

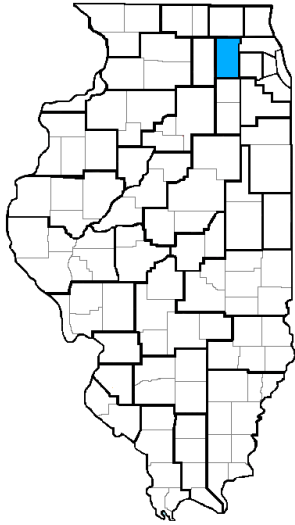
ACTION PLAN



Region 31

Kane County

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Table of Contents

Letter from Family & Action Council Members	3
Action Plan Development	4
How this Document is Designed	4
Region 31	5
Recommendation 1.....	6
Recommendation 2.....	9
Next Steps.....	12

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 31 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 having accessible resources and having enrollment fairs, as recommended in this Action Plan, will enable parents to make more informed choices about their child's education and care. We also hope our Action Plan will make it possible for parents and caregivers to have accessible child care from providers they trust, which in turn could boost the economy in our community. Finally, we hope implementing the recommendations in this Action Plan will create a network of providers that work together to ensure our community is getting exactly what they need.

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 31 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.

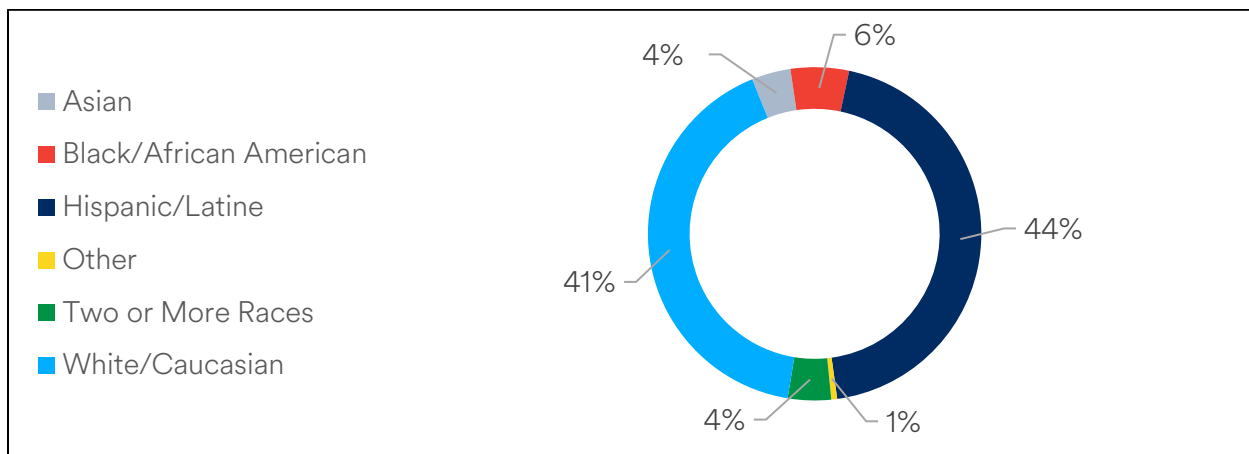
² See <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/nc-smart-goals-fact-sheet.pdf> for more information.

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 31

Region 31 is located in north-central Illinois and includes Kane County. In 2022, the total population of the Region was 675,150; 49,132 were children birth through age five. Most children in the Region are identified as Hispanic/Latine or white, but there are steadily growing numbers of children who are identified as Black/African American, Asian, and Two or More Races.

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 15,518 slots in publicly funded, licensed, and license-exempt child care centers and homes for children birth through age five (Table 1). Currently, Region 31 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, 19 people; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, 4 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	216
Head Start	Ages Three to Five	11	332
Preschool for All	Ages Three and Four	23	2,881
Preschool for All Expansion	Ages Three and Four	15	818
Licensed Child Care	Ages Birth to Twelve	88	9,214
Licensed Family Child Care	Ages Birth to Twelve	95	955
License-Exempt Child Care	Ages Birth to Twelve	15	1,102

Source: IECAM

Created by: Birth to Five Illinois

For additional data and information, please access Region 31’s Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessment at: www.birthtofiveil.com/region31/#report.

Recommendation 1



Expand on, and build awareness of, funds available to families to assist in paying for child care.

This recommendation was primarily made due to an increased need for child care assistance (via the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)) in Kane County. Families reported that the cost of child care is high and leaves many with the difficult decision of finding alternate arrangements, sacrificing quality, health, and safety at times because care is not affordable. Some parents and caregivers also reported eliminating a second household income and remaining home or reducing work schedules to remain eligible during re-determination periods until they can afford a better arrangement. Affordable child care can provide families with Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) opportunities in a more equitable way and lead to more economically productive communities.

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>Implement monthly informational community meetings/opportunities for families to receive ongoing support in completing the CCAP application by the end of FY25. Provide quarterly check-in opportunities for providers with CCAP staff to obtain updates and ask questions by the end of FY25.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite CCAP representatives to be part of the planning process. • Find partners and locations throughout the County to host meetings. • Plan logistics of ongoing support meetings. • Create marketing materials to invite parents/caregivers to attend. • Create a pre-screening questionnaire. • Collect information/create a list of which child care providers accept CCAP. • Promote the implementation of "CCAP application drop-in hours." in ECEC organizations. • Provide quarterly training for Parent Ambassadors, Parent Navigators, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When ongoing community informational meetings are scheduled for families and providers that cover Kane County.
<p>Work with YWCA Metropolitan Chicago to measure an increase in CCAP applications from Kane County families between July 2024 and December 2025.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain current CCAP data on the number of applications received. • Establish quarterly targets for CCAP applications based on baseline data. • Review quarterly data to ensure the number of applications in Kane County is on target to meet the 10% increase by the end of FY25. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the 10% increase in applications received is reflected in the quarterly data reports from the YWCA Metropolitan Chicago.

Risks & Barriers

Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation	Proposed Solutions to Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation
Potentially incomplete data from community and state partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize data from YWCA Metropolitan Chicago, which is receiving and processing the CCAP applications.
Inconsistent or irregular support provided to families due to lack of staff and staff scheduling conflicts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring together agencies/programs implementing the ongoing parent support collectively as a Region to ensure consistency and predictability. Work closely with organizations that have established parent ambassador programs to get them trained and have them support families with CCAP applications. Utilize playgroups and areas of the community where parents/caregivers are already present. Collaborate with the park district to distribute resource booklets that are already available to their enrolled families in various programs with young children.
Decisions pertaining to goals and recommendations will be based on potentially outdated data, meaning decisions will be reactive, instead of a predictive model that could be used proactively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use longitudinal data over time as a resource to predict the future numbers of CCAP applicants for the Region.

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

Funding may be needed to support more Parent Ambassadors, a position to manage scheduling supports for families, the development and distribution of marketing materials, and other activities related to the recommendation. The Council members did not identify additional possible funding sources at this time.

Community

Council members identified multiple community groups, organizations, and agencies that are providing this type of support for families: the Elgin Partnership for Early Learning (EPEL), SPARK (Strong, Prepared And Ready for Kindergarten) Early Childhood Collaboration, home visitors, child care providers, YWCA Metropolitan Chicago, All Our Kids (AOK) Network, and case workers at Family Focus, Hesed House, Head Start, and others.

While collaboration and communication has been established with these community groups, no clear lessons learned about their initiatives have yet been conveyed to Council members or Regional staff.

Recommendation Implementation

Council members said they will know the recommendation is fully implemented when more families are able to understand the CCAP application process and more easily access CCAP.

They also predicted that fully implementing the recommendation may lead to longer wait times for CCAP processing due to staffing limitations at the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago. Also, there may need to be additional community support to overcome the stigma of utilizing CCAP in some areas of the Region.

Recommendation 2



Create awareness for families and providers around community resources and support of child care centers and enrollment procedures.

The recommendation for universal awareness of programs and available support was made because many families in the Region are unaware of the programs and resources that are available to them. This can be a barrier to accessing important Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services. Families shared that their main source of information when looking for care for their children came from Facebook Groups, Google, and websites such as Care.com and NannyLane.com. Collaborating and building relationships between providers and families will strengthen the overall impact of child development in our communities.

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?
Organize three to five ECEC Enrollment Fairs throughout Kane County between March 2024 and June 2025.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a specific and simple way to enroll in enrollment fairs. • Secure a venue and set a time and date. • Create a template with provider information to be available at the enrollment fair. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When at least three enrollment fairs have taken place throughout Kane County.
Collaborate with community partners to develop a unified messaging campaign, directing parents/caregivers to existing resources in Kane County to help them find care by June 2025.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a logo and tagline for the campaign. • Meet with community organizations and present the messaging campaign. • Reach out to in-home providers to be included. • Decide what site/resource parent/caregiver traffic will be directed to and how. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website analytics show an increase in online traffic. • When parents and caregivers show an increase in awareness of available ECEC programs and services in Kane County. • When community partners have developed and approved a unified message.

Risks & Barriers

Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation	Proposed Solutions to Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation
Finding agencies and organizations to help implement this new messaging regionwide.	Bring together existing Community Collaborations within the Region to form a leadership team.
Assigning individuals to lead the work and maintain it for their specific service area, while still being aware of what happens throughout the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite the Kane County Health Department to take a leading role in countywide messaging. • Utilize web services and sites that are already in place to drive web traffic instead of creating something new.

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 the development and maintenance of a digital platform, pay for a texting service, hold events, develop tools and resources, engage community members and partners, develop and distribute marketing materials, and other activities related to the recommendation, the Council members did not identify additional possible funding sources at this time.

Community

Several agencies and organizations are currently promoting ECEC resources, programs, and services in Kane County. However, the messaging is fragmented and can be confusing and difficult to access for families. Some organizations working on similar goals in their individual capacities are SPARK (Strong, Prepared And Ready for Kindergarten) Early Childhood Collaboration, the St. Charles Collaboration, Elgin Partnership for Early Learning (EPEL), All Our Kids (AOK) Network, Kane County Health Department, libraries, nurse home visitors, and Family Focus.

While collaboration and communication has been established with these community groups, no clear lessons learned about their initiatives have yet been conveyed to Council members or Regional staff.

Recommendation Implementation

Council members said they will know the recommendation is fully implemented when data shows an increase in the awareness of ECEC programs and service amongst caregivers, there is an increase in attendance at enrollment fairs, and when ECEC providers see an increase in enrollment.

They also predicted that by fully implementing the recommendation families will help to disseminate information about ECEC programs and services to relatives and friends, especially in communities where English is not their home language. Additionally, they predicted that trust in providers and agencies will increase alongside the awareness of resources available for families.

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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