

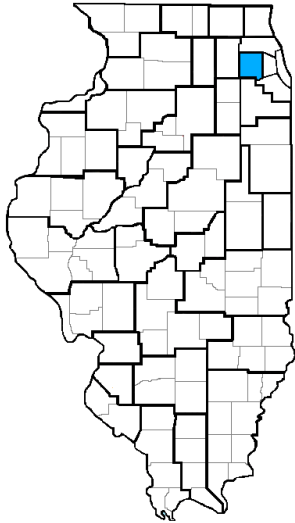
ACTION PLAN



Region 19

DuPage County

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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 19 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 want to thank our community members for their support in developing our Regional Action Plan. It is our hope that the implementation of our Action Plan will provide a greater sense of cultural competency throughout the Region and address the root causes of the challenges and barriers facing families and the Early Childhood Education and Care System.

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 19 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.

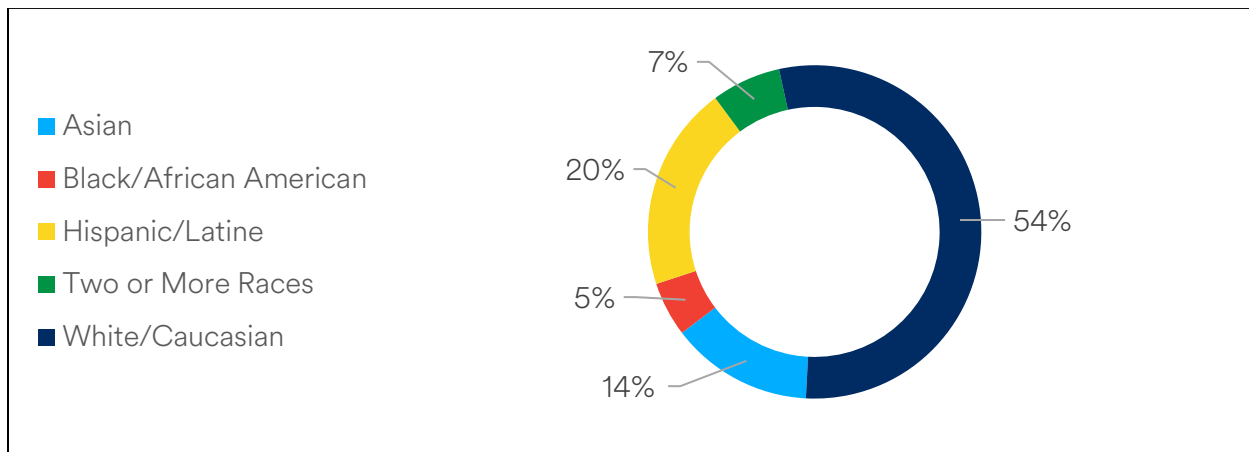
² See <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/nc-smart-goals-fact-sheet.pdf> for more information.

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 19

Region 19 is located in northern Illinois and includes DuPage County. In 2022, the total population of the Region was 946,511; 64,013 were children birth through age five. As a Region, DuPage County has seen a steady increase in population growth. Although predominantly white, the racial and ethnic identity of Region 19 has steadily become more diverse with increases in both the Black/African American and Asian communities (Figure 1).

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 30,161 slots in publicly funded, licensed, and license-exempt child care centers and homes for children birth through age five (Table 1). Currently, Region 19 does 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	6	293
Head Start	Ages Three to Five	9	345

³ Other races/ethnicities have too small of numbers to be represented in the chart: American Indian and Alaska Native, 16 people; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, 4; Other, 164 people.

Preschool for All	Ages Three and Four	31	5,550
Preschool for All Expansion	Ages Three and Four	13	573
Licensed Child Care	Ages Birth to Twelve	184	19,129
Licensed Family Child Care	Ages Birth to Twelve	137	1,453
License-Exempt Child Care	Ages Birth to Twelve	30	2,818

Source: IECAM

Created by: Birth to Five Illinois

For additional data and information, please access Region 19’s Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessment at: www.birthtofiveil.com/region19/#report.

Recommendation 1



Increase access to publicly funded Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programs, recognizing inconvenient schedules, the lack of transportation, and disqualifying criteria that creates barriers for families.

In Region 19, publicly funded programs offer essential services to eligible children, but their locations and funding sources vary, leading to inconsistency. Despite the potential benefits, families, especially those from marginalized communities, face logistical challenges accessing these programs. Preschool For All and Head Start programs often operate part-time, making it difficult for working parents/caregivers to arrange transportation and balance work with intervention services, while limited availability exacerbates the struggle to find affordable part-time child care. Additionally, families with children qualifying for multiple programs must navigate logistics across multiple locations, further complicating access, with no guarantee of available transportation even if child care is secured.

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>Identify and develop partnerships with licensed child care centers and homes to establish new Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative sites within identified Early Childhood deserts through an increase in Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) Request for Proposal (RFP) applications received by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) during the FY25 grant cycle.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential partner centers and homes. • Assist identified partners with understanding and meeting qualifications and grant requirements. • Facilitate conversations and partnerships with programs and sponsoring/partner schools. • Leverage local expertise and knowledge to provide support for the partnering programs during the grant writing process. • Develop a community of practice to support program implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When 10 non-school district applications are completed during the FY25 grant cycle.
<p>Develop and pilot transportation solutions to ensure children have access to ECEC services by establishing partnerships with mechanics, developing a ride share program, and exploring Local Collaboration investments in agency-owned vehicles by the end of 2024.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and explore the legal requirements and regulatory practices associated with the transportation of young children. • Establish partnerships with local mechanics and trade schools who are willing to work with partner organizations to offer discounts/payment options for families with inoperable vehicles. • Develop participation metrics and qualifying criterion for a vehicle repair program. • Research existing programs such as Peoples Resource Center, the partnership between DuPage Pads and Loaves & Fishes, and the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When at least 10 families have received assistance with transportation. • When programs report increased attendance rates.

	Pennsylvania DOT Childcare Transportation Program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research the feasibility of the purchase of an agency-owned vehicle and continuing maintenance. 	
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Risks & Barriers

Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation	Proposed Solutions to Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation
Current transportation options do not address the current challenges within existing ECEC programs housed within school districts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some local programs have included a limited number of funds within their budget to gift Uber/Lyft gift cards to families enrolled in their program to help temporarily alleviate transportation barriers. As part of the work within these programs, Collaboration partners are looking at ways to leverage other local funding opportunities to expand temporary relief.
The operation of publicly funded programming requires additional paperwork and regulatory compliance components, creating a barrier for some providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step one of the Action Plan is to research and explore regulatory components.
Overcoming transportation challenges requires addressing legal and liability barriers as well as long-term funding sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step one of the Action Plan is to research and explore regulatory components.

Additional Engagement with State Organizations, Agencies & Individuals

Council members and Regional staff identified additional community and state-level 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. However, Council members and Regional staff identified the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) as a statewide partner who should be engaged further to provide insight into regulations required for transporting young children to ensure transportation solutions comply with regulatory policies.

Possible Funding Sources

The Council members identified the following potential sources of funding to support the full implementation of this recommendation:

- We Go Together for Kids (WGTK): They have dedicated \$20,000 of their 2024 budget to offer financial assistance for vehicle repairs.
- ISBE Early Childhood Block Grant: Dependent on grant allocations and partner needs.
- Private, In-Kind Donations: Discounts from local mechanics, trade schools, and private foundations that would support the purchase of a multi-passenger vehicle, including insurance and maintenance costs.

Community

Council members identified two organizations already providing this type of service: WGTK and the People’s Resource Center (PRC). WGTK’s Early Childhood Committee is working on addressing short-term transportation needs of families in West Chicago, including the maintenance and repairs of family vehicles. PRC offers a program called Care for Cars, which provides financial assistance to individuals in need of vehicle maintenance. The premise of the program is to reduce barriers for individuals living in DuPage County as they “conduct job searches or retain employment”. Through partnerships with local mechanics, the PRC will pay a portion of the cost of repairs for clients.

PRC shared that there are often long wait times for the car repairs, as many mechanics are making the repairs on their own time. As with a lot of industries there is also a shortage of skilled workers, so the automotive businesses are often busy and the mechanics themselves are overworked. The local West Chicago school district also shared that transportation challenges were one of the top contributors to program absenteeism. Although Uber/Lyft gift cards can provide temporary relief, this solution comes with its own set of challenges and barriers, including but not limited to funding and the use of car seats.

Recommendation Implementation

Council members said they will know the recommendation is fully implemented when preschool deserts have been eliminated in the Region and the number of missed attendance days decreases within the West Chicago ECEC programs.

They also predicted that by fully implementing the recommendation other Early Childhood Collaborations will be able to replicate and address local transportation issues, and families will no longer have to decide between work and services for their child as a result of not having transportation or factoring in the need to travel to multiple child care sites. By providing transportation support, children will be exposed to fewer transitions and will receive a continuum of care with ECEC providers.

Recommendation 2



A system that supports children from varying levels of development, trauma, and medical complexities through inclusive and adaptive environments.

Families with children diagnosed with disabilities or medical complexities face significant barriers accessing Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programs in Region 19, irrespective of their race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. These barriers include limited enrollment availability, discriminatory practices, and a lack of resources to support children with special needs. Private child care programs often lack specialized staff and environmental accommodations, exacerbating the issue. The COVID-19 pandemic further compounded challenges by limiting pivotal social experiences for children and increasing the demand for social-emotional support in group care settings. Despite the increasing needs, many ECEC programs struggle with inadequate resources, funding, and training to accommodate children requiring additional support.

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 the end of 2024-2025 school year, develop and pilot a toolkit for parents/caregivers to inform them of their rights and empower them to advocate for services for their children with varying levels of development, trauma, and medical complexities that is culturally and linguistically sensitive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and research categories specific to family needs: healthcare, explanation of services; parental rights; Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process, etc. Create a cohort of families to provide feedback and pilot the toolkit, making sure the content is understandable and culturally responsive. Plan for distribution, considering how to best get information to families and in different languages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The goal will be achieved when 50% of parents/caregivers indicate an increase in awareness of their rights and services. The pilot will be completed once participants have provided feedback on the toolkit and a plan for larger dissemination is created.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential partners to provide in-person support for those using the toolkit. • Create pre-pilot and post-pilot surveys to measure the increase of awareness about rights and services 	
<p>Create and implement extensive professional development opportunities for the ECEC workforce and community members specific to providing quality care to children from varying levels of development, trauma, and medical complexities; cultural competency, including identifying implicit bias; providing resources and referrals for services; and fostering positive relationships with families by the end of 2024.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a comprehensive professional development plan, including but not limited to providing a resource guide to existing trainings/resources specific to the identified topics; identifying potential training partners/experts in topic areas; researching accessibility to ECEC workforce and community, etc. • Build a marketing plan and identify potential employer partners to reach those outside of ECEC workforce. • Identify and proactively address participation barriers, such as location of trainings, setting (online vs. in-person), dates, and times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This goal will be achieved based on a decrease in the percent of families who report experiences with discrimination. • Additionally, the professional development opportunities will be considered successful with the facilitation of at least 15 community sessions and an average attendance of 10 or more individuals.
<p>By the start of the 2024-2025 school year, facilitate a Community of Practice (CoP) for Regional Family Support Specialists and similar positions employed by local school districts and Early Childhood Collaborations, providing support to ensure clients receive assistance that supports their educational journey and connects them to needed community resources in a culturally competent manner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential cohort participants. • Develop a curriculum for the CoP. • Establish consistent meeting times and dates noting accessibility. • Partner with experts/guest speakers to provide professional development on varying topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This goal will be achieved when the cohort is established and has met at least six times.

<p>Utilizing funding made available through a countywide mental health grant, develop and implement mental health services and supports for children birth to age five and their families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential partner organizations to apply for the mental health grant. • Research grant metrics and deliverables once funding opportunity is released. • Utilizing feedback from the Local Early Childhood Collaboration leaders, provide support for the partnering agency(s) during the grant writing process. • Develop a model for implementing mental health support within the ECEC landscape in Region 19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goal will be achieved if funding is received, and success will be determined by completing grant deliverables.
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Risks & Barriers

Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation	Proposed Solutions to Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation
<p>The availability of funding to support SMART goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community partners will leverage existing local resources to fund the various professional development plans proposed. • Experts within the community will volunteer their time and donate meeting space to assist with facilitation.
<p>Buy-in and participation of ECEC workforce and community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community partners will identify and proactively address participation barriers, such as location of trainings, setting, dates, and times to encourage participation. • Leverage the relationships built between the ECEC workforce, Local Early Childhood Collaborations, partner organizations, and community partners to promote and market opportunities for workforce engagement.

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

Council members identified the following potential sources of additional funding to support the implementation of the recommendation:

- The DuPage Foundation: Utilization of money received from DuPage County to support mental health and address substance misuse that can cover the costs of administration, staff compensation, implementation materials, and more.
- Private, In-Kind Donations: Donations of time and materials to develop and distribute the toolkit.

Community

The DuPage Foundation facilitates the Bright & Early DuPage initiative dedicated to ensuring children within the community are provided the opportunity to succeed in Kindergarten and beyond. As such, they currently provide funding for eight Early Childhood Collaborations throughout the Region. However, their support for this work goes far beyond fiscal responsibility. In addition, Bright & Early DuPage has established Communities of Practice for the Collaboration leaders and various support staff. They provide professional development opportunities specific to those employed as Family Support Specialists and are currently working on a project to provide developmental milestone resource guides for families.

Additionally, the local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Agency, facilitated through the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, provides ongoing professional development opportunities for the Early Childhood workforce. Utilizing their expertise and community relationships, the CCR&R provides opportunities for individuals to participate in various learning communities to increase their skills and knowledge on a wide range of topics.

The CCR&R is trying to transition some of its professional development opportunities from exclusively virtual (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) to in-person. Although in-person learning allows for better engagement, virtual options allow more flexibility for participant attendance. It has been difficult to offer opportunities that yield high participation rates to the intended audience; those working directly with young children are often overworked and overwhelmed. Despite offering training during non-working hours (evenings and weekends), the CCR&R has had challenges with large portions of those who have registered not attending the scheduled training.

Recommendation Implementation

Council members said they will know the recommendation is fully implemented when there is an increase in parent/caregiver comfort and knowledge regarding their rights and the rights of their child(ren). Additionally, success will be measured by an increase in the availability of mental

health support services. Ideally, all children, no matter their level of development, trauma, or medical complexity are afforded the opportunity to partake in high-quality ECEC in a way that meets their needs.

Council members also predict that by fully implementing this recommendation, there will be equitable access to high-quality ECEC programs and services for all children regardless of their level of development or medical complexities, environments that are adaptive and responsive to the diverse needs of the children in care, and demonstrated respect and cultural competency throughout the community, allowing children and families to receive the education and care services they need without judgment or fear.

Recommendation 3



An appreciation for the value of the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) workforce that provides equitable wages, mental health support, and obtainable professional development. Intentional solutions to address workforce shortages and retain qualified staff.

Region 19 faces staffing shortages in ECEC programs and services primarily driven by low staff retention rates and insufficient new teacher recruitment. Existing ECEC professionals endure overwhelming workloads and low wages, impacting the quality of care. Pay disparity persists despite demanding educational qualifications, creating a cyclical problem that limits access to quality programs. Efforts to address this issue, such as the Illinois Department of Human Services' Strengthen and Grow Grants and the Great Start program, offer some relief through periodic compensation supplements. However, the transient nature of these incentives fails to provide lasting motivation for ECEC professionals. Many are considering leaving the field due to the instability and lack of support, highlighting the urgent need for a comprehensive support and resource system to sustain the ECEC workforce and benefit the community's young children.

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>Develop a marketing campaign to connect current ECEC professionals with the resources available to supplement income and employment benefits, such as access to healthcare and wage supplement programs in anticipation of additional state supports being released in October 2024.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with Services Employees International Union (SEIU) to develop an overview of member benefits, specifically enrollment in any health benefits. • Connect with contacts from healthcare.gov to develop an overview of health care coverage opportunities (i.e. SNAP benefits, government employee health benefits). • Develop a culturally competent marketing campaign to reach all ECEC professionals. • Develop an educational overview of resources, making sessions and information accessible to all, including provision in multiple languages, taking into account cultural differences, and various levels of understanding. • Partner with local social service agencies and community businesses to offer specific resources for members of the ECEC workforce (i.e. Access DuPage, local Chambers of Commerce). • Meet with elected officials to advocate for fair wages/benefits for ECEC professionals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goal will be achieved once the marketing campaign has been fully launched. • Additionally, the marketing campaign will be considered successful when ECEC workforce retention numbers have increased.
<p>Utilizing funding made available through a countywide mental health grant, develop and implement mental health services and supports to support current ECEC professionals, including self-care and classroom/behavior management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential partnership organizations to apply for the mental health grant. • Research grant metrics and deliverables once funding opportunity is released. • Utilizing feedback from the Local Early Childhood Collaboration leaders, provide support for the partnering agency(s) during the grant writing process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goal will be achieved if funding is received, and success will be determined by completing grant deliverables.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a model for implementing mental health supports within the ECEC landscape in Region 19. 	
<p>Establish a countywide workforce recruitment project, focusing on specific populations such as high school students, stay-at-home parents/caregivers, and culturally representative individuals through marketing and community engagement by the end of 2024.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with CCR&R Higher Education Navigators to assess current recruitment/outreach efforts. • Establish relationships with high school staff (i.e. guidance counselors, Early Childhood development instructors) to assess current communication to prospective students and provide education to allow them to foster interest in ECEC career paths. • Leverage local relationships to connect with caregiver playgroups (i.e. libraries) to facilitate conversations with stay-at-home parents/caregivers. • Connect directly with institutions of higher education to assess current recruitment/outreach efforts and the landscape of ECEC professional programs. • Develop metrics to better measure Regional staffing outcomes and vacancies, including tracking where and when staff leave the ECEC field. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goal will be achieved with at least 10 new child care programs have been established, including but not limited to license-exempt providers, licensed Family Child Care homes, and licensed child care centers.
<p>Develop a plan for a Regional shared services model for substitute ECEC teachers to address short-term staffing shortages within Region 19 by the end of 2025.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Regional Office of Education (ROE) to understand the public school model for providing substitute teachers. • Research and review the metrics/requirements for programs to employ substitute staff, including the opportunity for shared services. • Research other state models and establish connections with successful programs, such as the Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network, to leverage their knowledge and expertise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goal will be achieved when a comprehensive strategic plan has been developed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilizing an in-depth analysis of different systems and metrics, outline a proposal for regulatory changes to permit the implementation of countywide substitute pool. 	
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Risks & Barriers

Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation	Proposed Solutions to Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation
Child care staffed through non-traditional entities who may qualify for union membership or unemployment benefits may lose staff as those individuals transfer to traditional ECEC programs (such as licensed centers) to gain access to those benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A variety of resources to meet the diverse needs of the workforce will be provided. Implementation will consider the different levels of access and utilize provider feedback regarding their needs.
When recruiting potential ECEC staff, there is a risk of perpetuating employment disparities among traditionally marginalized populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lead agency will make concerted efforts to ensure cultural competency in all facets of Action Plan implementation.
ECEC substitute qualifications and regulations are determined by the DCFS and state regulatory policies. Previous efforts to introduce a countywide substitute pool have been unsuccessful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The workgroup is aware that statewide policy changes require multiple entities and time. The goal with this initiative is to advocate for larger systemic change by providing viable solutions for consideration at the state level.
Ensure that as a community we are not making assumptions about the needs of the ECEC workforce and take proactive steps to include the voices of those intended to benefit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the Continued Quality Improvement process, follow-up and assessment is integrated into each action step. Birth to Five Illinois: Region 19 will continue to provide agencies with feedback from the community.
Some professionals looking to utilize the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) Scholarship Program have experienced barriers to enrolling in higher education due to unpaid fees or holds on transcripts and accounts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to collaborate with Higher Education Navigators to try and address barriers.

Additional Engagement with State Organizations, Agencies & Individuals

Council members and Regional staff identified additional community and state-level 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

Council members identified the following potential source of additional funding to support the implementation of the recommendation:

- The DuPage Foundation: Utilization of money received from DuPage County to support mental health and address substance misuse that can cover the costs of administration, staff compensation, implementation materials, and more.
- Private, In-Kind Donations: Discounts from local businesses, special programs supported by local businesses, organizations, and agencies.

Community

The local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Agency, facilitated through the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, has recognized the need for ECEC workforce interventions and has implemented innovative solutions to not only retain child care providers, but also to recruit them. With specialized staff who can provide onsite support and professional development opportunities, the CCR&R serves as a resource hub for the child care community.

In 2017, the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) recognized the need to address staffing shortages, administrative burdens, and financial challenges within the ECEC landscape and developed the Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network (WEESSN).⁴ Based on the level of membership, both family and center-based providers can receive access to online business management tools, hiring and employment assistance, professional development, shared back-office staff, and access to a substitute pool. Within the span of three years, WEESSN went from assisting ECEC providers in two counties to providing services statewide. Leveraging community support, they have been recognized nationally for their innovative approach to supporting ECEC within their state.

Recently, the CCR&R partnered with various statewide partners to submit a proposal for shared staffing networks between licensed ECEC programs. During this process, it was determined that each individual would be required to have a separate background check for each physical location. The logistical challenges make the potential almost impossible. The CCR&R has also been working to recruit stay at home parents/caregivers to become Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) providers. So far, progress has been slow.

⁴ <https://wisconsinearlychildhood.org/programs/weesn/>

Recommendation Implementation

Council members said they will know the recommendation is fully implemented when ECEC programs and services in the Region are fully and appropriately staffed with highly qualified professionals who are representative of the populations they serve. Subsequently, access to programs and services will no longer be negatively impacted by staffing shortages. ECEC professionals will feel appreciated and respected, while making a livable wage with adequate benefits.

Council members also predict that by fully implementing this recommendation the employment turnover rate within the ECEC field will dramatically decrease within Region 19. Ultimately, programs adequately staffed with highly qualified and culturally representative staff will improve learning outcomes for young children.

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.



Birth to Five Illinois is funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and is a department of the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA).

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