

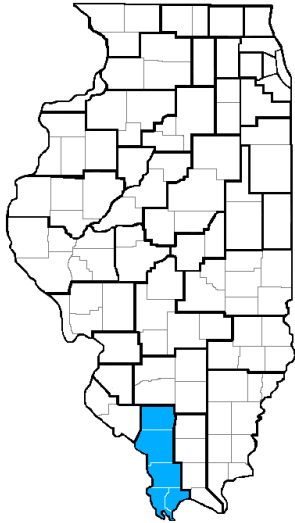
ACTION PLAN



Region 30

Alexander, Jackson, Perry, Pulaski & Union Counties

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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 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 30 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:

- Ann Kremer, Early CHOICES
- Missy Brown, Child Care Resource & Referral Agency (CCR&R)
- Lori Longueville, Southern Illinois Coalition for Children and Families

It is our hope that this Action Plan will help families, caregivers, and child care providers be able to access useful and usable information more easily to better serve children and improve service delivery. We also hope that people will be able to access accurate, direct resources and services with care and ease.

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 30 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.

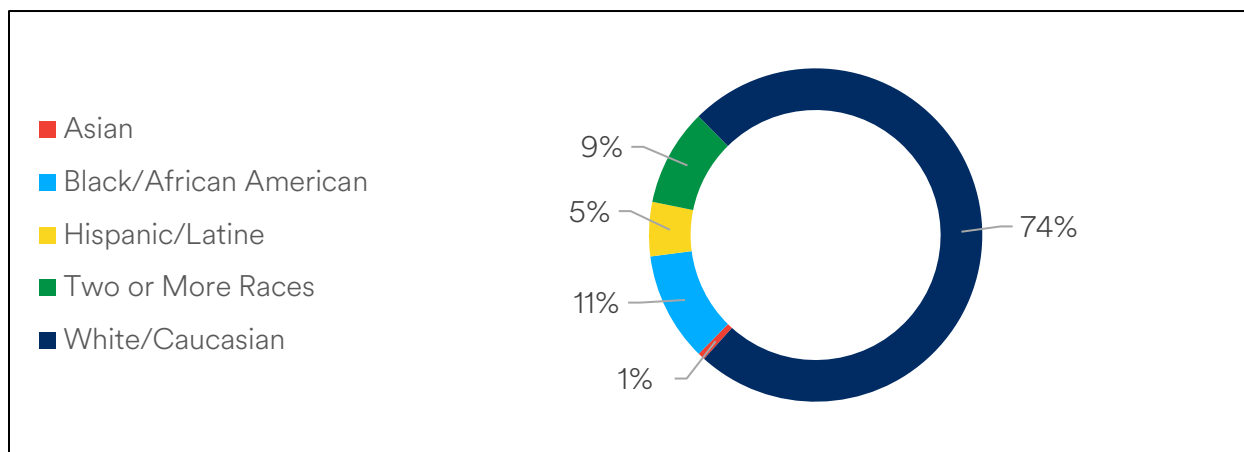
² See <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/nc-smart-goals-fact-sheet.pdf> for more information.

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 30

Region 30 is located in southwestern Illinois and includes the counties of Alexander, Jackson, Perry, Pulaski, and Union. In 2022, the total population of the Region was 103,628; 6,791 were children birth through age five. While the majority of the children aged four and under in the Region are identified as white, there are significant and growing numbers of children who are identified as Black/African American, Two or More Races, Hispanic/Latine, and Asian (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 2,675 slots in publicly funded, licensed, and license-exempt child care centers and homes for children birth through age five (Table 1). Currently, Region 30 does not have enough spots available for families who might want to enroll their young child in an ECEC program.

³ Other races/ethnicities have too small of numbers to be represented in the chart: American Indian and Alaska Native, 5 people; Other, 22 people.

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	4	80
Head Start	Ages Three to Five	13	506
Preschool for All	Ages Three and Four	17	766
Preschool for All Expansion	Ages Three and Four	1	75
Licensed Child Care	Ages Birth to Twelve	13	849
Licensed Family Child Care	Ages Birth to Twelve	25	249
License-Exempt Child Care	Ages Birth to Twelve	4	150

Source: IECAM

Created by: Birth to Five Illinois

For additional data and information, please access Region 30's Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessment at: www.birthtofiveil.com/region30/#report.

Recommendation 1



Support existing regional efforts to create a comprehensive and readily available online resource directory and referral platform.

This recommendation is based on feedback from community partners and Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) providers who expressed concern that families and caregivers are unable to find lists of current ECEC resources and services. Additionally, there are no mechanisms to track data when there are no services available for families and caregivers.

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>In collaboration with the Healthy Southern Illinois Delta Network (HSIDN) and Southern Illinois Coalition for Children and Families (SIFFC), one representative from Birth to Five Illinois will attend a minimum of one meeting per quarter in 2024 and share a list of resources on the SI Families website by spring of 2024.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report back to Councils, get input, and it take back to HSIDN and SIFFC. • Attend meetings in the developmental stages. • Birth to Five Illinois: Region 30 will distribute those resources via newsletters, Facebook, Council members, etc. • Explore alternative mechanisms to better connect families with resources, such as a family navigator or a mobile resource bus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the Birth to Five Illinois: Regional Council Manager has attended quarterly meetings in 2024.
<p>Action and Family Council members, along with the Birth to Five Illinois: Region 30 Team, will identify at least three (3) key partners per county in the Region to help promote awareness of available resources to each community by the beginning of FY25.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask each Action and Family Council member to identify two (2) key partners. • Create a list of key partners per county and contact each partner. • Marketing: possible texting campaign, free advertisement (i.e. news channels, radio, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the key partners per county have been identified and contacted.

Risks & Barriers

Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation	Proposed Solutions to Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation
<p>Many people in rural communities may want printed copies of resources; many do not have access to Internet services so there must be a way to get paper copies to places where families frequent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an Outreach Plan to share information with schools, social workers, ECEC providers, health departments, mayors, Regional Office of Education #30, Women, Infants, Children (WIC) nurses, and others in the community.
<p>Getting people to use the platform and/or resources, possible funding sources, and sustainability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage school leaders, child care providers, food pantries, health departments, and other key community partners to sign on. • Be intentional by including active partners. • Put current resources in people's hands.

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

While funding may be needed to support activities related to the recommendation, the Council members did not identify additional possible funding sources at this time.

Community

Council members did not identify additional community groups who are currently working on similar goals and recommendations.

Recommendation Implementation

Council members said they will know the recommendation is fully implemented when community partners have been identified and contacted and meetings have been attended for the year. They also predict that by fully implementing the recommendation, Healthy Southern Illinois Delta Network (HSIDN) and other resource platforms will show an increase in website traffic and usage.

Recommendation 2



Raise awareness for families to advocate for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for children with diagnosed or suspected disabilities.

This recommendation is based on feedback from parents and caregivers of children with diagnosed or suspected disabilities who said they are unable to find child care due to a lack of slots and/or staff who are trained to support the needs of their 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>In collaboration with community stakeholders, Birth to Five Illinois Council members will seek out inclusion champions, and schedule one meeting per county in the Region by the beginning of FY25 to discuss the importance of creating an inclusive environment to provide services to ECEC students with disabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a list of community stakeholders and contact them to schedule meetings. • Identify potential meeting venues in each county, find partners to help host, and collaborate with experts to create a presentation. • Provide information at each meeting on the available training on inclusion and creating an inclusive environment. • Share flyers of meetings on social media platforms, and with schools, health care facilities, survivor empowerment center, Head Starts, Regional Office of Education (ROE), Child Care Resource & Referral Agency (CCR&R), and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Education Committee. • Share the Family Matters website link with community partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When one meeting per county has been scheduled and completed. • When flyers have been shared with community partners.

Risks & Barriers

Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation	Proposed Solutions to Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation
<p>Teachers and paraprofessionals do not have the support, education, and/or training that will be beneficial.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide educational opportunities to help people understand the importance of inclusion and how children thrive when they do not know they are different.
<p>Finding community champions willing to meet and coordinate available times.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect local school districts, Head Start programs, and the Regional Special Education Co-op with the Early CHOICES Inclusion Implementation Project.

Additional Engagement with State Organizations, Agencies & Individuals

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Possible Funding Sources

While funding may be needed to support activities related to the recommendation, the Council members did not identify additional possible funding sources at this time.

Community

Council members did not identify community groups who are currently working on similar goals and recommendations.

Recommendation Implementation

Council members said they will know the recommendation is fully implemented when flyers have been shared throughout the community and meetings have been completed. They also predict that by fully implementing the recommendation, families and caregivers will be better prepared to advocate for their children diagnosed with a disability.

Recommendation 3



Increase efforts to expand licensed family child care home providers with support to get them established in smaller rural communities offering more choices to families.

This recommendation was made based on data that over 2,000 children from birth to age five do not have a slot in child care programs across the Region if their families wanted or needed care. Additionally, community members expressed they do not know how to begin a home and/or family child care.

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>In collaboration with the regional Child Care Resource & Referral Agency (CCR&R) and the Illinois Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS), host a town hall in the fall 2024 for people interested in becoming a licensed home child care provider to inform them of the benefits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify five to ten potential people to participate. • Confirm with potential attendees the date, time, and location. • Look for training provided by the CCR&R and DCFS. • Partner with the Small Business Development Center to set up businesses to attend the event. • Contact local Chambers of Commerce about the event. • Develop marketing and dissemination plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the town hall meeting has been held.

Risks & Barriers

Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation	Proposed Solutions to Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation
<p>Attendance at the town hall meeting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out about community events and potential direct contacts with local school boards. • Place announcements in places where people already are.
<p>Parents and caregivers having the confidence to advocate or participate in community meetings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build confidence in local communities. • Encourage and motivate people to prepare themselves to be advocates for their children by emphasizing the critical shortage of providers. • Training community members to be champions of well-being for children from birth to age five.

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

While funding may be needed to support activities related to the recommendation, the Council members did not identify additional possible funding sources at this time.

Community

Council members did not identify community groups who are currently working on similar goals and recommendations.

Recommendation Implementation

Council members said they will know the recommendation is fully implemented when the marketing plan has been developed and the town hall meeting has been held.

They also predict that by fully implementing the recommendation there will be an increased number of home child care providers in the Region.

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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