readiness measures, including fine and gross motor skills, knowledge of nutrition, personal care, oral care, wellness, social-emotional regulation, and cognition in reading and math.

Next Steps



Birth to Five Illinois Regions will continue to use the CQI process and meet with stakeholders this summer to discuss the community's progress on implementation and continue bringing stakeholders together.

As pieces of the Action Plan are implemented, stakeholders will be encouraged to build on those efforts and develop new SMART goals to expand access to ECEC services, programs, and supports, and continue this important work in making Illinois the best state in the nation for families raising young children, with the nation's best Early Childhood Education and Care system.

For more information on Birth to Five Illinois, please visit: www.birthtofiveil.com.



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