

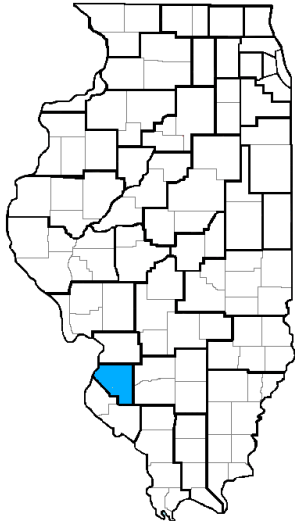
ACTION PLAN



Region 50

St. Clair County

Regional Council Manager: Stephanie Herling (she/her)
Email: sherling@birthtofiveil.com
Phone Number: (618) 825-3929 or (309) 270-5657
Regional Website: www.birthtofiveil.com/region50



Family Council

Cassandra Staal
Katie Manno
Krystin Hobbs
Linda Eiland

Megan Burgess
Misti Johnson
Roberta Johnson
Shalese Bruya

Action Council

Aimee Hart
Audrey Gonzalez
Carolyn Jason
Chinita M King
Emily Alvarez
Gina Harding
Gina Ruther
Janice Moenster
Jaqueline Chacon

Jessica Seger
Kaelin Richardson
Makisha Binns
Nicole Warren
Shameka C Brown
Shamyra Brown
Sylvia Nunn
Wendy Williams

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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 50 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:

- Comprehensive Behavior Health: Taylor Shy, Coordinated Intake

It is our hope that this Action Plan will help families truly get connected to the services that they need and desire. We also hope that it will strengthen relationships among agencies and build on what is already being done in the community, not replicate efforts.

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 50 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.

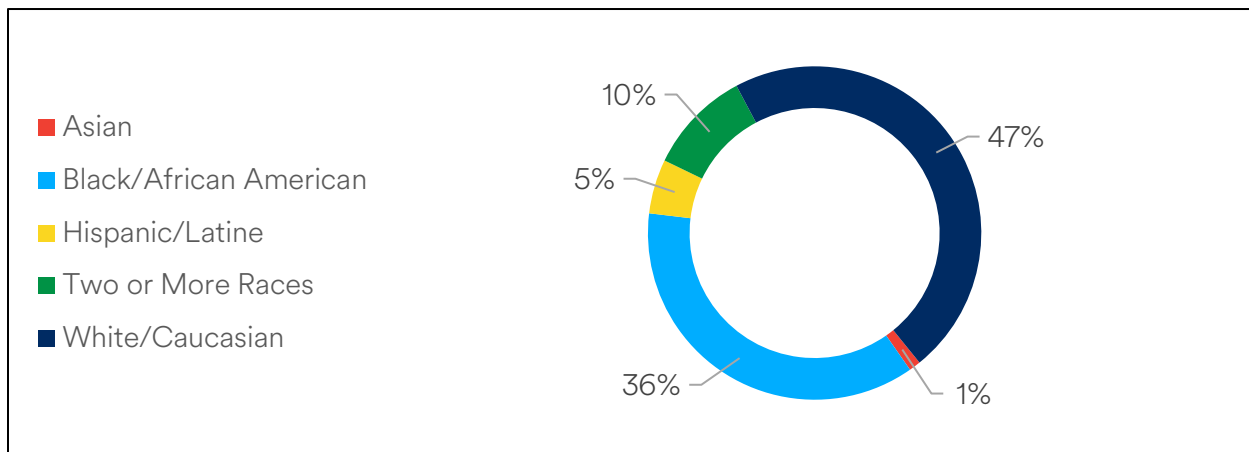
² See <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/nc-smart-goals-fact-sheet.pdf> for more information.

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 50

Region 50 is located in southern Illinois and includes St. Clair County. In 2022, the total population of the Region was 243,984; 17,086 were children birth through age five. Children ages four and under in the Region largely identify as white and Black/African American, with a growing number of children being reported as Two or More Races each year (Figure 1). Most of the northwestern areas of Region represent the second highest race/ethnicity, 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 9,604 slots in publicly funded, licensed, and license-exempt child care centers and homes for children birth through age five (Table 1). Currently, Region 50 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, 17 people; Other, 53 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	8	329
Head Start	Ages Three to Five	9	536
Preschool for All	Ages Three and Four	23	1,202
Preschool for All Expansion	Ages Three and Four	10	860
Licensed Child Care	Ages Birth to Twelve	47	4,460
Licensed Family Child Care	Ages Birth to Twelve	160	1,548
License-Exempt Child Care	Ages Birth to Twelve	13	669

Source: IECAM

Created by: Birth to Five Illinois

For additional data and information, please access Region 50's Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessment at: www.birthtofiveil.com/region50/#report.

Recommendation 1



Connect all Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) staff and programs to supports, resources, and professional development around special education, trauma-informed care, and mental health.

The recommendation was made based on feedback from families and providers during the Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessment process. The approach ensures that all ECEC professionals are aware of the professional development resources they can access, and training agencies can collaborate to provide training to professionals in the Region.

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>Through the development of two crosswalks by FY25, develop an understanding of the training requirements of professionals around the topics of special education, trauma-informed care, and mental health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crosswalk one: Collect the professional development requirements of all ECEC professionals and identify who provides those trainings. • Crosswalk two: Document professional development offerings around three content areas. • Complete and distribute the crosswalk documents to professionals. • Provide continuous updates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When both crosswalks have been drafted, edited, and distributed.
<p>Within three months after the completion of the crosswalk, identify gaps and needs to determine if shared training is needed to address the three subjects from professionals through a survey.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze crosswalks to determine gaps. • Reflect with training entities about their annual professional development survey and information they already have about the three subjects. • Develop questions to send out in a survey to professionals around special education, trauma-informed care, and mental health. • Distribute the survey. • Review and analyze the data from the survey. • Review the data to determine the action steps needed. • Share the information with state departments, legislators, funders, and training entities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a survey is distributed and collected. • When information is reviewed and shared.

Risks & Barriers

Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation	Proposed Solutions to Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation
<p>People may not want to participate in the survey.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer incentives to participants. • Ask training instructors to send the survey to participants. • Ensure participants understand the value of the survey. • Keep the survey simple, clear, and free of jargon.

Assumptions being made that professional development is not currently meeting providers' needs, and that professional development opportunities already exist for providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with training organizations to develop a list of what training is available. • Ask what providers are disclosing as needs for training in their surveys. • Connect with ECEC partners to understand their professional development needs.
Professional development topics may not align with needs or interests of providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with ECEC professionals and training organizations about the requested professional development topics.
There may be financial constraints that do not allow for professional development trainings to occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote professional development funds that are available to aid ECEC professionals.
Organizations currently offering a training may be unable to offer it to those outside their organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask organizations to share information about training, even if they cannot offer it. This awareness can help others find training that is valuable and supports their work.

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 following statewide organizations, agencies, and/or individuals who should be engaged further to help support the SMART goals and/or recommendation:

- Crisis Nursery of St. Louis: Ask to provide information on mental health services, temporary housing, and supports.
- Early Childhood Professional Learning: Ask to provide information on Preschool For All and Preschool For All Expansion resources and training.
- Early CHOICES: Ask to provide information on special education.
- Family Matters: Ask to provide information on resources and training related to special education.
- Hoyleton: Ask to provide information on training and resources for providers.
- I-Learning: Ask to provide information on training.
- Illinois Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS): Ask to provide resources and information on finding financial support, trainings, and intact services for families.
- Illinois Head Start Association: Ask to provide information on training and resources.
- Illinois Network of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (INCCRRA): Ask to provide information on training and resources.
- Illinois Principal Association: Ask to provide information on training and resources.
- Pediatricians: Ask to provide information on providers.

- Service Employees International Union (SEIU): Ask to provide information on training and resources.
- The Arc of Illinois: Ask to provide information on training and resources.

Possible Funding Sources

While funding may be needed to support the development of tools and resources, engaging community members and partners, the development and distribution of marketing materials, training, surveys, and other activities related to the recommendation, the Council members did not identify additional possible funding sources at this time.

Community

Council members noted that there are statewide organizations currently working on similar goals and recommendations, but none are working on similar goals and recommendations locally.

Recommendation Implementation

Council members said they will know the recommendation is fully implemented when there is a Resource Hub that connects professionals; when more ECEC professionals are engaging in trainings, and more trainings are being offered; and when there is an increase in the sharing of resources that support professionals with special education, trauma-informed care, and mental health.

Council members also predict that by fully implementing the recommendation, data and information will be used to bring professional development organizations together to provide an institute day around special education, trauma-informed care, and mental health.

Recommendation 2



Conduct outreach and promotion to the community for the available Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) resources and services.

This recommendation is based on feedback from families, caregivers, and ECEC professionals that program options are often unknown to caregivers and confusing to navigate. While ECEC programs attempt to find and reach families in their service area through events and resource distribution, they are unable to reach all families who may need their services or 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?
By FY25, coordinate information sharing across the three main referral agencies (Comprehensive Behavioral Health, United Way 211, and Brightpoint) to promote outreach across the county.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate discussion with the three main referral agencies around deliverables and the limitations each has around referrals. • Support Comprehensive Health, United Way 211, and Brightpoint to build their referral databases. • Share referral numbers and information with the community by developing outreach materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the referral sources increase resources in their database to provide a variety of referrals for families in St. Clair County.
By the summer of 2025, expand the resources in the database programs that referral agencies are using.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide what information needs to be collected from the referral sources. • Develop and distribute a survey for agencies/organizations to define what services they provide. • Develop an outreach guide that will categorize the services that organizations provide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a resource that agencies can use to promote referral agencies and community services.
By spring of 2024. increase the participation of both agencies and families in the annual Intake Fair with Comprehensive Behavioral Health to promote community outreach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with Comprehensive Behavior Health to aid in the promotion of their annual community intake fair. • Reach out to gather vendors, service providers, and agencies to attend the Intake Fair. • Support community outreach to the families in the county around the Intake Fair. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The event is held.
Prior to the end of the FY24 school year, outreach to St. Clair County high schools to promote the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out to the Illinois Network or Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) to determine if any programs in St. Clair County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration of at least one program in the Region for the Training of Trainers at INCCRRA.

<p>opportunities for teachers to participate in the Level 1 ECE Training of Trainer (TOT) that will certify them to hold the credentialing process to promote ECEC as a career option.</p>	<p>have registered to participate in this summer's TOT.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with the St. Clair County Regional Office of Education (ROE) to reach out to high schools. • Inquire if INCCRRA will host an informational meeting about the program with high schools. • Follow up with high schools to determine if there is an interest or gather reasons why they are not interested. 	
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Risks & Barriers

Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation	Proposed Solutions to Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation
<p>Funding may be needed to support the SMART goals or action steps.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate to access funds through local organizations whose deliverables and/or mission align with SMART goals and/or action steps.
<p>Some programs may be recommended over others due to lack of knowledge that the program exists.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure parents are connected to all options so they can make informed decisions.
<p>Capacity of ECEC professionals to take on additional tasks or collaborative work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of the “asks” for each agency and how others can facilitate the work.

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 suggested asking the following agencies and organizations for printed materials and/or permission to print their materials to support outreach efforts:

- 211 United Way
- Family Matters
- iGrow
- Illinois Cares for Kids
- Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS)
- Illinois Early Learning Project

- Illinois Network of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (INCCRRA)
- Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)

Possible Funding Sources

While funding may be needed for the development and distribution of marketing materials, events, wages and scholarships, transportation, survey tools, and other activities related to the recommendation, the Council members did not identify additional possible funding sources at this time.

Community

Council members reported that Brightpoint, United Way 211, and Comprehensive Behavioral Health are currently working on similar goals and recommendations. They shared that organizations should provide families with all available resources so families can choose what is best for them, instead of providing information the organization feels might be the best or in the closest proximity. Additionally, these organizations suggested we collaborate to strengthen services that are already available instead of attempting to duplicate services.

Recommendation Implementation

Council members said they will know the recommendation is fully implemented when professionals and families have information that leads to a referral line that can aid them to make an informed decision for care and services, or when they know who to reach out to directly.

They also predict that by fully implementing the recommendation, families will utilize programs they may not have known about prior to referral and information system.

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 (INCCRRRA).

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