

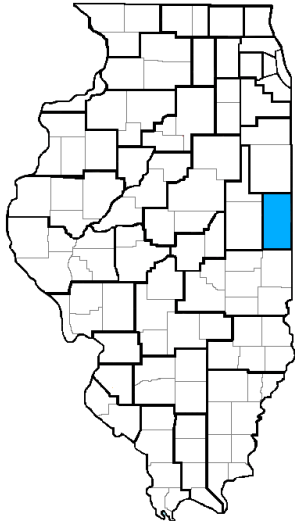
ACTION PLAN



Region 54

Vermilion 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 54 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 this Action Plan will help to fill some of the gaps in ECEC that have existed for so long and lead to better funding and more resources for transportation and transitions. Additionally, we hope it will result in even small milestones being achieved to keep our community moving in a positive direction.

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 54 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.

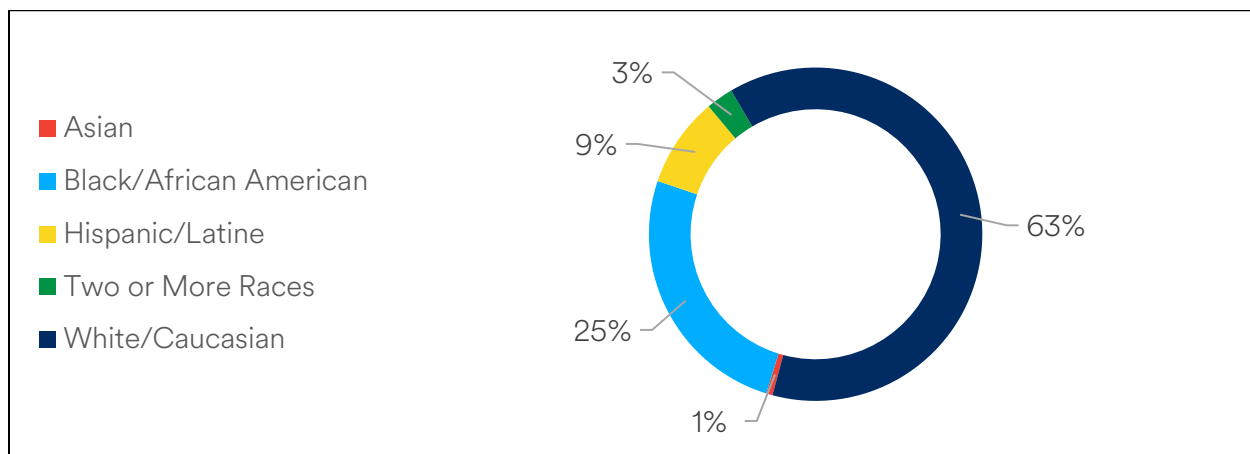
² See <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/nc-smart-goals-fact-sheet.pdf> for more information.

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 54

Region 54 is located in east-central Illinois and includes Vermilion County. In 2022, the total population of the Region was 74,060; 5,336 were children birth through age five. While most of the children aged four and under in the Region are identified as white, there are increasing numbers of young children from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds (Figure 1). The Danville area is predominantly Black/African American, with those who identify as Hispanic/Latine and Two or More Races living the same community. A small number of racially diverse families live in the rural towns around the Region such as Hoopeston, Westville, and Georgetown.

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 2,298 slots in publicly funded, licensed, and license-exempt child care centers and homes for children birth through age five (Table 1). Currently, Region 54 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.

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

Program Type/Name	Ages Served	Number in Region	Capacity/ Funded Enrollment
Early Head Start	Ages Birth to Three	2	48
Head Start	Ages Three to Five	4	273 ⁴
Preschool for All	Ages Three and Four	9	732
Preschool for All Expansion	Ages Three and Four	1	55
Licensed Child Care	Ages Birth to Twelve	5	451
Licensed Family Child Care	Ages Birth to Twelve	56	596
License-Exempt Child Care	Ages Birth to Twelve	3	143

Source: IECAM

Created by: Birth to Five Illinois

For additional data and information, please access Region 54’s Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessment at: www.birthtofiveil.com/region54/#report.

Recommendation 1



Add additional support in the classroom, when possible, to better serve children, and increase the number of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) providers throughout the Region, especially in rural areas.

This recommendation was made based on data from the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM) which shows that many children in the Region do not have access to ECEC services and programs, including preschool.

⁴ Data reflects 2022-2023 counts from IECAM. Community feedback indicates that there are now fewer Head Start and Early Head Start programs and funded slots available 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>By the end of December 2024, connect with five local businesses and three ECEC providers (center or family providers) to discuss the need for an increased number of child care facilities or slots.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact local businesses and set up meetings to discuss the need for an increased number of child care facilities or slots. • Establish partnerships with child care provider mentors. • Discuss child care availability with facilities and community members. • See what other states/counties are doing and how they have expanded or helped other providers get started. • Share that families need extended hours for child care options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When Council members and/or Birth to Five Illinois: Region 54 Team members meet individually with five local businesses. • When Council members and Birth to Five Illinois: Region 54 Team members meet with three ECEC providers separately to discuss mentorship. • When the Region has two new child care facilities/providers. • When research on what at least three other states/counties are doing to help expand child care providers is completed. • When information about the need to extend child care hours is shared with five child care providers.
<p>By the end of December 2024, share data with community members about the lack of availability of ECEC staff and child care slots.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile information on the need for available child care to distribute among the community. • Create a one-page data demographic flyer to spread information to the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When at least 15 data fliers and/or social media posts on the availability of child care options in Region 54 have been created. • When Birth to Five Illinois staff and Council members share 15 one-page data demographic flyers.

Risks & Barriers

Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation	Proposed Solutions to Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation
<p>Funding for availability data flyers about the need for ECEC programs in Region 54.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask community organizations to print flyers.
<p>Delegating who is responsible for distributing information/flyers about the need for more ECEC providers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide tasks evenly among the Council members, organizations, or community members.
<p>Region 54 is limited on second and third shift child care options.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with child care providers ways they could extend their hours of operation.

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:

- Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) Scholarship: Continue ECEC educational opportunities.
- Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS): Co-host an information session for providers.
- Local Child Care Resource & Referral Agency (CCR&R): Share updated information on ECEC programs to providers in the Region.

Possible Funding Sources

While funding may be needed to support the development and distribution of marketing materials, incentives for students or providers who remain in the field, and other activities related to the recommendation, the Council members did not identify additional possible funding sources at this time.

Community

Council members did not identify other 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 there are more qualified ECEC professionals, and the number of child care slots increases.

They also predict that by fully implementing the recommendation, the Region will see the unemployment rate for non-ECEC professions drop due to the increased number of available child care spots across the Region.

Recommendation 2



Develop a resource and information hub where families can learn about, and explore, various Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) options and other resources in the Region.

This recommendation is based on feedback from caregivers and families gathered during Council meetings, focus groups, and interviews. They report being unaware of the available ECEC resources in the Region, as well as not knowing where they could begin to find help if needed.

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 the end of year 2024, promote community awareness of available resources by creating and distributing printed and online resource materials through local businesses, schools, and other community organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and distribute resource guides, pocket resource cards, and magnets. • Bring together community partners to discuss the development of an online resource guide. • Work with other community organizations to share the community website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When resource information is gathered and shared via 10-15 social media posts. • When three meetings are held to discuss adding resource information to multiple organization's websites. • When discussions are held with five different organizations about the distribution of resources.

Risks & Barriers

Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation	Proposed Solutions to Anticipated Risks/Barriers to Meeting Goals/Recommendation
Funds to developing and printing resource list.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask organizations to help with printing costs.
Accuracy of resource list.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every three months the resources will be updated by at least one organization that is delegated for review.
Access to technology may be a barrier for some families, caregivers, and community members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have resources binders available at libraries and other community organizations.

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 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 noted that Vermilion Advantage and VCHelp are currently working on similar goals and recommendations; Vermilion Advantage (Chamber of Commerce) is for business networking, and VCHelp is a social service resource website. Community members shared with Council members that VCHelp.org is a huge asset to our community.

Recommendation Implementation

Council members said they will know the recommendation is fully implemented when there is more community awareness of ECEC services available in the Region, and families will know where to go if they need help or resources related to ECEC programs and services.

They also predict that by fully implementing the recommendation, organizations and businesses will have fewer requests from community members looking for help finding resources.

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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