



Lake County Early Childhood System Assessment

Strengths and Opportunities

JANUARY 31, 2023

Acknowledgments

This report was prepared thanks to many individuals and organizations that generously provided time, expertise, and support:

- Lake County families and child care providers who responded to surveys, participated in focus groups and interviews
- Lake County Health Department
- YWCA Metropolitan Chicago
- United Way of Lake County
- Home visiting, Head Start and child care providers including Start Early, One Hope United, SGA Youth & Family Services, Kids Above All, and Family Focus
- Lake County elementary school districts including Beach Park SD 3, Big Hollow SD 38, Winthrop Harbor SD 1, Emmons SD 33, Antioch CCSD 34, Gavin SD 37, Lake Villa SD 41, Grayslake CCSD 46, Woodland SD 50, Gurnee SD 56, Waukegan CUSD 60, Lake Bluff SD 65, Lake Forest SD 67, Libertyville SD 70, Hawthorn SD 73, Fremont SD 79, Fox Lake SD 114, Zion Elementary SD 6, Rondout SD 72, Oak Grove SD 68, North Chicago SD 187, Barrington CUSD 220, North Shore SD 112, Kildeer Countryside SD 96, Lake Zurich CUSD 95, Round Lake Area SD 116 and Diamond Lake SD 76
- Mental health providers including The Josselyn Center, CYN Counseling Center and Youth & Family Counseling
- Lake County public library districts
- Lake County park districts
- Birth to Five Illinois
- Illinois Action for Children
- The Alliance for Human Services

Thank you also to our partners who funded and advised the process of creating this report (see list in the Introduction).

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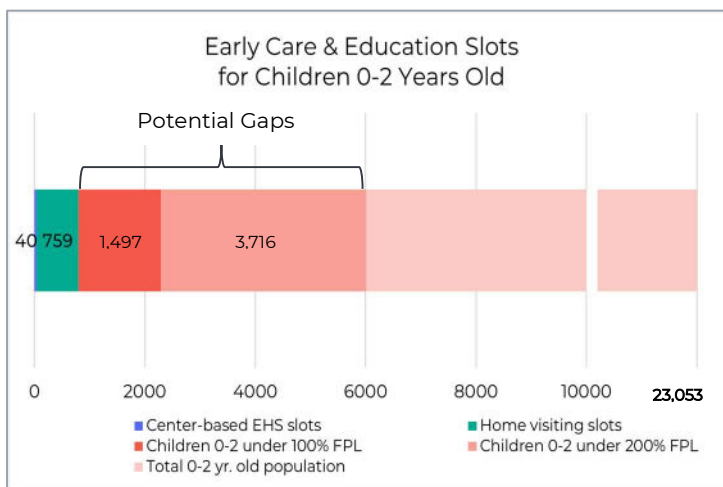
Executive Summary

This early childhood systems assessment provides a landscape of the programs in Lake County serving children and families from the prenatal period to age five, and it identifies the key strengths, opportunities and recommendations to improve the system. Information for this report was gathered through data requests to program and system leaders, publicly available sources, surveys, interviews and focus groups with families and early childhood professionals. The goal of this report is to inform a vision and collective action plan for a strong early childhood system in Lake County moving forward.

Early Childhood Programs

Program Name	Program Description	Eligibility Policies	Funded Slots	Children Served	Providers
Early Intervention	Provides services to infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities and their families to help children develop their skills.	Ages: 0-3 yrs old Children qualify through an evaluation that determines if they have a developmental delay, a diagnosed condition, or are at risk for developmental delay.	N/A	Approximately 1,100 children in FY22	18 service coordinators at Lake County Health Department; 404 early intervention providers
Home Visiting/ Doula Programs	Provides voluntary family support and child development services through regular visits with a trained professional.	Ages: Prenatal-3 or -5 yrs old Selection criteria used to prioritize families for enrollment. Varies by funding stream.	759 total 641 prenatal-3 118 prenatal-5	596 children in FY22	8 home visiting/doula programs including 4 school districts and 4 non-profit organizations
Center-based Early Head Start (EHS)	Provides individualized, comprehensive family support and educational services to promote learning and development and prepare children for success in school.	Ages: EHS 0-3; HS 3-5 yrs old Families with incomes below the federal poverty level (FPL) or 130% FPL qualify. Selection criteria used to prioritize families for enrollment.	40	41 children in FY22	1 site
Head Start (HS)			278	N/A	5 sites
School-Based Preschool	Provides educational support for children's learning and development in a classroom setting through half-day or full-day sessions	Ages: 3-5 years old Eligibility/selection criteria depends on funding stream. Schools using local funding or charging tuition may enroll on first-come-first serve basis.	4,595	3,588 in FY22	36 elementary school districts
Early Childhood Special Education	Provides services to preschool-aged children with developmental delays and disabilities. Services often delivered in schools in inclusive or self-contained preschool classrooms but can also be delivered in community-based programs or at home.	Ages: 3-5 years old Children qualify through an evaluation that determines if they have a developmental delay or disability that requires an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)	N/A	1,452 children with IEPs in FY22	36 elementary school districts and 3 special education collaboratives

<p>Child Care Capacity</p>	<p>Provides safe, nurturing care and supports for children's learning and development. Includes licensed and license-exempt child care centers, family child care homes, and family, friend and neighbor caregivers.</p>	<p>Ages: 0-12 yrs old</p>	<p>N/A Licensed capacity for 5 and under - 12,307 in FY21</p>	<p>Unknown</p>	<p>537 licensed providers, including 127 centers, 411 family child care homes, and 10 license exempt centers</p>
<p>Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)</p>	<p>Provides financial assistance to help cover the cost of child care to help ensure the well-being and safety of children while their parents/guardians are working or attending school/training.</p>	<p>Ages: 0-12 yrs old (or to 19 with special needs) Families qualify if working or attending approved education or training program and meet income requirements (i.e., below 225% FPL at application and below 275% FPL at re-determination). Some populations prioritized.</p>	<p>N/A Not funded by slots but number of families who can be served is limited</p>	<p>3,995 families (with children of all ages) in Sep. 2022 3,946 children 5 and under in FY2020</p>	<p>741 providers actively billing for CCAP for all ages (including license exempt homes and before/after care providers)</p>



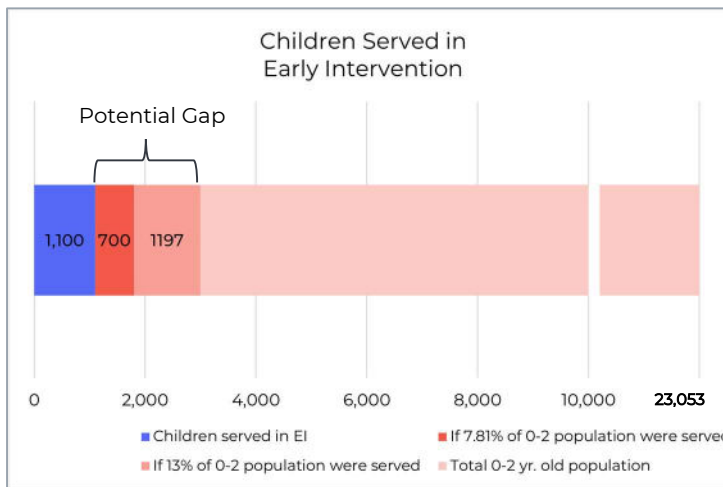
EARLY CARE & EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN 0-2 YEARS OLD

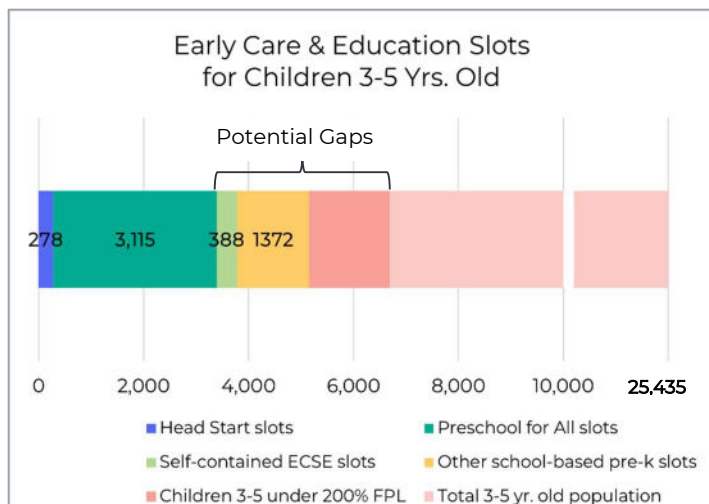
- Only 1.7% of children 0-2 years old under 100% of the Federal Poverty Level can be served with the current available slots for center-based Early Head Start.

- Only 14% of children 0-2 years old under 200% of the Federal Poverty Level can be served with the current available slots in home visiting and Early Head Start.

- As a state, Illinois provides 7.81% of the population of children 0-2 years old with early intervention services. If Lake County served this percentage of infants and toddlers, it would provide 700 more children with EI services.

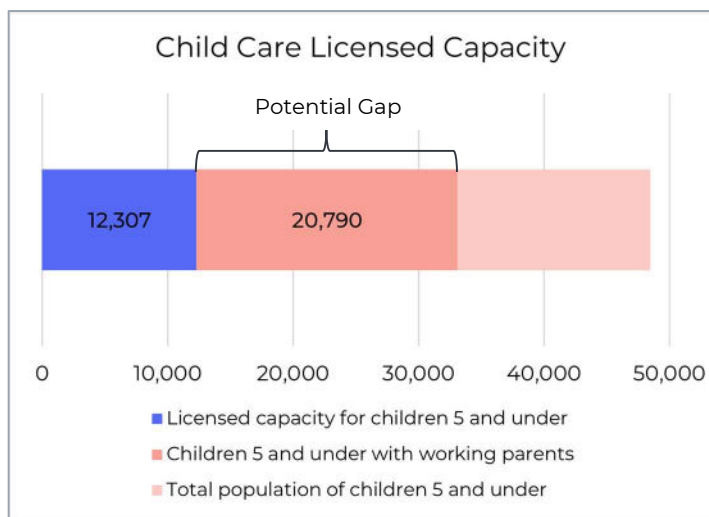
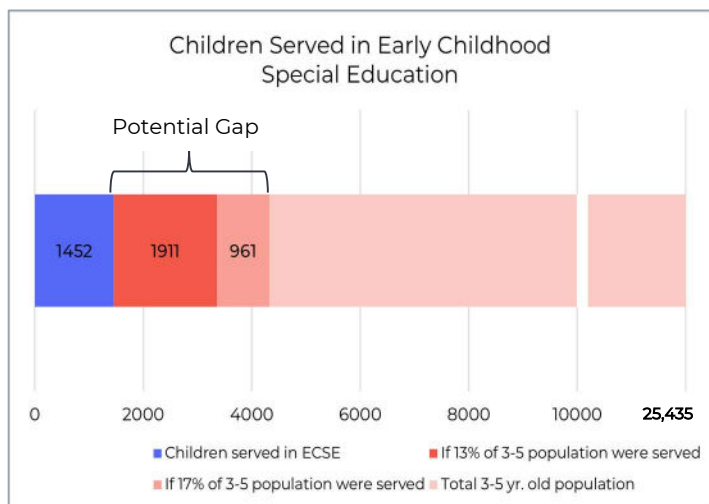
- It is estimated that approximately 13% of children 0-2 may be eligible for early intervention services.¹ If Lake County served this percentage of infants and toddlers, it would provide 1,897 more children with EI services.





EARLY CARE & EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN 3-5 YEARS OLD

- Only 11% of the 2,565 children 3-5 years old under 100% of the Federal Poverty Level can be served with the current available slots in Head Start.
- 51% of children 3-5 years old under 200% of the Federal Poverty Level can be served in the combined Preschool for All and Head Start slots.
- With the estimated prevalence of developmental delays and disabilities for children 0-2 at 13% and for children 3-17 at 17%, the prevalence for children 3-5 is likely between those estimates. If Lake County served this percentage of 3-5 year olds in early childhood special education, it would provide between 1,911-2,872 more children with services.
- The current licensed capacity of child care in Lake County can serve approximately a quarter of the total population of children under 5 and about 37% of those in working families (i.e., children five and under with one working parent in a one parent household and children with two working parents in two parent households)



Strengths and Opportunities

The table below summarizes the key strengths and opportunities that emerged from the data, surveys, interviews and focus groups.

Strengths	Opportunities
Access and Affordability	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Access to home visiting programs has expanded in the past year. B. School districts are increasingly supporting children birth to three. C. Income eligibility for the child care assistance program has expanded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Early care and learning opportunities are not accessible for many families in Lake County. B. There are not enough full-day pre-K programs in schools or extended hours for care. C. Child care is unaffordable for many families in Lake County. D. The Child Care Assistance Program is underutilized. E. Families and providers report the application process for Child Care Assistance Program and other assistance programs is arduous and slow.
Equity and Inclusion	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> D. Parents are satisfied with the early intervention services they received. E. School districts are increasingly offering inclusive pre-k classrooms for children with developmental delays and disabilities to learn alongside their typically developing peers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> F. There is a waitlist for early intervention services, especially for in-person services. G. Families with children with special needs struggle to access inclusive, high-quality early care and education. H. There is a shortage of staff who reflect the language and culture of the children and families served. I. Data on the race, ethnicity, and languages spoken by the children and families served in early care and education programs is not readily available.
Connecting Families to Resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> F. Lake County has significant system infrastructure to coordinate and connect families to services. G. Pediatricians serve an important and trusted role for parents when they have questions and concerns about child development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> J. Families have difficulty searching for and finding child care or a preschool to meet their needs. K. Parents report that pediatricians are not making timely referrals to early intervention. L. Parents expressed they want more support with parenting and child development. M. There is a lack of free or low-cost mental health supports for young children and their families.
Early Childhood Workforce and Program Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> H. Staff hiring, qualifications, retention and compensation in school-based programs are strong. I. Reimbursement rates to providers have increased for the Child Care Assistance Program. J. The Strengthen and Grow Child Care grants have provided stable, predictable funding to eligible child care programs during the pandemic. K. Early childhood professionals have access to many affordable professional development opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N. Early care and education programs have a severe staffing shortage. Compensation is too low to attract and retain professionals in the field. O. The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) reimbursement rates still do not cover the cost of quality care. P. Professionals expressed that they want more access to professional development and support, especially regarding supporting children with special needs, supporting children's social emotional development and behavior, and culturally responsive practices.

Recommendations

To build on the strengths and address the opportunities identified, several priority recommendations are outlined below. Included in the full report are potential tactics to advance these recommendations through advocacy at the state and federal level, as well as actions at the local level.

1. Increase the number of slots in publicly funded programs to increase equitable access to high quality early care and education.
2. Increase the affordability of high quality child care for families.
3. Increase educator compensation to stabilize and support the workforce and improve quality over time.
4. Increase support for high quality, affordable early care and education in family child care home settings through greater funding and child care networks.
5. Increase the availability of full-day and extended-day options for preschool-aged children through program partnerships.
6. Increase support for infants, toddlers, and their families through school district/child care partnerships.
7. Increase the availability of inclusive environments for children with special needs to learn alongside their typically developing peers across all early learning settings.
8. Increase awareness of the benefits of early intervention (EI) and reduce the delays children and families experience in receiving their EI services.
9. Increase family awareness and utilization of services through greater coordination of outreach referrals, and enrollment.
10. Center family and provider voice in all decisions that will impact the early childhood system.

Next steps should include providing multiple opportunities for program leaders, educators, families and other community members to dialogue about the findings, discuss the recommendations, and explore ways to strengthen the Lake County system. Continuing to build trusting relationships and promote collective effort across the system will have the greatest impact over time. With families, professionals, and community members as partners, the system can be improved to better support families and help children in Lake County thrive.

Introduction

Lake County, Illinois is home to 48,488 children five years old and under.³ For children, families, and communities in the county, these early years hold tremendous potential and opportunity for the future. Early life experiences are critical in fostering young children's brain development and laying the foundation for lifelong resilience and success. Families of all kinds need extra support when raising young children. Wanting to ensure that all families and young children are prepared to thrive, and that the long-term social and economic future of the county is bright, Start Early Consulting conducted an assessment of the local early childhood system, which was requested and funded by:

- The Gorter Family Foundation
- The Hunter Family Foundation
- The John & Kathleen Schreiber Foundation
- The Lake County Community Foundation
- The Steans Family Foundation

The process of creating this report was advised by the following group of partners in Lake County who contributed their experience and expertise:

- Jon Ashworth, Community Systems Development Manager, Lake County Health Department
- Kevin Considine, President and CEO, Lake County Partners
- Dane Cruz, Regional Council Manager, Region 34, Birth to Five Illinois
- Tynisha Gardner, President, Affirm Leadership Christian Academy
- Dr. Michael Karner, Regional Superintendent of Schools, Lake County Regional Office of Education
- Gail Nelson, Director, Early Childhood Initiatives, Steans Family Foundation
- Cheri Richardson, Executive Director, Gorter Family Foundation
- Martina Rocha, President and Founder, Together for Childhood Network



More than 1 million neural connections formed every second in the first year of life.⁴



13% Return on investment for every dollar spent on high-quality early learning.⁵



80,778 is the number of parents in Illinois making career sacrifices due to issues with child care.⁶

Purpose

The purpose of this early childhood systems assessment is to provide a landscape of the early childhood programs serving children from birth to age five and their families in Lake County and to identify the key strengths and challenges of the system. It begins with key context on Lake County and the priority partner communities (see page 13), including a summary of data on demographics, economic well-being, and the system infrastructure. This is followed by program profiles of seven of the major publicly funded programs available to children and families from prenatal to age five. Each profile answers three key questions:

- What is the program?
- Who benefits?
- Who are the providers?

While this is not all inclusive, these profiles represent the major types of early childhood programs operating in Lake County. Finally, the report concludes with strengths, opportunities, and recommendations for Lake County leaders to inform a vision for a strong early childhood system moving forward.

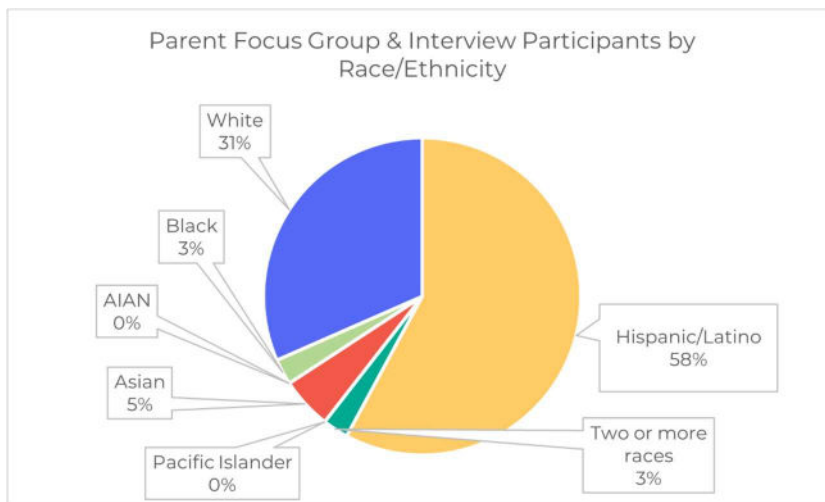
Process

This early childhood systems assessment was produced by Start Early in collaboration with a group of partners in Lake County. Start Early worked with the partners to outline the scope and content of the asset map and the process for gathering information. Start Early gathered policy information, population and program data from a range of sources, including public state and federal websites, reports, and data requests to relevant agencies and programs.

Critically as part of the process, Lake County families, early childhood providers, program leaders and system leaders shared their experiences and ideas through a survey and a series of focus groups and interviews. To recruit families to provide their feedback, digital and print flyers advertising the focus group and interview opportunities were sent out to the Lake County community via school districts, libraries, park districts, the YWCA of Metro Chicago, Lake County Health Department, and other community organizations familiar to our project advisors. Families indicated their interest by completing a screening survey that asked for their preferred language, city/town of residency, children's ages, if their child(ren) had special needs, the early care and education programs they participate in, and their race/ethnicity. They also had the option to continue the survey and answer more questions about their experiences raising a young child in Lake County, which 60 respondents chose to do. From the pool of families who expressed interest in focus groups or interviews, invitations were extended to participants that would form a sample

as representative as possible of Lake County demographics. We also aimed to have at least one family representative from each Priority Partner Community (see definition on p. 13). However, we did not have any families sign up from Highwood, Zion or North Chicago. Ultimately, a total of 39 families with children under 5 years old were engaged in focus groups and interviews, including:

- Families participating in child care centers, family child care homes, before- and after-school care, early intervention, early childhood special education, school-based preschool, home visiting, and parent support groups or parenting classes.
- Families living in Gurnee, Grayslake, Round Lake, Lake Villa, Mundelein, Vernon Hills, Antioch, Fox Lake, and Waukegan.
- 41% whose primary language is Spanish.
- At least 6 parents of children with special needs.



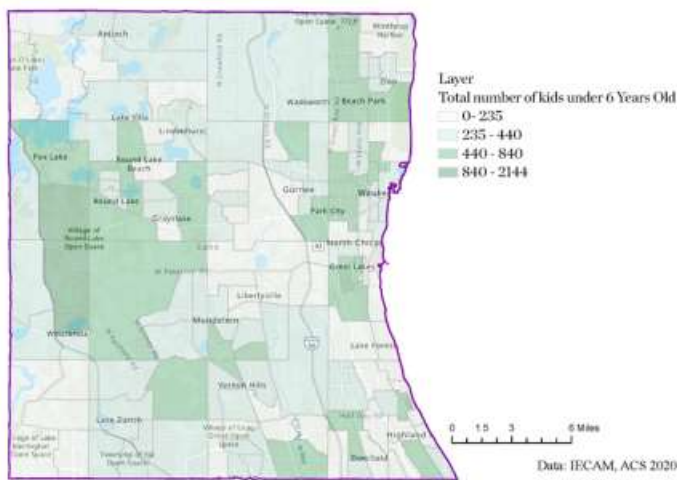
Similarly to families, flyers advertising the focus group/interview opportunity were sent out through various channels to early childhood providers. Providers completed a screening survey and shared their preferred language, the city/town where they work, and their race/ethnicity. A total of 46 early childhood educators, program leaders and systems leaders were engaged in focus groups and interviews, plus 20 survey respondents. 11 of these participants spoke Spanish as their preferred language. The 46 participants represented the following programs and services:

- Child care, including family child care homes
- School-based early childhood programs
- Head Start/Early Head Start
- Early childhood special education and early intervention
- Home visiting
- Mental health
- Pediatrics
- Early childhood system infrastructure, such as the Child Care Resource & Referral, 211 United Way of Lake County, and a family child care network.

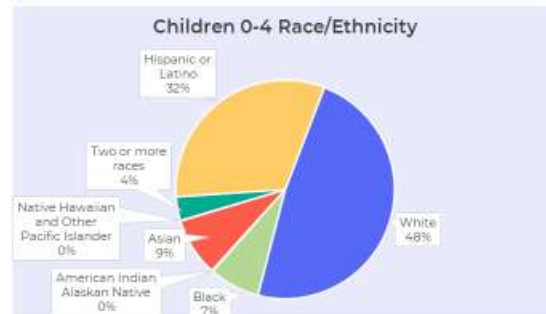
Lake County Context

Lake County is situated in the northeastern corner of Illinois. The county is primarily suburban, with some urban and rural areas. As of the 2020 Census, it had a population of 714,342, making it the third-most populous county in Illinois. Lake County is diverse; almost a third of the population identifies as Hispanic/Latino/Latinx.

LAKE COUNTY POPULATION⁷

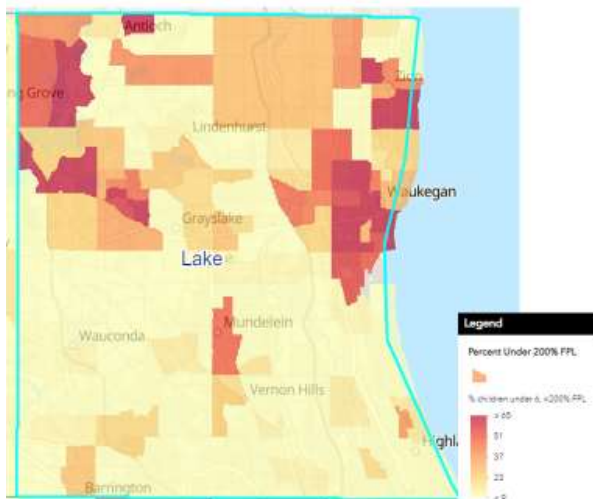


Demographics	2020 data
Total Population	714,342
Households	254,744
Births	6,607
Total children 5 and <5	48,488
Children 0-2 years old	23,053
Children 3-5 years old	25,435
Limited English-speaking households	Spanish - 9.58% Other - 1.25%



Map from Birth to Five Illinois - Region 34 <https://www.birthtofiveil.com/data/#region34>

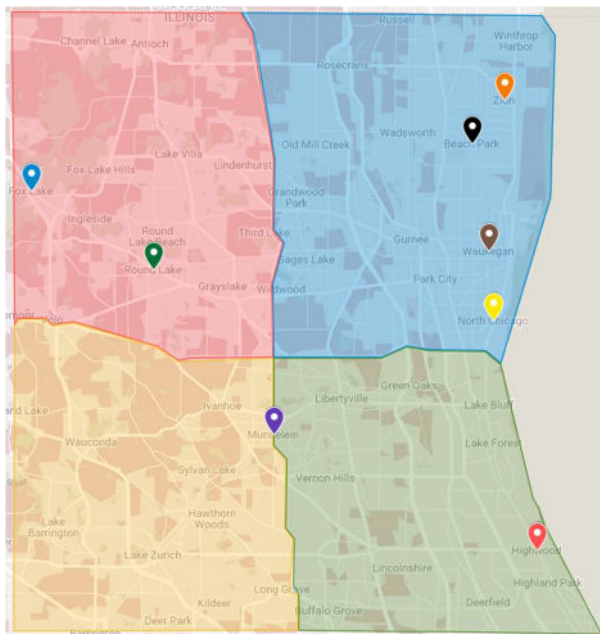
LAKE COUNTY ECONOMIC WELL-BEING⁸



Economic Well-Being Indicators	2020 data
Median Household Income	\$92,654
Average per capita income	\$42,223
Children 5 and <5 with 2 working parents (in 2 parent households)	23,763
Children 5 and <5 with 1 working parent (in 1 parent households)	9,334
Total Population Living in Poverty	50,003 7%
Children 5 and <5 low income (200%FPL)	12,708
Children 0-2 low income (200% FPL)	6,012
Children 3-5 low income (200% FPL)	6,696
Children 5 and <5 in poverty (100% FPL)* *a subset of 200% FPL	4,861
Children 0-2 in poverty (100% FPL)	2,296
Children 3-5 in poverty (100% FPL)	2,565

Map from <https://ecamregionalreports.education.illinois.edu/dash-snapshot-report/demographic>

Lake County is the second wealthiest county in the state by per capita income. The county includes affluent North Shore communities, where much of the county's wealth is concentrated. However, there are also concentrated pockets of poverty, mainly in the northeast, but also in parts of the northwest. Because of these differences, seven priority partner communities have been identified for greater attention and support.



LAKE COUNTY PRIORITY PARTNER COMMUNITIES

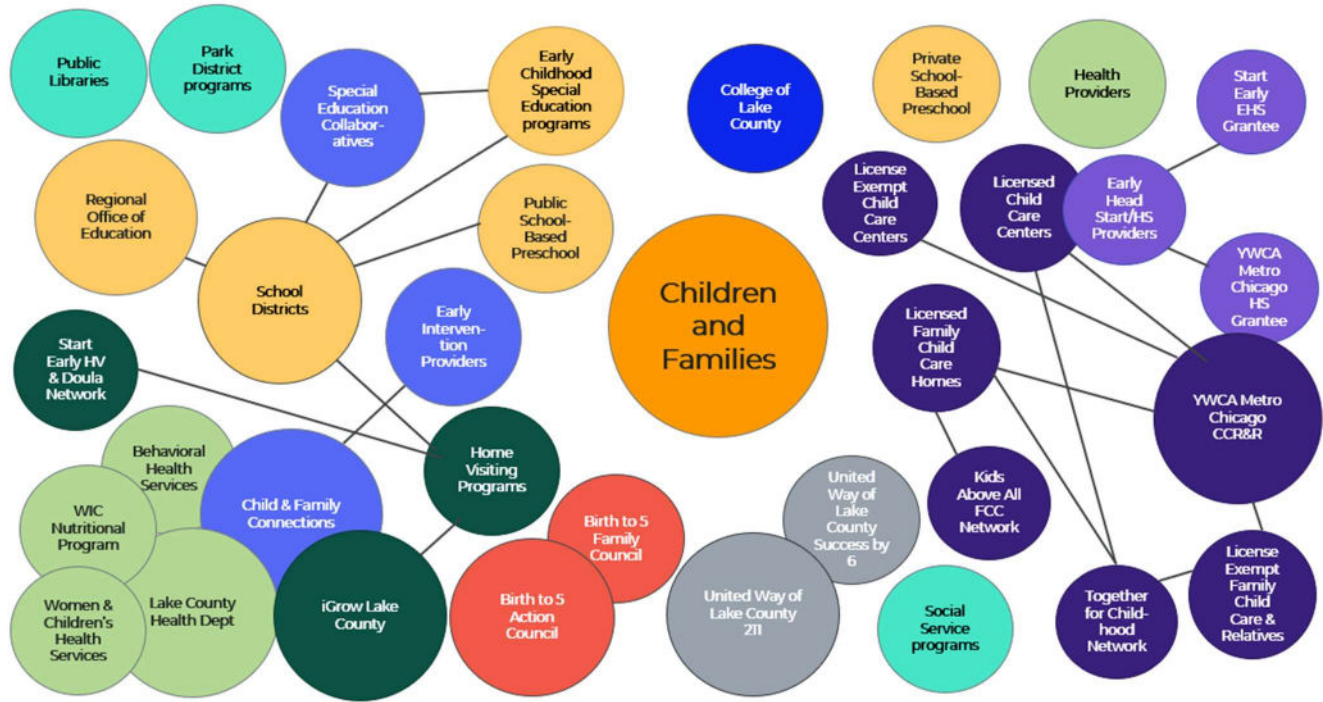
- Waukegan** Beach Park, in the northeast, has not been designated officially as a priority partner community, but may be in the future.
- Beach Park**
- Zion**
- Round Lake**
- Fox Lake**
- Highwood**
- Mundelein**
- North Chicago** See **Appendix A** for demographic data and economic indicators for each priority partner community.

The Lake County system includes a range of entities that comprise the early childhood system infrastructure. These organizations fund, coordinate and/or support services at the program level. And they help connect families to the programs and other resources that they need. The key components of the system include the following:

- **The Lake County Health Department** houses many programs for families with young children, including iGrow, Child and Family Connections, WIC, women and children’s health services, and behavioral health services.
- **iGrow** provides coordinated intake services for home visiting and doula programs making it easier for families to connect to one that meets their needs. Four of the eight programs are currently part of iGrow. See more in the Home Visiting Profile.
- **Child & Family Connections (CFC)** is the point of entry for early intervention services for children with suspected or diagnosed developmental delays and disabilities. The CFC provides service coordination, connecting families to therapies, community resources and facilitating transitions. See more in the Early Intervention Profile.

- **YWCA of Metro Chicago** is the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency for Lake County. They help families with the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and with finding childcare to meet their needs, and they provide training and technical assistance to child care professionals. Child care networks are also part of the landscape. See more in the Child Care Profile.
- **School Districts** provide preschool, home visiting, and early childhood special education (ECSE). Some districts use **Special Education Cooperatives** to deliver ECSE services. The **Regional Office of Education** for Lake County provides professional development to educators and is planning ways to support early learning. See more in the School Based Early Childhood Programs and Early Childhood Special Education Profiles.
- **Head Start and Early Head Start programs** are a critical part of the landscape, with two grantees and six sites serving Lake County. See more in the Head Start Profile.
- **211 at the United Way of Lake County** is set up to maintain an up-to-date centralized community resource directory, and has navigators to help families identify the type of help they need and connect them to the appropriate services. United Way also has **Success by 6** early learning programs, including **Bright by Text**. See more in the United Way Profile.
- **The Birth to Five Action Councils** are a new part of the early childhood system in IL and provide a regional mechanism to enable local stakeholders to address early childhood issues in their community. The Region #34 council serves Lake County and includes a family council.
- **Park district programs and public libraries** are significant community assets in Lake County and serve as hubs for families with young children. **Health providers** are also a “go-to” resource for families with questions or concerns about their child’s development.

LAKE COUNTY EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM MAP



	Child care		Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education
	Head Start and Early Head Start		Birth to Five Action Council
	School-based early childhood		United Way programs
	Home visiting		Other programs that serve the community, children + families
	Health		College of Lake County (supports EC professionals)

This relationship map highlights the major parts of the Lake County Early Childhood system. The larger bubbles represent the system infrastructure elements, and the smaller bubbles represent the various types of programs. Bubbles that are touching/overlapping are co-located or parts of the same organization. The lines represent funding or contractual relationships as well as provision of support services. The colors in the key above represent major early childhood and related programs/services.

Program Profiles

Home Visiting/Doula Programs

What is the program?

Home visiting programs provide voluntary family support and child development services through regular visits with a trained professional. Home visiting programs may address a wide range of goals, depending on the funding stream and program model, including to: improve maternal and child health, promote children's development and school readiness, prevent child abuse and neglect, reduce domestic violence and crime, connect families to needed community resources and supports, and increase family education levels and earning potential. Home visitors provide vital support tailored to family strengths and needs. They share information, answer questions, support family bonding, teach positive parenting skills, help families to set goals for their future, conduct screenings and make referrals. Home visiting programs also offer parent support groups to connect parents, decrease isolation, and promote well-being and positive parenting practices.

Doula services may be offered by home visiting programs. A doula is a trained professional who provides educational, emotional, and physical support before, during and shortly after childbirth to help achieve the healthiest pregnancy, labor and delivery possible. Doula services may be provided beginning in the 7th month of pregnancy. Pregnant clients are typically assigned both a home visitor and a doula who coordinate their visits, with the doula visiting more frequently than the home visitor during pregnancy, and then phasing out services 6-8 weeks after birth.

Publicly funded home visiting programs must adopt an evidence-based program model. The models are similar in many ways but may vary in their specific purposes, in who delivers services, the duration or intensity of home visits, and the evidence supporting the model. Healthy Families America (known as Healthy Families Illinois) and Parents as Teachers are the most common models in Lake County.

Profile Note: Information about the programs, funded capacity, and service area was received from all known home visiting program providers in Lake County. Data about children and families served was not received from SGA Youth & Family Services in time for this report and was incomplete from some others. Some programs reported race and ethnicity (Hispanic/Latino) separately and so the pie chart here could not include both.

Who benefits?

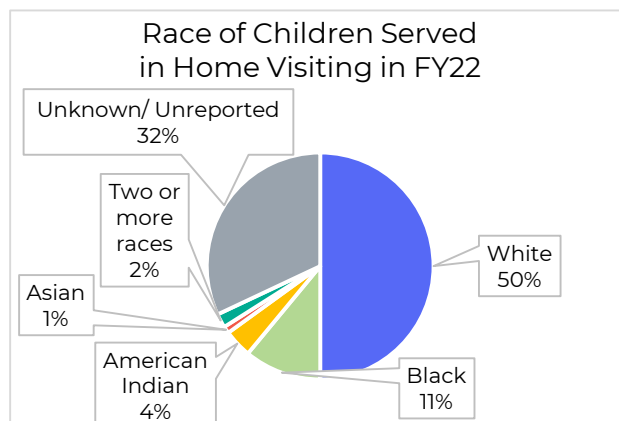
Eligibility Policies: Eligibility is determined primarily by the funding stream and chosen program model. Selection criteria may also be used to prioritize families for enrollment.

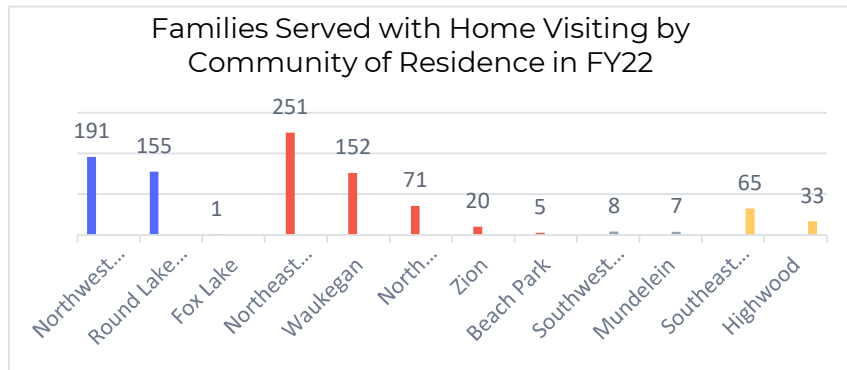
EXHIBIT 1: HOME VISITING ELIGIBILITY BY FUNDING STREAM

Funding Stream	Age Eligibility	Eligibility Requirements/Priority Populations
Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Prevention Initiative (PI) <i>State funding</i>	Expecting parents and families with children birth to age three (may enroll up to 2 ½ years old)	Programs must create their own eligibility and selection criteria to identify and prioritize pregnant women at risk and children at risk of academic failure.
Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS)-Healthy Families Illinois and Maternal and Child Home Visiting (formerly Parents Too Soon) <i>State funding</i>	Expecting parents and families with children birth to five. Most must enroll prenatally or within 3 months after birth.	Services are available to new and expectant families with identified risk factors for child maltreatment whose income is less than or equal to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Programs prioritize first time parents and parents age 13-21 and those who meet other selection criteria.
Early Head Start (EHS)- <i>Federal funding</i>	Expecting parents and families with children birth to three.	Services are available to families with incomes below the federal poverty guidelines. See Head Start Profile for more information on EHS eligibility.
Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) <i>Federal funding</i>	Expecting parents and families with children birth up to the age of kindergarten entry	Services are intended for families who live in communities that face greater risks and barriers to achieving positive maternal and child health outcomes. Programs must prioritize families who meet one or more of the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low income • Expecting parents/parents under the age of 21 • Have a history of child abuse or neglect or have had interactions with child welfare services • Have a history of substance abuse or need substance abuse treatment • Have users of tobacco in the home • Have children with developmental delays or disabilities • Have served or are serving in the Armed Forces
Local public and private funding	Local discretion	These local funding sources decide on the eligibility criteria or may choose to serve any family in their service area.

Funded Capacity: Approximately 697 households can currently be served by home visiting programs in Lake County.⁹ This is an increase from FY21 and the capacity will be expanding by at least 62 slots over the next year. The table below provides more detail about the programs, slots and who can be served. This capacity will be enough to serve approximately 6% of the children 5 and under in low-income families (200% FPL) or 12.6% of children 0-2 in low-income families.

Children and Families Served: At least 533 households with 596 children were served in Lake County in FY22.¹⁰ Of families served, 78% identified as Hispanic or Latino. Fifty percent of families spoke Spanish as the primary language; 40% spoke English as their primary language; and data on language was not available for 9% of families. Approximately 83% of families served were low-income (or 200% FPL) (16% unknown/not reported).¹¹ Families served by community:¹²





Who are the providers?

In Lake County, there are eight home visiting and doula service providers for expecting parents and families with young children, including four school districts and four non-profit organizations.

EXHIBIT 2: HOME VISITING PROGRAMS IN LAKE COUNTY¹³

Home Visiting Providers	Home Visiting Program Model	Funding Stream/ Funding Partner	Ages Served	Funded Capacity (# of families)	Service Area
Antioch Central Consolidated School District 34	Parents as Teachers	ISBE/PI	Prenatal to three	35	Antioch School District boundaries
Big Hollow School District 38	Parents as Teachers	Local public funding	Prenatal to three	15 (may increase as program develops)	Big Hollow School District boundaries
Family Focus	Parents as Teachers	ISEB/PI	Prenatal to three	165	Lake County
Kids Above All	Parents as Teachers and Doula	ISBE/PI MIECHV	Prenatal to three	54 families (expanding to 56)	Lake County
One Hope United	Healthy Families Illinois	IDHS	Prenatal to five	42	<u>Primary:</u> Waukegan, Zion, North Chicago, Gurnee, Wadsworth, Winthrop Harbor, Beach Park, Park City. <u>Secondary:</u> Mundelein, Lake Villa, Lindenhurst
	Healthy Families Illinois and Doula	IDHS Start Early	Prenatal to five	36	
	Healthy Families Illinois	ISBE/PI Start Early	Prenatal to five		
	Parents as Teachers and Doula	ISBE/PI	Prenatal to three	60	North Chicago
	Parents as Teachers	Early Head Start Start Early	Birth to three	30	Waukegan, North Chicago, Park City and Beach Park
Round Lake Community Unit School District 116	Parents as Teachers	ISBE/PI	Prenatal to three	~60 (expanding to ~120)	Round Lake School District boundaries
		Private funding	Prenatal to five	~40	
SGA Youth & Family Services	Parents as Teachers	ISBE/PI	Prenatal to three	110	Lake County
		unknown	Three to five	unknown	unknown
Waukegan Community Unit School District 60	Baby Talk	ISBE/PI Local public funding	Prenatal to three	50	Waukegan School District boundaries

iGrow at the Lake County Health Department provides coordinated intake services for home visiting and doula programs in Lake County; they promote home visiting services, help families apply, and then match them to a home visitor to meet their needs. Four of the home visiting programs in the county participate, including Family Focus, Kids Above All, One Hope United, and Round Lake School District. iGrow is currently privately funded.

Note: enough information was received about the home visiting work force to report specific data on the number of providers or demographic data. Though at least four of the home visiting programs (all non profits) have 2 open home visitor positions each. Salary ranges reported from three programs vary from \$38,000-\$45,000/year (non profit) to \$54,000-\$60,000 (school district).

Early Intervention

What is the program?

Early intervention (EI), also known as “IDEA Part C,” is a program that provides supports and services to children ages 0-2 with developmental delays and disabilities and their families to help their children learn and increase skills in the following area of development:

- **Physical:** how a baby moves and explores
- **Cognitive:** how a baby learns
- **Communication:** how a baby lets others know what they need
- **Social/Emotional:** how a baby engages with others and shows their feelings
- **Adaptive:** how a baby uses new skills¹⁴

EI is a mandated program under Part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and is known as Child and Family Connections (CFC) in Illinois. The CFC in Lake County is housed at the Lake County Health Department. For each child determined eligible for EI services, an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is created that outlines services tailored to their needs. EI services are family-centered and designed to enhance children’s development through learning opportunities embedded in their daily routines and activities. They should be provided in the “natural environment,” or settings that would be typical for child of the same age without a disability such as the home or other community settings.

All evaluations, assessments, service coordination and activities related to the development and review of the IFSP for EI are free to the family. If the family agrees to be part of the EI program, then the family pays an annual family participation fee ranging from zero to \$2400 per year based on family income. EI services are billed to families’ private or public health insurance first, and any services not covered by insurance are then billed to the Illinois Early Intervention Program.¹⁵

Who benefits?

Eligibility Policies: EI services through Child and Family Connections are available to infants and toddlers from birth to three years old who can qualify in one of three ways:

1. **Diagnosed physical or mental condition** which typically results in a developmental delay (see nonexclusive list of conditions [here](#))¹⁶
2. **Developmental delay** of 30% or more in one or more developmental area as measured by an Illinois Department of Human Services-approved diagnostic assessment instrument
3. **At risk of a substantial developmental delay**, based on informed clinical opinion (see list of eligible risk factors [here](#)).¹⁷ Legislation in 2022 makes all children with substantiated cases of abuse and neglect automatically eligible for EI.¹⁸

Legislation also went into effect January 2022 that allows eligible families with May 1-August 31 birthdays the option to extend EI services past the child’s third birthday until the beginning of the next school year.¹⁹

Children Served: The CFC coordinates EI services for infants and toddlers within the boundaries of Lake County. On average in 2022, the Lake County CFC received 135 referrals per month. **As of October 2022, approximately 1100 children had active IFSPs.** Lake County Health Department reported that they do not collect race/ethnicity or home language data for their clientele but estimated that approximately one-fourth of families receiving EI services speak Spanish only.

EXHIBIT 3: KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF LAKE COUNTY EARLY INTERVENTION

	Lake County ²⁰	Illinois ²¹
Percentage of referrals that result in IFSPs	52.3%	55.9%
Percentage of children receiving initial IFSP within 45 days of referral	97%	93.2%
Percentage of birth-three population receiving early intervention services	~4%	7.81%
Percentage of birth-one population receiving early intervention services	<1%	1.21%
Average age of active IFSPs	2.17 years old	2.14 years old
Average age at initial IFSP	1.82 years old	1.73 years old
Percentage of children/families experiencing service delays	15%	7.4%
Percentage of children receiving services in natural environment (including virtual)	100%	96.6%
Service coordinator vacancy rate	9.7%	16.6%

Who are the providers?

As of October 2022, the Lake County CFC employed 18 service coordinators and contracted with 404 total providers in the following disciplines: audiology (aural rehabilitation and assistive technology), behavior analysis, deaf mentorship, developmental therapy (general, hearing, and vision), nutrition, occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychology, social work, other counseling, speech therapy, interpretation and translation. Lake County Health Department reported that over 90% of contracted providers speak English only and that they typically rely on interpreters and translators for families who have a home language other than English. The Illinois Early Intervention Program reimburses for EI services at the rates listed [here](#) as of July 2022 after billing is first done with the family’s public or private health insurance.²²

Early Childhood Special Education

What is the program?

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) is a program that provides supports and services to children ages three through five with developmental delays and disabilities. ECSE is a mandated program under Part B 619 of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This federal law includes an affirmative duty of Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), which are typically school districts, to locate all children in their boundaries who may be eligible for ECSE services and conduct initial evaluations to determine their eligibility. This process is commonly known as “Child Find.” School districts then facilitate the creation of an individualized education program (IEP) defining the supports and services that will be provided to the child tailored to their strengths and needs.²³

For the delivery of ECSE services, federal law requires that children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in their least restrictive environment (LRE). This means that children with disabilities should receive their education alongside their typically developing peers and should not be removed from their regular educational environment to the maximum extent appropriate. For preschool-aged children with disabilities, the decision about their placement is more complicated because of the myriad settings where they can receive their education. IDEA presumes that the first placement option considered for a preschool child with a disability is the regular public preschool program the child would attend if the child did not have a disability.²⁴ School districts can offer some or all of the following options for the child’s placement:

- **School-based inclusive/blended preschool classroom**, which has a combination of children with disabilities and nondisabled peers
- **School-based self-contained preschool classroom**, which has only children with disabilities
- **Participation in community-based preschool programs** operated by agencies other than school districts, such as Head Start, community-based child care or private preschools.
- **Home-based services** in which ECSE providers travel to the child’s home to deliver services

Note: Data about the children served and the ECSE services offered was reported by 27 of the 36 elementary school districts in Lake County. Some information about the 9 school districts that did not report data was available on their website or via other publicly available sources.²⁵

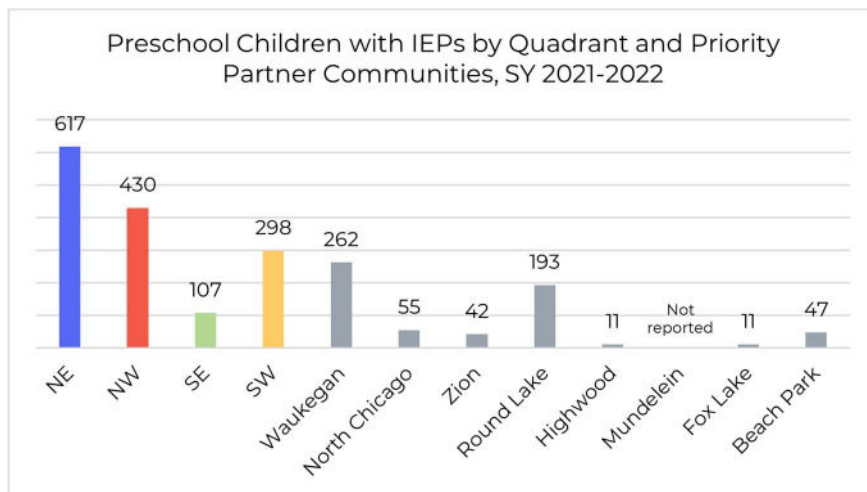
Who benefits?

Eligibility Policies: Children ages three through five who may have a developmental delay or disability are referred to their local school district to receive an evaluation to determine if they qualify to receive special education services. Children are typically referred for an evaluation through one of the following channels:

- Parent request
- The child is exiting early intervention (Part C) and is referred to the school district
- A referral from a community-based early childhood program the child attends, such as Head Start or a child care program, often resulting from a developmental screening
- A referral from a health services provider, such as a pediatrician
- School district-organized Child Find events, such as monthly developmental screenings for preschool-aged children in the district’s boundaries

After a request for an evaluation is made, the school district has 14 days to decide if they will proceed with the evaluation. If they decide to proceed, they must request the parent’s informed written consent for the evaluation and then have 60 days from parent’s consent to complete the evaluation. By the end of the 60th day, the evaluation team must meet with the parent to decide if the child is eligible for ECSE services, and if yes, they meet with the parent to develop an IEP. Finally, the parent must provide written informed consent for the placement of their child in the environment they will receive their ECSE services.²⁶

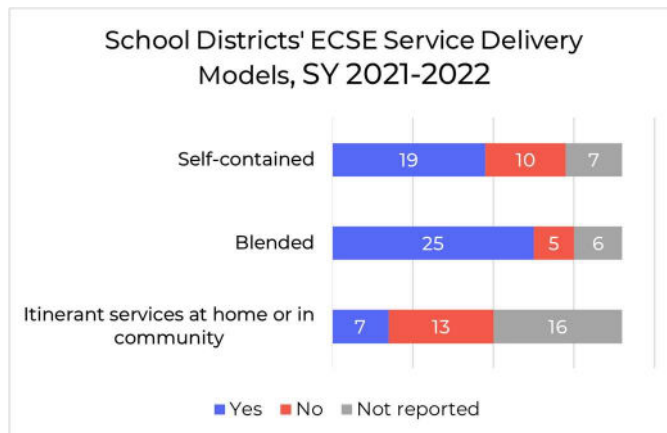
Children Served: There were 1,452 preschool children from reporting districts in Lake County in SY 2021-2022 who received IEPs. The primary home languages spoken by children with IEPs were English, followed by Spanish, and a small proportion of other languages. Information was not received from enough districts on children with IEPs’ race/ethnicity to include in this report.



Who are the providers?

The primary coordinators and providers of ECSE services are the 36 Lake County elementary school districts. School districts vary in how their providers deliver ECSE services:

- In an inclusive/blended preschool classroom*, there is typically a Preschool Special Education teacher co-teaching with a general education teacher who are both supporting the children with and without IEPs. Related service providers can “push in” and provide their services within the context of the general education classroom.
- In a self-contained preschool classroom*, all the teachers in the classroom specialize in Preschool Special Education or provide related services solely to children with IEPs.
- In an itinerant model*, ECSE providers from the school district travel to the community-based early childhood program (such as Head Start or child care) where the child with an IEP goes to preschool or to the home where the child lives and deliver their services there.



Elementary school districts in Lake County are typically small, so they may not have the capacity to provide all their own ECSE services. To fill this gap, three special education collaboratives serve 32 districts.²⁷ They provide shared special education services such as:

- Schools and classrooms for children with complex needs
- Professional development for district administrators and educators, sometimes including community-based providers. This can include training as well as job-embedded PD like coaching
- Itinerant specialized services
- Developmental screenings, assessment, and evaluations for ECSE eligibility

EXHIBIT 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION COLLABORATIVES

Special Education Collaborative Member Districts	
Special Education District of Lake County	TrueNorth Educational Cooperative 804
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Winthrop Harbor SD 1 Beach Park SD 3 Zion Elementary SD 6 Millburn SD 24 Emmons SD 33 Antioch SD 34 Grass Lake SD 36 Gavin SD 37 Big Hollow SD 38 Lake Villa SD 41 Grayslake CCSD 46 Woodland SD 50 Gurnee SD 56 Oak Grove SD 68 Libertyville SD 70 Rondout SD 72 Hawthorn SD 73 Mundelein SD 75 Diamond Lake SD 76 Fremont SD 79 Aptakisic-Tripp SD 102 Round Lake SD 116 Wauconda CUSD 118 North Chicago SD 187 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lake Bluff SD 65 Lake Forest SD 67 Bannockburn SD 106 Deerfield Public SD 109 North Shore SD 112
	<p>Exceptional Learners Collaborative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kildeer Countryside SD 96 Lincolnshire-Prairie View SD 103 Fox Lake SD 114

Head Start/Early Head Start

What is the program?

Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) are federally-funded programs designed to promote the learning and development of children ages birth to 5 from families with low income, preparing them for success in school. The programs provide a learning environment and educational interactions that support growth in the following domains: language and literacy, cognition and general knowledge, physical development and health, social emotional development, and approaches to learning. The programs promote strong parent-child relationships and families as lifelong learners, educators, advocates, and leaders. The programs also provide children and their families with a range of individualized, comprehensive services, including health, dental, mental health, nutrition and other services. EHS and HS programs can include center-based and home-based/home visiting options for families, and center-based services can be part-day or full-day.

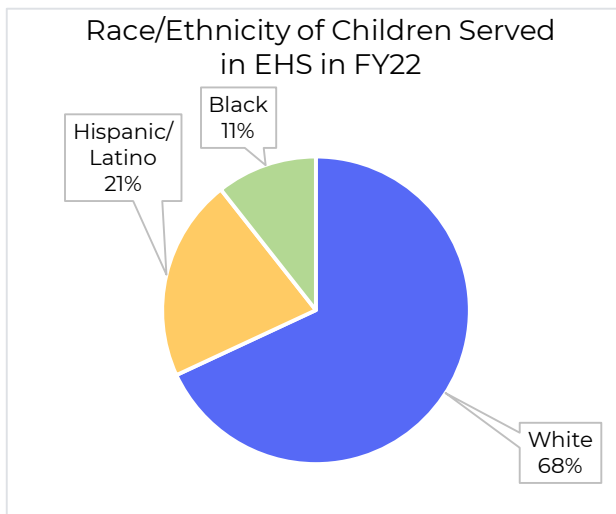
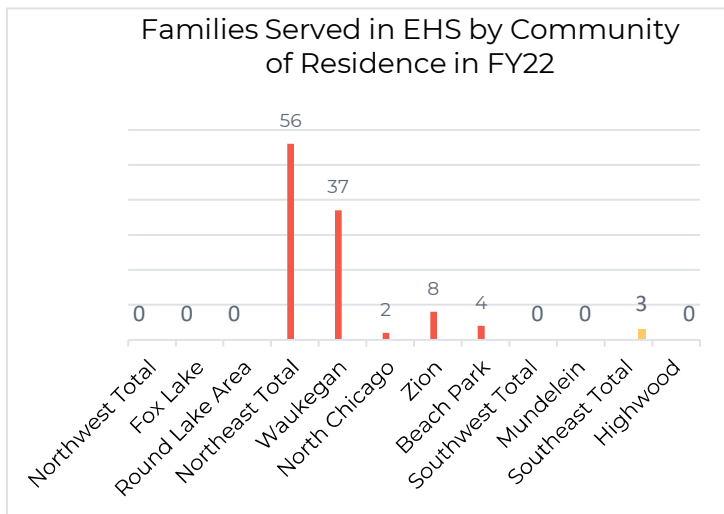
Who Benefits?

Eligibility Policies: EHS serves infants and toddlers under the age of 3 as well as pregnant women and HS serves children ages 3 to 5. EHS and HS services are available to families with incomes below the federal poverty guidelines. Children in foster care, children who are unhoused, and children from families receiving public assistance such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are eligible (regardless of income). Programs create additional selection criteria to prioritize families for enrollment. EHS and HS programs are required to ensure that at least 10% of enrollment slots are occupied by children with disabilities. Up to 10% of the children who are enrolled may be from families that exceed the low-income guidelines, but who meet the criteria that the program has established for selecting such children and who would benefit from HS services. An additional 35% of children may be from families whose gross incomes do not exceed 130% of the Income Guidelines, if all under-income children are already being served.

Funded Capacity: 348 children can be served, including 278 for Head Start (187 currently allocated slots and 91 yet to be allocated slots) and 70 total for Early Head Start.²⁸ This is 7% of the 4,861 children 5 and under living in poverty.

Children Served: The YWCA is a new Head Start grantee in Lake County, and recently started enrolling families in September 2022, so no data is available on children served in Head Start in FY22. 59 children were served in EHS in FY22, including 41 in center-based EHS and 18 in home-based EHS. Of the children served, 44% were Dual Language Learners (English/Spanish), 18.6% had an identified developmental delay or disability, and an additional 16% were referred to early

intervention for an evaluation. Of the families served, 91% had a family income below 130% FPL and all had income below 200% FPL. Three percent of families served lived in the southeast part of the county; 97% lived in the northeast.



Who are the providers?

There are currently two grantees serving Lake County:

- YWCA, which is partnering with five child care programs to provide Head Start services blended with child care for working families in need of full-day early care and learning.
- Start Early, which partners with One Hope United to provide home-based and center-based Early Head Start services. The primary service area includes Waukegan, North Chicago, Park City and Beach Park.

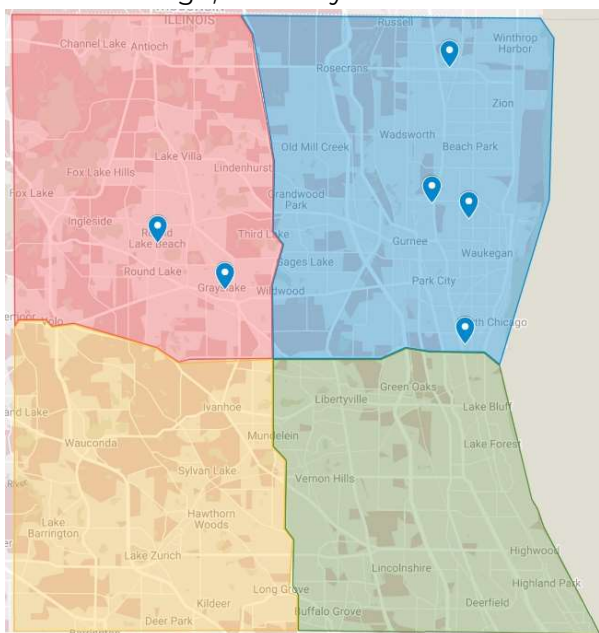
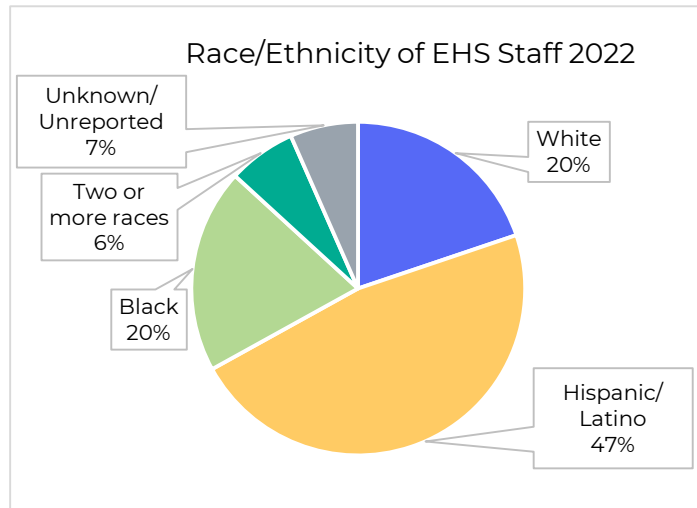


EXHIBIT 5: HS AND EHS SITES

Site Name	Town	Number of Allocated Slots
Peppermint Stick Preschool	Grayslake	12 HS
Peppermint Stick Preschool	Round Lake Beach	18 HS
Step by Step	North Chicago	60 HS
Busy Bee (One Hope United)	Waukegan	40 HS
		70 EHS 40 center-based 30 home-based
Maggie's Place Childcare & Learning Center	Waukegan	20 HS
Granny Betty's Day Care & Learning Center	Zion	37 HS

EHS Workforce: The EHS program has 24 staff positions with 6 open as of the fall of 2022, including two teachers, one assistant, two home visitors, and one family support specialist. Teachers and assistants have a salary range of \$12-14 per hour, plus benefits. Other key characteristics of the workforce include:

- 35% are bilingual
- 83% have a Child Development Associate (CDA)
- 8% have an Associate degree



School-Based Early Childhood Programs

What is the program?

Elementary school districts can provide a variety of early childhood services, including early childhood special education, before- and after-school care, home visiting, and other family support and education programs. Most prevalently, they are providers of preschool education for children ages three through five. In Lake County, school districts pay for these preschool programs typically using the following funding streams:

- **Preschool For All (PFA)**, a state-funded grant program that provides high-quality, free preschool to eligible families including developmental screening, licensed early childhood teachers with bachelor's degree, and standards-aligned, research-based curriculum, along with other [program quality standards](#).²⁹ PFA-Expansion grants support full school day programming.
- **Title I**, a federal funding stream under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, that can be used for a variety of services, including to establish or enhance preschool programs for eligible children.³⁰
- **Early Childhood Special Education (IDEA Part B 619)**, a federally mandated program to provide free supports and services to children ages three through five with disabilities and developmental delays (see program profile on Early Childhood Special Education).
- **Local school funding**
- **Tuition** paid to the school by families.

Preschool is provided in either half-day sessions, which can range from 2.5-4 hours, or full-day sessions, which are the same length as the school day (6-7 hours). Most school-based preschool programs in Lake County are half-day, with 14% of school districts offering a full-day option.

Note: Data about early childhood programs was reported by 27 of the 36 elementary school districts in Lake County. Some information about the 9 school districts that did not report data was available on their website or via other publicly available sources.³¹

Who benefits?

Eligibility Policies: Eligibility for early childhood programs is determined primarily by the funding stream and chosen program model. Selection criteria may also be used to prioritize families for enrollment. Information about eligibility policies for home visiting and early childhood special education services provided by school districts can be found in their respective profiles.

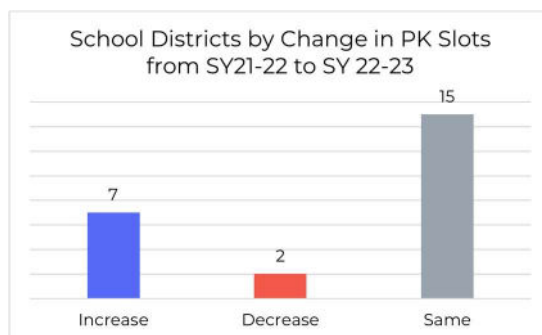
EXHIBIT 6: PRESCHOOL ELIGIBILITY BY FUNDING STREAM

Funding Stream	Eligibility Requirements/Priority Populations
<p>Preschool For All (PFA) & Preschool for All-Expansion (PFA-E)</p>	<p>PFA requires programs to establish weighted eligibility criteria that prioritize children most at risk of academic failure for enrollment. Each program’s weighted eligibility checklist must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Experiencing homelessness (first priority for enrollment) ■ Youth in care of the child welfare system (first priority for enrollment) ■ Having an IEP ■ Family income 50% below the federal poverty level ■ Parent or caregiver who speaks a language other than English ■ Screening indicating developmental delay but child does not have current referral to special education <p>Eligibility criteria cannot exclude children who are not toilet trained. Many PFA programs use this Eligibility and Weighted Priority Enrollment Form during enrollment (although the use of this form is only required for Preschool For All Expansion programs).</p>
<p>Title I</p>	<p>Title I funds are distributed to districts and schools with high percentages of children from low-income families. If a Title I district or school cannot serve all children within its attendance area, it must establish multiple, educationally related, objective criteria to identify the children who are most at risk of failing to meet academic standards, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Developmentally appropriate measures of child development ■ English language learners ■ Children receiving special education services ■ Family income (but cannot be sole qualifying criteria) <p>Some children are automatically eligible, including children who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Participated in a Head Start or a Title I preschool program during the prior two years ■ Are experiencing homelessness³²
<p>Early Childhood Special Education (IDEA Part B 619)</p>	<p>See the Early Childhood Special Education program profile for more information on eligibility policies tied to this funding stream.</p>
<p>Local school funding and tuition-based</p>	<p>School districts using local school funding or charging families tuition determine their own eligibility guidelines or selection criteria. They may choose to enroll children on a first-come-first-serve basis.</p>

Funded Capacity: There were 4,595 total reported preschool slots in School Year (SY) 2021-22 from all funding streams in schools.³³ There were 280 additional PFA slots in five community-based programs (i.e., not school districts).³⁴ Of the 4,595 school-based slots:

- 2,835 were PFA slots.
- 388 were self-contained Early Childhood Special Education slots.

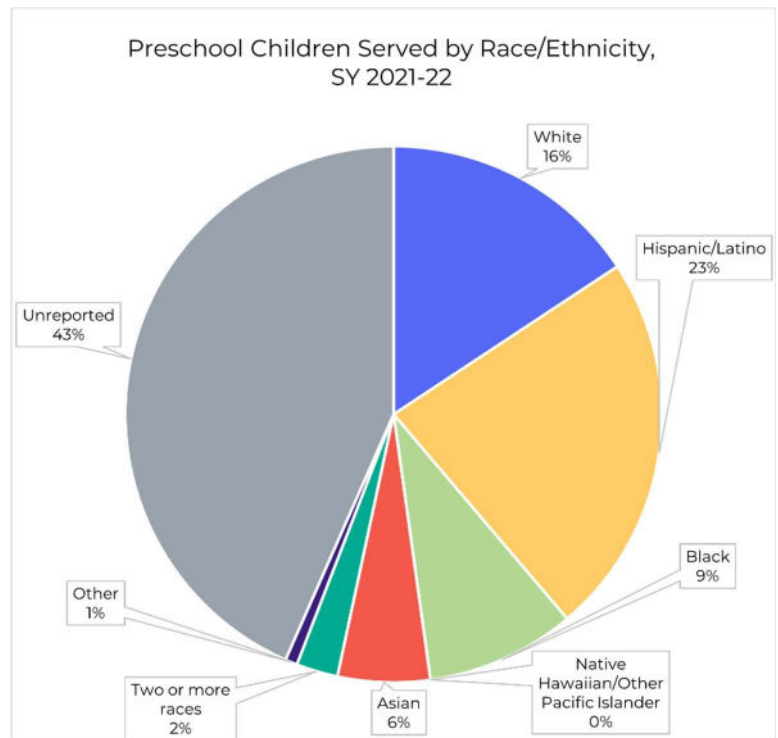
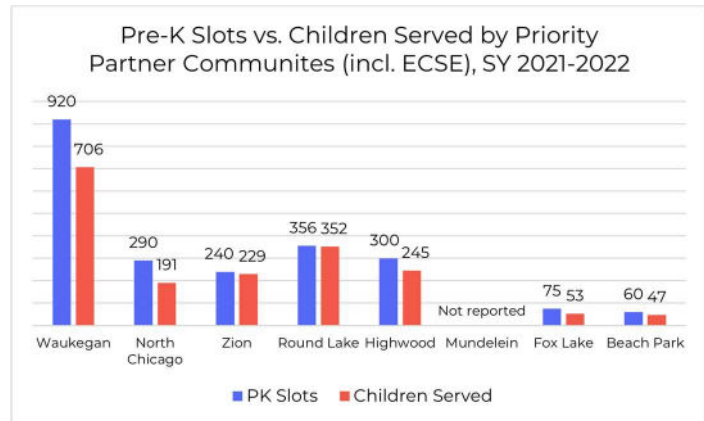
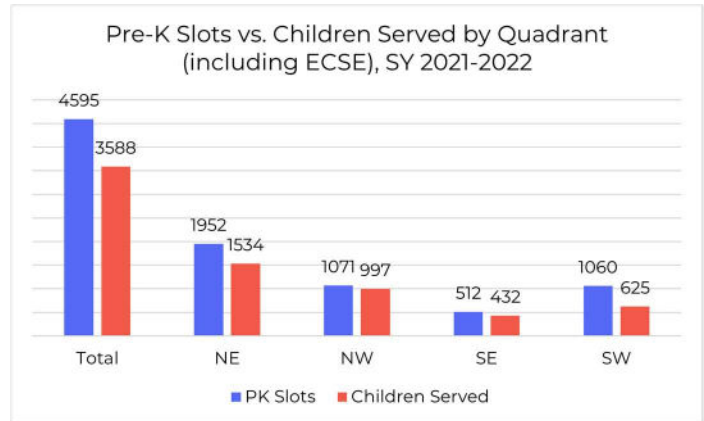
For SY 2022-23, the reported total number of school-based preschool slots decreases to 4,267. Although only two school districts decreased slots, these were larger school districts: Grayslake and Zion.



Children Served: Approximately, 3,588 children were reported to be served in school-based preschool programs in SY 2021-22. This represents 78% of the total available pre-k slots reported. School districts shared the following reasons for under-enrollment:

- Continuing parent apprehension to enroll their children in preschool during the COVID-19 pandemic,
- Holding spots for children with IEPs that were ultimately not filled,
- Lack of awareness amongst families of preschool offerings, and
- Open slots were not conducive to families' schedules (e.g., families needed full-day program but district only offered half-day).

Of the 24 school districts with preschool programs that reported data, only 15 reported the race/ethnicity of the children they served. These preschool children are diverse both by race/ethnicity (see chart to the right) and by home language. Only 2 school districts reported that the only home language present in their programs was English, and 7 school districts reported only English and Spanish. The rest of the school districts reported a wide variety of home language in addition to English and Spanish, including Russian, French, Polish, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Arabic, Tagalog, Chinese, Malayamam, Telugu, Punjabi, Cambodian/Khmer and Vietnamese.

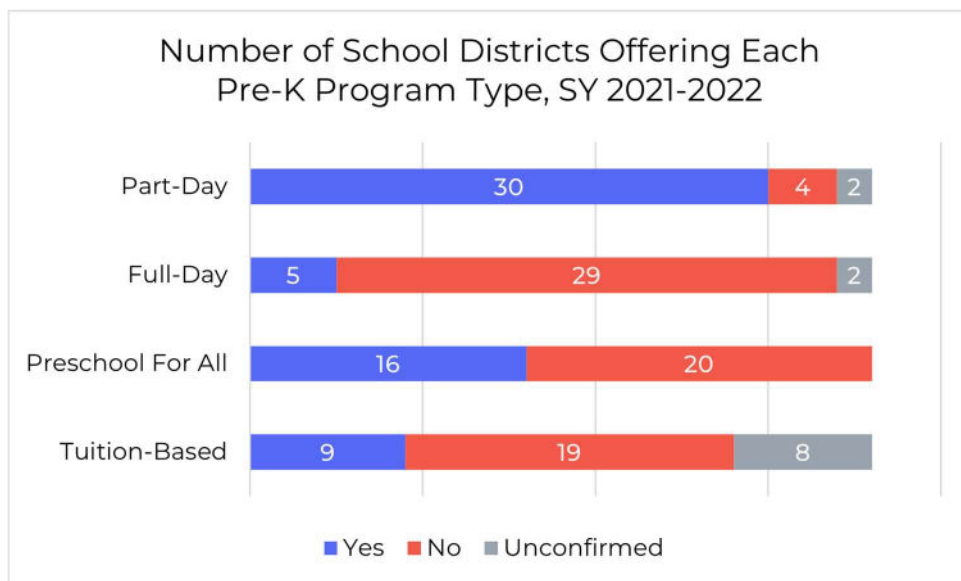


Who are the providers?

In Lake County, there are a total of 36 elementary school districts. Of the 27 school districts who reported data, 24 offer a preschool program. These preschool programs reported a total of 398 early childhood staff. Key characteristics of these preschool providers include:

- 88% of school districts reported that preschool teachers and assistants have compensation parity with kindergarten teachers and assistants in the district.
- 29% of school districts reported that they had staff vacancies in their early childhood programs.
- 100% of school districts reported that their preschool teachers have at least a bachelor’s degree and a Professional Educator License with an early childhood endorsement.
- Most reporting school districts also reported that some or all of their teachers have an additional Early Childhood Special Education endorsement, an English as a Second Language endorsement and/or a Bilingual endorsement.
- 54% of programs have multilingual staff, 29% have English only staff, and 17% did not report the languages spoken by their staff.

EXHIBIT 7: LAKE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS



See **Appendix B** for more detail about the types of early childhood programs in each school district in the four quadrants of the county.

Child Care & Child Care Assistance Program

What is the program?

Child care is a vital support for working families, providing safe, nurturing care and supports for children's learning and development. There are many different types of child care programs and providers, including child care centers, family child care homes, and family, friend and neighbor caregivers.

The **Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)** provides financial assistance for eligible families to help cover the cost of child care to help ensure the well-being and safety of children while their parents/guardians are working or attending school/training. It also helps to give working parents access to quality early childhood services to help their children prepare for school. CCAP is funded through the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) block grant, state general funds, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds. It is administered by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). Families typically pay a portion of the cost of care according to a sliding fee scale based on family size and income, capped at 7% of a families' income. Co-payments for families have been reduced to \$1 or to \$0 for families experiencing homelessness or below the federal poverty level.³⁵ Families can use CCAP with participating child care providers of their choice. Provider may charge families additional fees.

Who Benefits?

CCAP Eligibility Policies: Parent/Guardians are eligible for child care assistance if they have a child under age 13 (or under age 19 with special needs or under court supervision) and meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Working and meet income requirements
- Attending an approved education or training program, including English as a Second Language (ESL), high school equivalency, GED, vocational training and 2- and 4-year college degree programs and meet income requirements
- Teen parents under the age of 20 and in high school or a GED program
- Recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and in an education, training, or other approved work activity
- Unemployed and seeking to re-enter the workforce (available through December 2022)

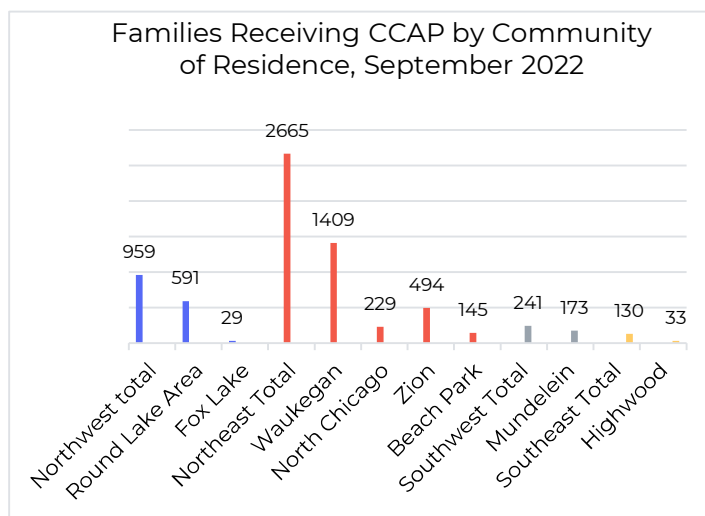
The income eligibility requirements are currently family incomes below 225% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) at application and below 275% of the FPL at redetermination.³⁶

Federal rules require lead agencies to prioritize children with special needs, families with very low incomes, and families experiencing homelessness. Special provisions are also made for some, such as when a parent is transitioning out of DCFS family services or on active military duty.

Citizenship or immigration status of the child's parent cannot be considered and will not impact the child's eligibility determination. And in Illinois, eligibility will not be denied based on a child's citizenship status.³⁷

Capacity: The total licensed capacity for child care programs in Lake County is 15,802, for all ages birth to 12 years old.³⁸ In FY21 with a similar total, the reported licensed capacity specifically for children age 5 and under was 12,307, meaning approximately 25% of the 48,488 children 0-5 could be served.³⁹

Children Served: A total of 3,995 families were using CCAP in September 2022 in Lake County (with children of all ages).⁴⁰ 3,946 children 5 and under were served by CCAP in FY2020⁴¹



Who are the providers?

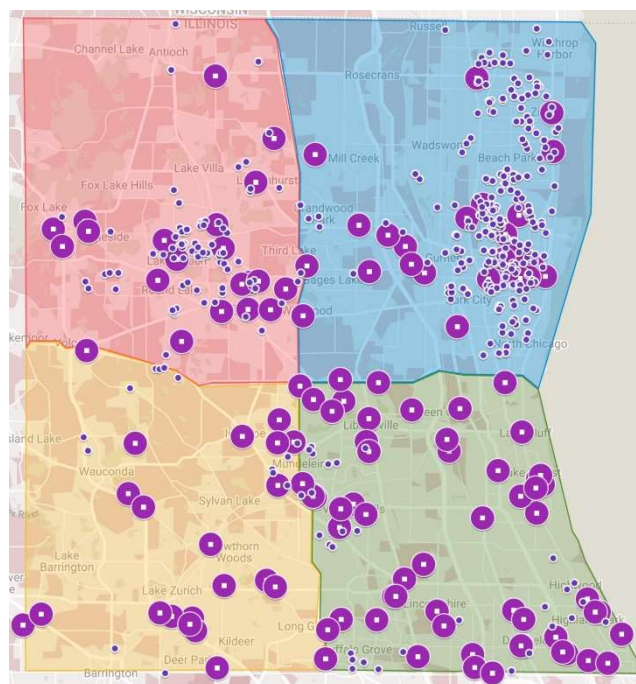
Lake County has a range of child care options for families. These providers may be licensed by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) or license-exempt. Licensed providers have met the state of Illinois standards for care in areas such as teacher to child ratio, educational qualifications, safety standards, and nutritional requirements. Licensed programs also have annual visits from licensing representatives. A center or home may be license-exempt depending on factors such as the number of children in care, school or religious affiliation.

Family Child Care homes are by far the most common type of provider in Lake County. They may be licensed to care for up to 8 or 12 children, or they may be license exempt if they have no more than 3 children in care. Child Care Centers vary in size from 1 classroom of 16 children to multiple classrooms with over 200 children. Most are private though some are part of a park district or the community college. Most providers are licensed to serve infants and up (nearly all family child care providers), though group sizes are smaller so there is less capacity for infants overall. Nearly 100% of providers licensed to care for children during late night hours are family child care homes. Also, almost all the providers listed by DCFS with Spanish language capacity are family child care homes, though additional centers may have Spanish speaking staff.

Regardless of licensing type or license exemption, child care providers participating in the CCAP program must comply with all applicable IDHS CCAP background checks, and health, safety, and child development requirements. Relative caregivers may also participate in CCAP if they meet the requirements, though they are reimbursed at a lower rate.

EXHIBIT 8: LAKE COUNTY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS AND KEY CHARACTERISTICS⁴²

Lake County Child Care Providers	
Total Number of Licensed Child Care Providers	537
Number of Licensed Centers	127
Number of Licensed Family Child Care Homes	411
Number of License Exempt Centers (FY21)	10
Number of Providers Actively Billing for Child Care Assistance Program (including license exempt)	741
Licensed Capacity (all ages 0-12)	15,802
% of Providers Licensed to Serve Infants	89%
% of Providers Licensed for Late Night Hours	66%
% Spanish Speaking	39%
Number of Licensed Programs at Gold Circle of Quality	8
Number of Licensed Programs at Silver Circle of Quality	12
Number of Licensed Programs at Bronze Circle of Quality	32



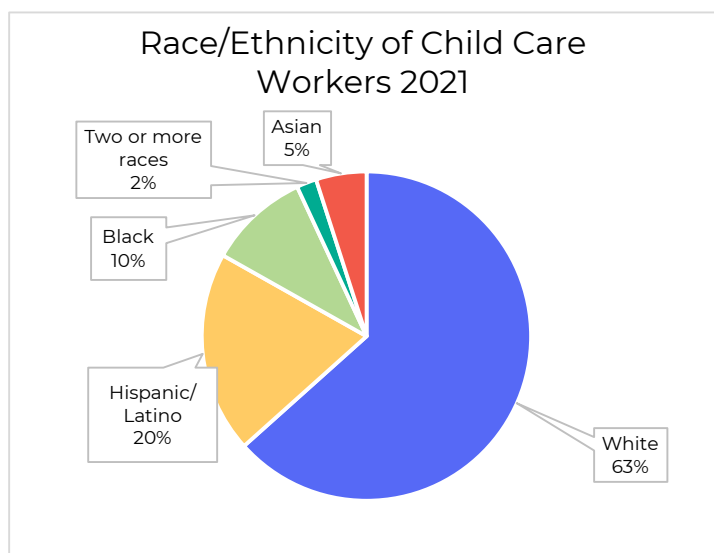
Illinois has a quality rating and improvement system for early care and education programs, called Excelerate. Programs may be rated Gold, Silver, Bronze, or Licensed depending on the standards that they meet in four main categories including: teaching and learning, family & community engagement, leadership & management, and qualifications & continuing education. License exempt schools may also be rated, but only the ratings for the licensed child care providers are included in the tables here. There are an additional 22 gold, 2 silver, and 1 bronze rated school-based programs in Lake County.⁴³

See **Appendix C** for more details about the number of child care providers and their key characteristics in each priority partner community and quadrant of the county.

IDHS funds **Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R)** agencies across the state to assist families finding quality child care and applying for child care assistance. CCR&Rs also provide a variety of training and technical assistance opportunities to child care providers to support quality improvement. The CCR&R in Lake County is the YWCA of Metro Chicago.

Families may also apply for CCAP directly through **Site Administered Programs**, rather than applying through their CCR&R and getting a certificate. Site Administered programs are typically non-for-profit organizations with large child care programs. A network can also be established as a site administered program, such as the Kids Above All **family child care network**. Under this model, families apply for CCAP with Kids Above All and are referred to the FCC providers in the network. Kids Above All handles the approval process and the billing with IDHS, and while they wait to receive the payments from IDHS, they provide steady payments to the FCC providers for care. The Together for Childhood Network is another type of network that provides professional development and support to family child care providers in Lake County.

Child Care Workforce: ⁴⁴ The childcare workforce is overwhelmingly female. Compensation is very low, near minimum wage on average, and turn over is very high. The workforce is less diverse than the child population.



The United Way of Lake County

The United Way of Lake County is a critical part of the early childhood landscape, offering two significant programs for families with young children:

211 Lake County

211 is a free, confidential, 24-hour information and referral helpline connecting individuals and families in need with access to available health and human services. The 211 website includes a directory of resources in Lake County, covering a wide range of needs including housing, utility assistance, food programs, health, mental health, addiction support and rehabilitation, employment and education support, etc. Families may also contact 211 by phone or text, and navigators will help guide and connect them to the resources they need. Translation services are included to ensure support is available in any language. The United Way of Lake County strives to get to know the service providers in the area, including, for example, the languages spoken by mental health providers, sliding fee scale options, hours of service in order to best guide people to what they need. They contact providers regularly to ensure their information is up to date.

Success by 6

The goal of this program is to promote healthy early childhood development to ensure children enter school ready to succeed. The United Way has several Success by 6 offerings.⁴⁵

Offering	Description	Availability	Children and Families Served
Bright by Text	A national texting program that provides parents expert tips, games and child development information. Messages are targeted to the child's age and family location, including information about local events and resources. Available in English and Spanish.	Available to all families in Lake County with children 5 and under.	627 families have signed up for 847 children since inception in 2021.
Kindergarten Readiness Calendars	A calendar filled activities to help families with preschool-age children get ready for kindergarten. The activities are fun, simple, and designed to support language and cognitive development.	Available to all families in Lake County with preschool age children.	25,000 were printed for distribution in FY23.
Better Together	A birth to three parent-child group program to support parents in their role as their child's first teacher and to provide a safe space for children and parents to explore and learn together. It includes a total of 15 sessions in fall and spring and 6 sessions in the summer.	Held at Green Bay Early Learning Center in. Open to families in North Chicago and Great Lakes.	30 families are served in two groups, one in the am and one in the pm with 15 in each in FY23.
Early Learning Clubs	A program to support parents and preschool age children with fun, interactive activities to support learning and school readiness. Offered in community locations by partner organizations (e.g., non-profits, libraries, child care centers, schools, etc.)	Key communities served are North Chicago, Beach Park, Round Lake, Waukegan, Zion.	2,569 children were served In FY22.
Kindergarten Countdown Camps	As summer program for children without prior pre-k experience and their families	Offered at 4 schools in Gurnee, North Chicago, Round Lake, and Waukegan.	120 children were served in 2022.

Strengths, Opportunities, and Recommendations

Building on the data from the program profiles and focus groups, interviews, and surveys of families and early childhood professionals, the purpose of this section of the report is to highlight key areas of strength and opportunity across the Lake County early childhood system.

Recommendations follow to build on the strengths and address multiple challenges in order to advance a more accessible, equitable, and high quality system for young children and families.

Strengths & Opportunities

The strengths to build on and opportunities for improvement of the Lake County early childhood system have been summarized below in four categories including, access and affordability, equity and inclusion, connecting families to resources, and the early childhood workforce and program support. Many of the strengths and opportunities described below reflect phenomena occurring at the state and national level, though recommendations that follow include strategies for local action.

Access and Affordability

Strengths

- A. **Access to home visiting programs has expanded in the past year.** The number of programs and slots has increased; for example, Big Hollow School District started a Parents as Teachers program and Round Lake School District is adding approximately 60 more slots this year to their home visiting program. Utilization of home visiting declined at the beginning of the COVID 19 pandemic; however, program leaders report enrollment has been increasing again this year.
- B. **School districts are increasingly supporting children birth to three.** For example, the school districts in three of the largest Priority Partner Communities, Waukegan, Round Lake and North Chicago have invested in building home visiting programs or programs similar to home visiting that target prenatal mothers and children birth to three. In Fox Lake, the school district leader interviewed said that the biggest need for her district is a home visiting program that can serve children birth to three. In interviews with school district leaders at Round Lake, North Chicago and Fox Lake, they described engaging with families before their children are preschool age as a key strategy for supporting children's learning and development as early as possible, developing trusting partnerships with families, and

connecting them with resources so that children arrive for preschool as healthy and ready for learning as possible.

- C. Income eligibility for the child care assistance program has expanded.** The increase in income eligibility from 185% of the federal poverty level (FPL) to 225% FPL allows significantly more families to qualify for assistance, and with the increase of income eligibility at redetermination to 275% FPL, families are less likely to lose assistance if they get a modest raise in their wages.

Opportunities

- A. Early care and learning opportunities are not accessible for many families in Lake County.** There are not enough slots within or across programs to meet the need, especially for children in families with low income.
- 13% of the children 0-2 years old in families with low income (200%) could be served in the 40 center-based Early Head Start slots and the ~759 home visiting slots, though some of these are also used for expecting parents and preschoolers.
 - 11% of children age 3-5 years old in families living in poverty (100% FPL) can be served in 278 Head Start slots.
 - 51% of the preschool aged children in families with low income (200% FPL) could be served in the Preschool for All (PFA), PFA-Expansion slots, and Head Start slots combined.
 - A total of 3,995 families (with children of all ages) are receiving CCAP, while there are 12,708 child 5 and under in families with low income (200% FPL).
 - ~25% of all 48,488 children 5 and under could be served in licensed child care. There is not enough child care capacity to meet family need. Center-Based Early Head Start and many child care programs report having wait lists.
- B. There are not enough full-day pre-K programs in schools or extended hours for care.** Only 5 of the 36 elementary school districts in Lake County had confirmed full-day preschool programs. Many parents reported that they cannot utilize the preschool program at their school district because it is only half day and does not fit their work schedule. 100% of reporting school districts said they do not offer before- and after-school care to preschool children as they often do for elementary school students. Therefore, even programs that do extend for a full school day, such as Preschool For All-Expansion programs, do not work for many families. In the survey, another 30% of families reported that child care for early morning, late evening, and weekend hours were among the hardest to find. More than half of the school districts reported waitlists, including 3 out of the 4 with full-day programs.

- C. **Child care is unaffordable for many families in Lake County.** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services advises that child care should cost no more than 7% of a household’s budget; many families spend well beyond that. Infant care in a child care center is about the same as college tuition at a state university. Many families rely on CCAP to afford care, however, there is still a significant gap. Many eligible families are not using CCAP. Also, many families who earn too much to qualify for assistance struggle to afford care. Cost/affordability was cited as the most difficult need to meet when searching for child care in the survey, across income groups, and nearly all families interviewed or in the focus groups cited the cost of care as a struggle, especially for infants and toddlers. Several mothers stated they quit their jobs to stay home with their children because they could not afford the cost. Others were relying on family members.

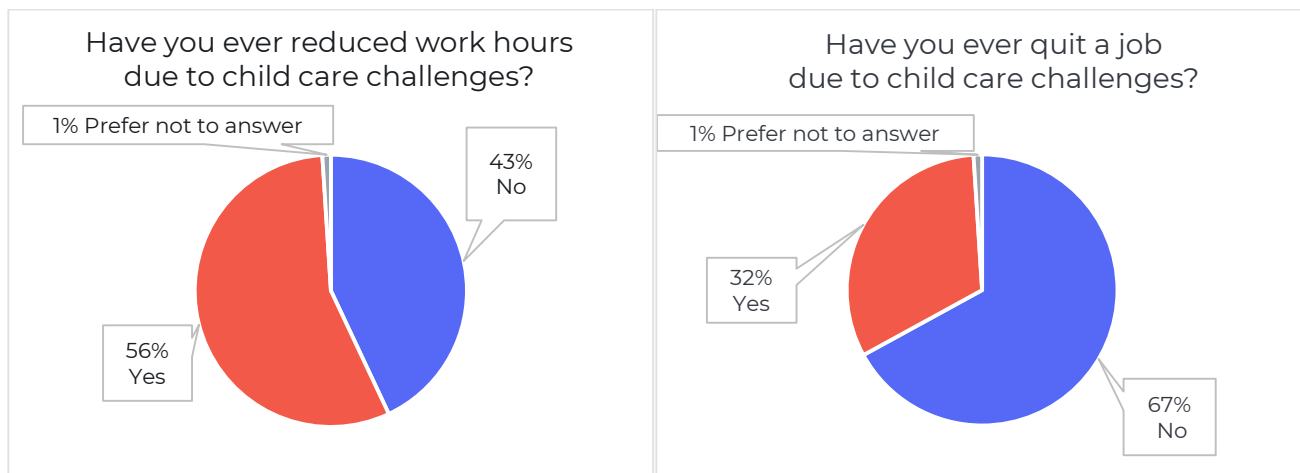
EXHIBIT 9: COST OF CHILD CARE AS PERCENTAGE OF INCOME IN LAKE COUNTY⁴⁶

Age	Setting	Median Price for Care		% of Median Annual Household Income (\$92,564)
Infants and Toddlers	Licensed Child Care Center	\$60.06/day	\$15,615/year	16.8%
Preschoolers	Licensed Child Care Center	\$46.00/day	\$11,960/year	12.9%
Infants and Toddlers	Licensed Family Child Care Home	\$39.99/day	\$10,400/year	11.2%
Preschoolers	Licensed Family Child Care Home	\$33.90/day	\$8,814	9.5%

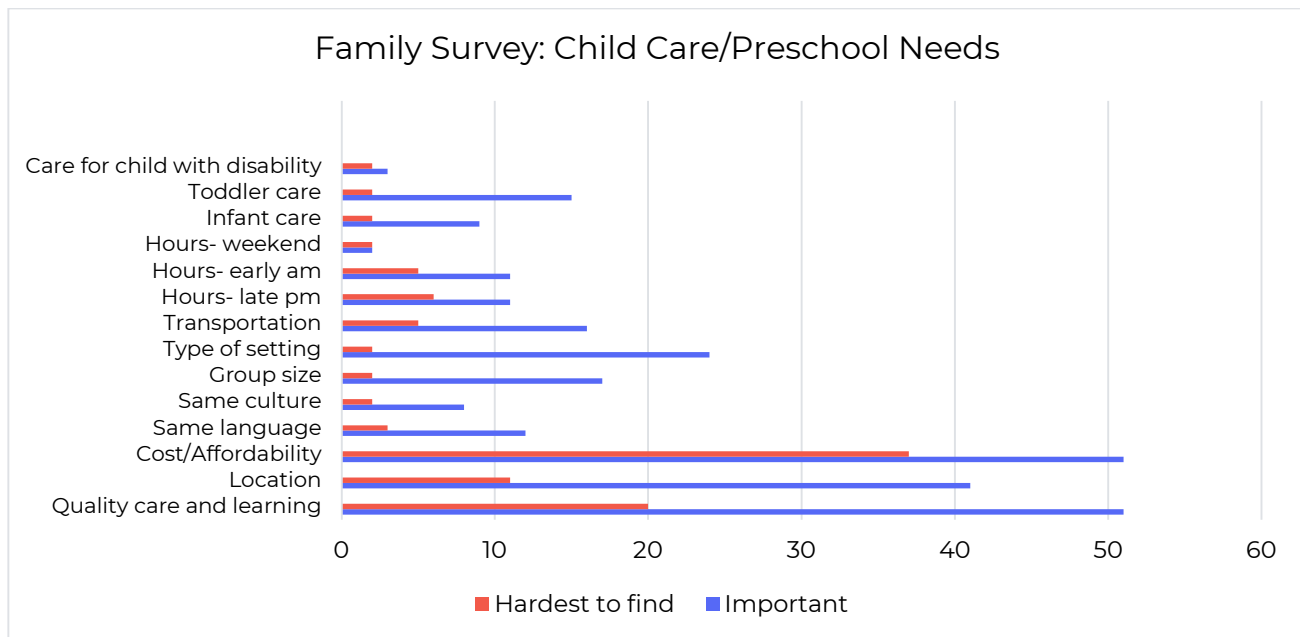
A family of four earning \$63,000, just above \$62,438 (225% of the FPL), is ineligible for CCAP. With an infant and preschooler in a family child care home, the cost would be 30% of their annual income for child care.

- D. **The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) is underutilized.** In the past in Illinois and currently in other states, there is a wait list for eligible families to access child care assistance. It is possible that families are not aware of this support or they may not realize that they are eligible, since the income eligibility limits have recently increased. Several parents reported that they had not heard of CCAP. Illinois is currently investing in an early childhood enrollment campaign, including investments in community outreach to increase access to affordable, quality child care.
- E. **Families and providers report the application process for the Child Care Assistance Program and other assistance programs is arduous and slow.** Families who use child care services while waiting for approval risk having to pay the full cost for several weeks of care if they are denied assistance, and providers risk not getting paid. Other parents reported that they experienced similar difficulties applying for and receiving approval for other forms of government assistance, including unemployment and TANF. With TANF in particular, a parent shared that they decided not to apply because they did not want to pursue collecting child support from their ex-partner due to past domestic violence incidents.

The impacts of family challenges with access and affordability were reflected in their survey responses.



Families also indicated the specific child care needs that are hardest for them to meet in the survey:



Equity and Inclusion

Strengths

- D. **Parents are satisfied with the early intervention (EI) services they received.** Six parents in the interviews and focus groups reported receiving EI services. All reported that they were able to quickly get an initial evaluation to determine their child's eligibility for services and have an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) developed. A provider of early childhood special education services (ECSE) who works closely with EI confirmed that the Lake County CFC runs a “tight ship” in relation to their initial evaluations. Once parents received their services, they all were satisfied with the quality, including those who received fully virtual services. They appreciated the family coaching approach of providers, and they saw significantly positive impacts on their child's development. The ECSE provider and school district leaders who were interviewed shared that they were efficiently connected to families exiting EI so they could transition them to ECSE.
- E. **School districts are increasingly offering inclusive pre-k classrooms, for children with developmental delays and disabilities to learn alongside their typically developing peers.** There is a desire to move towards inclusive early learning and away from self-contained special education classrooms, as demonstrated by the number of inclusive or “blended” preschool programs (25 school districts) being greater than number of ECSE self-contained preschool programs (19 school districts, at least one being new). Many school district leaders also cited providing inclusive preschool programs or adding a blended classroom to their offerings as a point of pride.

Opportunities

- F. **There is a waitlist for early intervention services, especially for in-person services.** In Lake County, 15% of eligible families are waiting on one or more of the services included in their IFSPs, compared to 8.1% in Illinois overall. One reason for this delay cited by multiple interviewees was the effect of the pandemic on providers willingness to provide in-person services. Many switched to providing only virtual services during the pandemic and have continued even though the pandemic's intensity has decreased. This is partially due to the desire to reduce travel time, which they are not reimbursed for. Families who are willing to do virtual services can receive services quickly, but this is not the case for families who prefer in-person services. Furthermore, legislation recently passed expanding eligibility, including automatic eligibility for children connected to child welfare and the option for children with summer birthdays to receive services past their third birthday until the start of the next school year. Although this expansion is exciting, the amount of early intervention providers has not yet caught up in Lake County to serve this expanded pool of children without delay.

- G. **Families with children with special needs struggle to access inclusive, high-quality early care and education.** Although school districts, the primary providers of early childhood special education, are increasingly offering inclusive pre-k classrooms, most of these programs are only half day. For the remainder of the day, working parents have to find a child care center that accepts their child. School districts will offer transportation for children with IEPs to and from their child care center; however, this transportation is often limited to child care centers within the school district's boundaries and/or that have a formal agreement with the school district. This may not align with the parent's child care preferences. For example, one mother of a preschooler with special needs reported having to choose a lower quality child care center for her son because her center of choice was not included in the district's bus route. Unfortunately, many child care centers will also not accept children with special needs. 6 parents of children with special needs were interviewed or participated in focus groups, and all reported being turned away from centers because of their child's needs. Multiple child care providers also shared that they had to tell certain parents that their center was not "the right environment" for their child or that they did not have the resources to adequately respond to the child's needs.
- H. **There is a shortage of staff who reflect the language and culture of the children and families served.** For example, at the Lake County Child and Family Connections, they reported that at least 25% of their families receiving early intervention services speak a language other than English as their primary language but estimated that less than 10% of their early intervention providers speak any language other than English. In school districts, there is a similar disparity. 67% of reporting school districts said they had a multilingual preschool student population, but only 54% reported having multilingual staff and there was often a mismatch between the languages spoken by students and by staff. Furthermore, only 12 school districts reported the race/ethnicity of their preschool staff, but of those 12 districts, they reported that 79% of their staff was white, which is higher than the white student population. This disparity between providers' and children's racial, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds also extends to sectors adjacent to early care and education. For example, 4 out of 4 leaders of mental health agencies that provide services to young children and their families that were interviewed cited the need for mental health providers that better represent the language and culture of their clientele.
- I. **Data on the race, ethnicity, and languages spoken by the children and families served in early care and education programs is not readily available.** To understand equity in access to critical early childhood programs for historically marginalized populations, it is necessary to have race, ethnicity and language data on children served. However, when requesting this type of data for this project, the response was often that race, ethnicity and language data was not collected or there was no response. For example, the Lake County CFC said they do not collect race/ethnicity or language data for the children and families served in

early intervention. Of the 24 reporting school districts with preschool programs, 12 did not report race/ethnicity data.

Connecting Families to Resources

Strengths

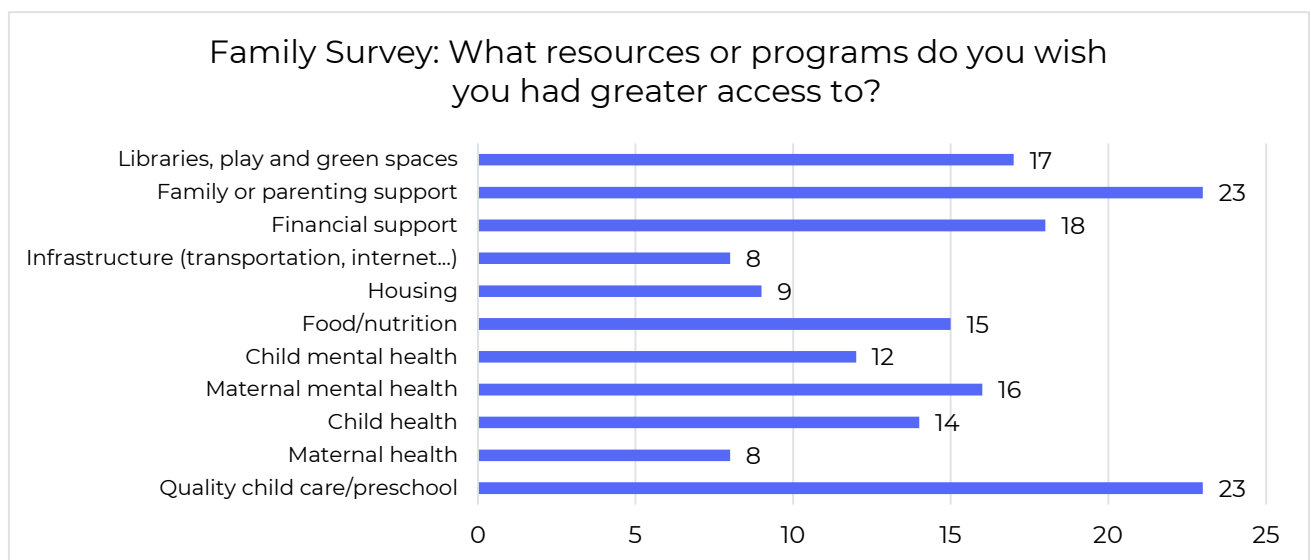
- F. **Lake County has significant system infrastructure to coordinate and connect families to services.** 211 at the United Way of Lake County, the YWCA of Lake County as the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, iGrow Lake County, the Child and Family Connections office and other health programs at the Lake County Health Department all play a significant role. The Regional Office of Education is also working to connect families to their school district starting at birth. Many parents also reported getting information about child and family resources from their local library.
- G. **Pediatricians serve an important and trusted role for parents when they have questions and concerns about child development.** During interviews and focus groups with parents of young children in Lake County, they were asked where they go when they need support for parenting and supporting their children's learning and development. Almost all mentioned their pediatrician as their go-to resource. They also said that their pediatrician serves as a source of referrals to other early childhood supports in the community. The pediatrician interviewed at the Lake County Health Department also reported that they conduct developmental screenings at every well child check-up in the early childhood years and refer families to early intervention or ECSE services as indicated.

Opportunities

- J. **Families have difficulty searching for and finding child care or a preschool to meet their needs.** Many families reported they did not know they YWCA could assist them in finding child care, and they were not aware of the two online listings of child care providers in Lake County (Provider Look Up on the DCFS website or the Illinois Cares for Kids website funded by the IDHS and administered by INCCRRA) . Further neither website includes information about whether the child care provider accepts CCAP payments. Parents reported having to call individual providers for this information. The CCR&Rs are not allowed to share this information publicly; it is unclear whether CCR&Rs can share this information with parents.
- K. **Parents report that pediatricians are not making timely referrals to early intervention.** For example, for infants and toddlers, several families reported that their pediatrician told them to "wait and see" when they were concerned that their child may have a disability or developmental delay. However, when they decided to seek out early intervention anyways, the early intervention providers told them they were glad they did not wait to seek out services. Similarly, an early intervention provider shared that families are often satisfied

with receiving virtual early intervention services; however, some pediatricians will tell families that virtual services do not work. A school district leader also shared that she hears from families with kindergarteners who are determined to qualify for an IEP at the beginning of the year that they told their provider repeatedly from birth to five years old that they suspected their child may have a developmental delay, and the pediatrician told them they could get support from the school district in kindergarten. The pediatrician did not seem to realize that supports could be available to families earlier than kindergarten.

- L. **Parents expressed they want more support with parenting and child development.** While some parent support or parent-child play groups are available in libraries or other places, parents reported they are usually not accessible for working families, in the evenings or on weekends. Multiple parents also expressed a desire to connect with other parents through these opportunities, especially after experiencing isolation during the pandemic.
- M. **There is a lack of free or low-cost mental health supports for young children and their families.** Providers across early intervention, child care, school-based early childhood programs, and mental health cited this as a barrier to child development and learning in Lake County. All of these providers noted that they often do provide mental health support to children and families that goes beyond the scope of their role and their training because they are the only option available. Leaders of mental health agencies that do provide free and low-cost mental health services noted that most of their services are not for children 5 and under and that they have a limited number of therapists who are trained in play-based therapy modalities tailored to younger children. Similarly to early intervention, mental health services have been harder to obtain for younger children since the pandemic because many providers have switched to providing completely virtual services, which can be more difficult for very young children. Many interviewees noted that mental health services became much more accessible when a family had private insurance.



Early Childhood Workforce and Program Support

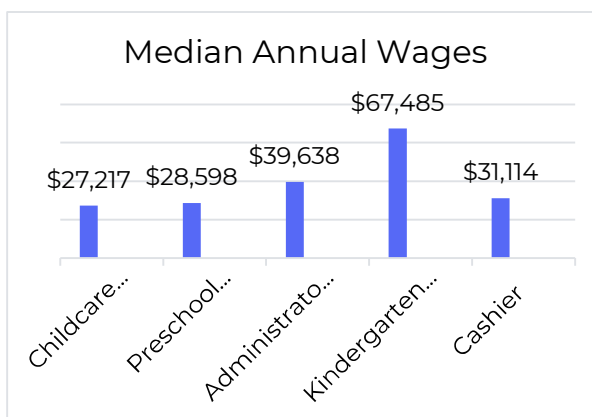
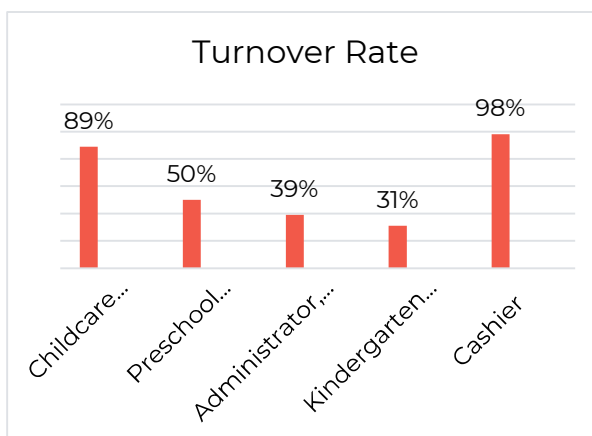
Strengths

- H. **Staff hiring, qualifications, retention and compensation in school-based programs are strong.** In survey responses and interviews, school district leaders repeatedly hailed the quality of their workforce as the key strength of their programs. When asked in interviews if they struggled with staffing, most district leaders said they felt lucky that they did not, especially in comparison to community-based child care centers. 26% of reporting school districts with preschool programs did report staff vacancies, but they seem to often be for paraprofessional positions rather than teacher positions. Child care providers who were interviewed reported that their staff leave their centers because they move to work at school districts where they can be paid more competitive salaries. School districts also cited compensation as the key driver for their staff retention, including for school-based home visiting programs. As a school district leader in Round Lake said of their home visiting program, “Our salary schedule has been a positive when finding staff.”
- I. **Reimbursement rates to providers have increased for the Child Care Assistance Program.** Providers reported this increase was desperately needed and appreciated.
- J. **The Strengthen and Grow Child Care grants have provided stable, predictable funding to eligible child care programs during the pandemic.** These grants have prioritized programs that serve families receiving CCAP (at least 10% of their licensed capacity) and that do not receive most of their funding from other grant sources (i.e., Head Start, Preschool for All). In the recent rounds, programs must use at least 50% of their funds for new or expanded investments in their workforce, such as wage increases, recruitment or retention bonuses, new or expanded benefits, hiring, professional development, or mental health supports.
- K. **Early childhood professionals have access to many affordable professional development opportunities.** The YWCA offers ample trainings and has several specialists to provide on-site technical assistance, including quality specialists, infant toddler specialists, and mental health consultants. They also have professional development advisors and higher education navigators who can help early childhood educators set career goals, plan a pathway to earn degree or credential, access scholarships and higher education programs. Training and technical assistance is also available for family child care educators to improve quality, accept CCAP payments, and get licensed, if desired. Family child care networks such as the Together for Childhood Network and the Kids Above All FCC network also provide training and professional support opportunities. The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) and the Gateways to Opportunity system also provide access to online training. In addition, school districts provide professional development opportunities to their staff, and North Chicago School District, at least, offers

training to child care educators in the community. Home visitors and doulas have access to professional development through Start Early. Lastly, the College of Lake County is an important resource. The Early Childhood Education program has received new grants this year from the state as well as private donations to support the incumbent workforce to develop their skills, complete a degree, and succeed in a career in early childhood education. Advancing racial equity and increasing the number of bilingual professionals in the field are a focus of these efforts, with part of the funding be used to develop and offer the early childhood courses in Spanish.

Opportunities

- N. **Early care and education programs have a severe staffing shortage. Compensation is too low to attract and retain professionals in the field.** Administrators reported these related issues as the biggest challenges they face. While staffing and compensation have always been a challenge in early childhood, this issue has been greatly exacerbated by the pandemic and the current social and economic climate. The crisis is especially acute in child care but is also a challenge in Early Head Start, home visiting, early intervention, and in community based (vs school district based) programs. For example, in early intervention, vacancies in service coordinator positions have become a statewide problem and was cited as an issue by the Lake County Child and Family Connections (CFC); in SFY 2022, the statewide vacancy rate was 0.1%, but as of September 2022, it is 10.5%. Staff at the Lake County CFC also noted particularly struggling to find occupational therapists and American Sign Language interpreters. Beyond low wages, many child care programs cannot afford to offer benefits like health insurance coverage, retirement plans, or paid time off. Programs are challenged to hire qualified staff and must invest in their training and professional growth, however, turnover is high, so programs must continually train and re-train new staff. Staffing issues impact access to care; in some programs, classrooms are closed because they cannot be staffed. Staffing issues (vacant positions, low qualifications/novice educators, and high



turnover) also significantly impact the quality of care and teaching. Note in the graphs above the similarities between child care employees and cashiers and the contrast with Kindergarten teachers in Lake County.⁴⁷

- O. **The Child Care Assistance Program reimbursement rates still do not cover the cost of quality care.** The current reimbursement rates⁴⁸ are close to the median price for care in Lake County, however, the prices and the market survey used to derive the reimbursement rates really reflect the maximum that parents can pay for care, the not actual cost of care, nor the cost of quality. According to the Narrow Cost Analysis Report published by IDHS, the cost of care often exceeds the maximum reimbursement amount per classroom.⁴⁹ Providers do receive an added 10% CCAP reimbursement if they are Silver rated in the ExceleRate quality rating and improvement system and 15% additional if they are Gold rated. This may close the gap at Silver, but because smaller group sizes are required for the Gold rating in programs with infants, toddlers, and two year olds, the cost of care at this level far exceeds the maximum CCAP reimbursement amount for a classroom and is only met with significant supplementary funding (e.g. Early Head Start). Importantly, the cost estimates in the report incorporate data from a statewide salary survey, and so do not take into account the increases that are likely needed to hire and retain qualified staff. Further, while some quality improvement funds, training and technical assistance are available to help child care providers meet the quality standards and receive higher reimbursements, most child care providers have remained at the licensed level of quality in the ExceleRate system. Providers, especially in family child care homes report needing more resources for equipment and materials. All reported needing more for staffing and compensation.
- P. **Professionals expressed that they want more access to professional development and support, especially regarding supporting children with special needs, supporting children's social emotional development and behavior, and culturally responsive practices.** Professionals, including home visitors and educators, also expressed the desire to learn more about how to work with parents of children with special needs, from identification and referral to supporting them with the EI/ECSE services. Educators want training, onsite support in the classroom, and the opportunity to learn with peers across sites.

Recommendations

Outlined below are recommendations that address the priorities that emerged from the data, surveys, interviews and focus groups. Included are recommended tactics for advocacy at the state and federal level, because greater public investment is needed to address the gaps at the scale required, as well as actions that could be taken at the local level with public and/or private funding to build on system strengths and address the opportunities for improvement.

Recommendation #1: Increase the number of slots in publicly funded programs to increase equitable access to high quality early care and education.

Opportunities Addressed: Early care and education opportunities are not accessible for many families in Lake County.

Rationale: There are not enough slots within or across publicly funded programs to serve the children and families who are eligible. There are especially not enough slots for full day programming, as most Preschool for All slots are half day. There are also not enough slots for high quality, comprehensive infant and toddler care with only 40 center-based Early Head Start slots and no center-based Prevention Initiative slots. Many programs were under-enrolled last year, however, this was primarily due to COVID-19 and parent apprehension to enroll due to the pandemic. Program leaders report enrollment is up this year. Other reasons for under-enrollment included under-staffing, half day programs not meeting families' needs, lack of awareness, and holding slots for children with IEPs that were ultimately not filled (issues to be addressed by other recommendations). There is likely still a significant unmet need.

Tactics: For large scale and long-term impact, support advocacy at the federal and state level to:

- Increase the number of federally funded Head Start and Early Head Start programs and slots, especially center-based Early Head Start and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships.
- Increase the number of state-funded Preschool for All programs and slots, especially Preschool for All – Expansion funds for full day programs.
- Increase the number of state-funded Prevention Initiative programs and slots, particularly for the center-based/high quality child care model which is similar to Early Head Start.
- See recommendation #2 for more about how to support advocacy.

Recommendation #2: Increase the affordability of high quality child care for families.

Opportunities Addressed: Child care is unaffordable for many families in Lake County.

Rationale: Child care is too expensive for most families in Lake County. It is not possible to significantly reduce the cost of care because margins are already very slim, and educators are earning at or close to minimum wage. Increasing utilization of current Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) funding is important. Expanding access to assistance is also needed to help close the gap for more families between the price of quality care and what families can pay.

Tactics:

- Increase utilization of the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) by families who are currently eligible.
- In the short-term and on a smaller scale, existing local public funding and/or new private funding could support a number of child care scholarships for families, focusing on families with lower incomes (e.g., up to 400% FPL, not eligible for CCAP, or on a wait list for CCAP, if CCAP becomes fully utilized and wait lists re-emerge) in priority partner communities. Scholarship amounts could cover the difference between the tuition cost and 7% of a family's income. Scholarship amounts would vary by family income, age of child/children, number of children in care, and center- or FCC- based programs.
 - For example, a family earning \$63,000/year should ideally pay not more than \$4,410 (7% of their income). A scholarship of \$5,990/year could cover the rest of the median cost of family child care for an infant (\$10,400). One million dollars could cover 166 such scholarships annually.
- For longer-term and larger scale impact, support advocacy at the federal, state and locals level to expand access to child care assistance and increase the number of families who can be served:
 - Increase income eligibility requirements for CCAP. Under current federal rules, income eligibility set by the state could be increased from where it is now at 225-275% FPL up to 400% FPL. Importantly, the policy should still prioritize lower income families for assistance.
 - Invest more federal and state funds in child care assistance, ultimately to ensure no family has to pay more than 7% of their income for quality child care.

To support advocacy, philanthropic organizations can fund advocacy activities to advance an early childhood agenda at the federal, state, and/or local level to increase publicly funded slots, subsidized child care and educator compensation (see recommendation #3 below). This can include funding advocacy organizations and/or local program leaders to lead or participate in advocacy activities and coalitions as they do not often have dedicated staff or time for these efforts. Advocacy activities can include organizing parent leaders, coordinating with other organizations, increasing local awareness and support for public investments in early childhood among local politicians, business leaders, the Lake County Chamber of Commerce, allied professionals (e.g., pediatricians, K-12 leaders), and the general public, etc. These local parent and community leader voices at the grassroots and

“grasstops” levels could then help amplify advocacy efforts at the state and federal level. At the local level, together they can build support to explore local/county funding strategies, including ways to use existing funds (e.g., cannabis taxes, property taxes, evidence-based funding from the state to school districts) to support early care and education as well as potential ways to raise new revenue for early childhood. Lake County Partners and others can help connect advocates to local business and government leaders and help amplify messages about the economic impacts of early care and education, both in regards to working parents and the workforce of the future. The Regional Office of Education and others can help connect advocates to local education and government leaders and help amplify messages about the long-term educational impacts of quality early care and education.

See this summary of the [Illinois Early Childhood Policy Landscape](#) for more information about the advocacy groups active on early childhood issues in the state.⁵⁰

Recommendation #3: Increase educator compensation to stabilize and support the workforce and improve quality over time.

Opportunities Addressed: Early care and education programs have a severe staffing shortage. Compensation is too low to attract and retain professionals in the field. The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) reimbursement rates do not cover the cost of quality care.

Rationale: Compensation for early childhood educators has always been low, however, now the field is in crisis with many vacant positions and high turnover. Access to early care and education programs cannot be expanded and quality cannot be increased without more educators willing to enter and stay in the field. Compensation must be increased, especially in community-based programs, without providing an additional cost burden on families.

Tactics:

- In the short-term and on a smaller scale, private funding could be used to provide grants to providers for staff compensation or stipends directly to staff (e.g., educator recruitment/retention bonuses) or to promote program partnerships to combine funding to increase compensation. These efforts should focus on priority partner communities, those serving low income families, bilingual professionals and professionals of color who reflect the language and culture of the families served.
- For longer-term and larger scale impact, support advocacy at the federal, state, and local level to increase funding for compensation for early childhood professionals.

The state of Illinois could:

- Adopt a salary scale for early childhood educators to create parity with kindergarten teachers.
- Increase reimbursement rates for CCAP to enable providers to increase staff compensation to meet the salary scale and other standards of quality at the Silver and Gold levels.
- Set minimum salary requirements in grants and contracts for CCAP, Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative.

The state or local public entities could:

- Provide grants to providers to sustain investments in the workforce made with the Strengthen and Grow Child Care grants especially for educators serving families with child care assistance.
- Provide supplementary compensation to the workforce directly through stipends or bonuses.
- Promote program partnerships and the braiding and blending of funding (e.g., Preschool for All and CCAP) to help increase compensation (see more on partnerships below).

Examples in Action for Recommendations 1-3:

- Other states have expanded access to the child care subsidy system, pre-k and infant toddler programs using a variety of strategies and revenue streams (in addition to use of general funds and increasing allocations in the state budget), such as cannabis taxes (Colorado and Washington), nicotine taxes (Colorado), and lottery funds (Georgia). Louisiana has enacted a set of innovative tax incentives known as the [School Readiness Tax Credits \(SRTCs\)](#) to support working families, child care providers, teachers and directors, and businesses that support early childhood education.
- Coalitions in multiple cities and counties across the country have organized referendums and rallied public support to raise local taxes specifically for early childhood education. For example:
 - In 2018, San Francisco voters passed Proposition C (Baby Prop C), a Commercial Rent Tax for Child Care and Early Education which expands access to child care assistance for families and increases compensation for early care and education professionals.
 - In 2022, voters in Orleans Parish in Louisiana passed an early childhood education millage to fund an additional 1000 slots in early childhood programs (80% of funding) and to support center expansion and start-up

grants, family outreach and coordinated enrollment, educator professional development, staffing, program evaluation and oversight.

- The Children's Trust is a dedicated source of revenue derived from property taxes, established by voter referendum in Miami-Dade County in 2002. Its mission is to partner with the community to plan, advocate for and fund strategic investments in improving the lives of children and families. Today, it funds Thrive by 5, an array of services for young children and families, including increased access to early intervention, home visiting, and high quality child care. Funding also supports child care scholarships and educator salary supplements, which are based on a combination of years of experience, education/credentials, and demonstrated teaching quality (measured by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System).
- Local governments are also finding ways to support early childhood in their community planning efforts. For example, The County of Santa Cruz, in California requires new building developments to pay a fee based on the related impact on the child care market. These fees partially fund a child care loan program for facilities.
- Start Early recently created a report about ways states are addressing [Equitable Compensation for the Early Childhood Workforce](#).⁵¹ See also the [Illinois Consensus Statement on Early Childhood Educator Compensation](#) for strategies the state is exploring to increase compensation.⁵²

Recommendation #4: Increase support for high quality, affordable early care and education in family child care home settings through greater funding and child care networks.

Opportunities Addressed: The Child Care Assistance Program is underutilized. Families and providers report the application process for Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) is arduous and slow. The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) reimbursement rates still do not cover the cost of quality care.

Rationale: Family child care is a large and critical part of the early care and education system in Lake County. Family child care settings are preferred by many families, because of the small group sizes, the access for infant care, the extended hours, the bilingual educators, and the lower cost. Greater funding for family child care providers could help them meet high quality standards, increase access to affordable, quality care for families, and increase compensation for these educators.

Supporting family child care networks could further bolster these programs financially, and assist them with managing administrative tasks associated with public funding. Specifically, providers could receive support from the network with CCAP, reducing the

administrative burden with billing, and providing a steady income to serve families with CCAP without waiting for reimbursement from the state. Providers can also receive administrative assistance from the network with the Child and Adult Care Food Program to support them financially to provide nutritious meals and snacks. Providers can market their programs through the network, and the network can coordinate enrollment. Networks can also reduce costs through joint purchasing (e.g. buying hand sanitizer and masks in bulk) or sharing supports like a quality specialist/instructional coach, a benefits navigator, or a substitute pool. Providers can receive training and technical assistance through the network to get licensed, meet requirements for CCAP, and improve quality. Networks can also provide families with personalized assistance in applying for CCAP and faster approval (vs. the YWCA as the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency). Also, families can feel more assured of quality knowing the network staff are observing and supporting the individual providers.

Tactics:

- In the short-term and on a smaller scale, ensure any private funding or efforts to increase affordability of child care for families (e.g. scholarships), and compensation for the workforce (stipends or grants) are inclusive of family child care providers.
- Offer financial incentives and supports to family child care providers to learn about child development and ways to support early learning (e.g., [PASO: Providers Advancing School Outcomes](#)), to become licensed, to meet requirements to accept CCAP, to advance in their credentials and/or in ExceleRate, the Quality Rating and Improvement System.
- Local investments could be made to expand existing family child care networks in the short-term and/or seed new ones in the medium and long term. Advocacy with the state may be needed to expand these rare arrangements for site administered CCAP contracts with networks.
- For longer-term and large scale impact, support advocacy at the state level to:
 - Increase child care reimbursement rates and/or increase compensation for family child care educators.
 - Allow state Early Childhood Block Grant funding (Preschool for All, Preschool for All Expansion, and Prevention Initiative) to be used to support programming in family child care settings. This would help increase access for families to publicly funded slots by leveraging these settings. It would also help increase compensation for family child care educators and help cover the cost of quality.

Examples in Action:

- Other states, such as Oregon, have significantly expanded access to state pre-k and high-quality infant-toddler care by funding and supporting programming in family child care settings.
- Networks like the Kids Above All family child care network in Lake County and the Child Care Network of Evanston have “site administered contracts” with IDHS for the Child Care Assistance program that they use to support child care at multiple sites in their network.
- Additional examples of shared service networks for family child care and small centers include: the [Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network](#) and [Sound Child Care Solutions Seattle](#).

Recommendation #5: Increase the availability of full-day and extended-day options for preschool-aged children through program partnerships.

Opportunities Addressed: There are not enough full day pre-K programs in schools or extended hours for care; Early care and education programs have a severe staffing shortage. Compensation is too low to attract and retain professionals in the field.

Rationale: First, research shows that children who experience full-day preschool programming consistently reap more benefits in the full array of developmental domains than children who only experience half-day programming.⁵³ Secondly but equally as importantly, working families need a full working day of care for their children. A strength of community-based providers typically offer the option of longer hours, whereas only 14% of the Lake County school districts offer a full-day pre-k option. A strength of school districts is the resources they are able to marshal to retain a consistent, highly qualified early childhood workforce. Partnerships between school districts and community-based providers could leverage these strengths to create a more seamless, affordable early care and education experience for families that is responsive to their needs. Furthermore, fostering partnerships between school districts and child care centers that accept CCAP and free Head Start programs would support families with the most need for affordable care for the full working day. These partnerships would also bolster child care programs that have struggled to serve their community due to the high costs of care and significant staffing challenges.

Tactics: Providing more opportunities for full and extended day care will require strong partnerships that are intentionally created between school districts and community-based child care providers such as child care and Head Start. This can be done in several ways:

- School districts could coordinate with community-based providers and provide transportation for children from part day preschool at a school to/from the community-based setting for the rest of the day. School districts would offer transportation to a parents' preferred child care (within reason), not just a limited set of child care centers within their district boundaries. Philanthropic foundations could help fund the costs associated with this transportation. The downside of this strategy is that these daily transitions can be disruptive and difficult for young children.
- School districts could contract with community-based child care providers to provide before- and after-school care in the school building which children can attend after their preschool session. The downside of this strategy is that many districts with part-day programs are offering morning and afternoon sessions and so may not have extra space to serve the same number of children for a full day.
- Districts could partner with child care or Head Start providers to offer an extended day program in one location with braided or blended public funding (i.e., Preschool for All, Title I, Child Care Assistance Program, Head Start). This could be a preschool program housed in the child care facilities with district-employed educators for part of the day and child care or Head Start employees teaching children the rest of the day. Alternatively, the child care provider could have a sub-contract from the district to fully deliver the preschool program and child care with their own staff.
- Philanthropy could provide resources that fund collaborative time for school districts and community-based providers to plan how they could partner to provide more full/extended-day options. They could also fund a pilot for several school districts to partner with community-based providers to increase full/extended-day options, and then the lessons learned from that pilot could be shared with other Lake County districts.

Examples in Action: Chicago Public Schools and the City of Chicago's Department of Family & Support Services partner with community-based children care providers to braid Preschool For All, center-based Prevention Initiative and Child Care Assistance Program funding to provide full-day care and education to children from birth to five.

Recommendation #6: Increase support for infants, toddlers, and their families through school district/child care partnerships.

Strengths Addressed: School districts are increasingly supporting children birth to three.

Rationale: By getting more plugged into what is happening with infant/toddler care in their community, school districts can connect earlier with the children and families who will eventually arrive in their schools. This gives them more time to build trusting

partnerships with families. Furthermore, schools often naturally play the role of a community hub so they are well-positioned to connect families with community resources that can support the families' wellbeing, which can even include referrals to the infant/toddler care providers that the school district connects with. By becoming more connected to the providers of infant/toddler care, school districts help create a more cohesive experience for children and families throughout their early years as they transition from community-based settings to the school district. Ultimately, this leads to the child's learning and development being supported as early as possible so that they have a strong foundation once they reach the district.

Tactics:

- School districts should identify all providers of infant/toddler care in their community and begin outreach efforts with them.
- School districts can offer benefits to infant/toddler providers who build a partnership with them, such as free classroom materials, professional development opportunities, listing on the school district's website as a child care provider available in the area, and free access to school district facilities for their own events.
- As stronger relationships are built with the school district, child care providers can begin to share information about their children with the school district (with family consent) so that the district can begin outreach efforts to the families. Once connected with the families, school districts can offer referrals to community resources, free books and other learning materials, information about their school district's early childhood programs, and other resources.
- Philanthropy could provide funding to school districts to facilitate all the activities above that help them connect with infant/toddler care providers and the children and families they serve. Philanthropy could also fund a pilot for several school districts to build their connection to the infant/toddler community, and then the lessons learned from that pilot could be shared with other Lake County districts. This funding could also support 1.0 FTE staff that serves as a Birth-3 Coordinator for participating districts.
- School districts and child care providers could partner to apply for center-based Prevention Initiative funding.

Examples in Action: School districts in three of the largest Priority Partner Communities, Waukegan, Round Lake and North Chicago have invested in building home visiting programs or programs similar to home visiting that target prenatal mothers and children birth to three. Additionally, North Chicago School District 187 has invested heavily in

building partnerships with their community's child care providers. With the leadership of the Superintendent and the Director of Student Achievement, the district spent a year going door-to-door and working with the YWCA to identify and recruit child care educators in the North Chicago area. These educators now meet monthly on Saturdays with district staff and are provided with professional development, peer-to-peer problem solving, books and materials for their programs, and opportunities to connect their children and families to the school district's resources.

Recommendation #7: Increase the availability of inclusive environments for children with special needs to learn alongside their typically developing peers across all early learning settings.

Opportunities Addressed: Families with children with special needs struggle to access inclusive, high-quality early care and education; Early childhood professionals expressed that they want more access to professional development and support, especially regarding supporting children with special needs.

Rationale: Not only does federal law (IDEA) require that children receive their special education services in the least restrictive environment, but research shows that both children with special needs and typically developing children benefit from inclusive early learning environments. Furthermore, by ensuring the least restrictive environment can be made available across all early learning settings, not just schools, families have greater options for the placement of their child in a setting that may be more conducive to their needs and preferences (e.g., full day care, culturally and/or linguistically responsive staff). It also allows families to choose to reduce disruptive transitions for children in community-based settings who instead would be bussed to schools from their community-based settings in order to receive their special education services. School districts are already doing an excellent job increasing the availability of inclusive classrooms for children with disabilities; there is an opportunity to build on this experience and use their expertise to expand inclusion to the community-based settings that parents may prefer or that children will go to anyways after the half-day programming the school district offers.

Tactics: School districts, as the early childhood providers in the community typically with the most financial resources and most stable workforce, should lead a process to build stronger partnerships with child care and Head Start so they can collaboratively serve all children in their community with disabilities and delays in their least restrictive environment. This process of increasing partnerships to facilitate inclusion could include the following steps:

- School district administrators/leaders learn about the benefits and necessities of partnering with community-based early childhood providers to support inclusion, such as by reading the [Strengthening Early Childhood Inclusion](#) report by Start Early⁵⁴ and learning about the experiences of other communities that have

increased inclusion in community-based setting. They can review the [Community, Local Program and Early Care and Education Environment Indicators of High-Quality Inclusion](#) as well which highlight the need for school districts and community-based providers to partner.⁵⁵ This need for partnership may require a mindset shift for some school district leaders so this learning period is important.

- School district leaders identify the community-based providers serving 3-5 year olds within their district boundaries and begin setting up opportunities to reflect with them on how to collaboratively support inclusion in their community. This could start with shared professional development opportunities on inclusion for both school district and community-based staff. Philanthropic funders could support these opportunities for building relationships and shared understanding between school districts and community-based providers.
- Philanthropic funders could financially support a pilot with several school districts who are ready to test out an itinerant model for providing ECSE services in community-based early childhood programs within their district boundaries. This pilot could test several versions of itinerant models such as school district ECSE staff co-teaching for the full day with child care providers in their community-based program, school district ECSE staff providing coaching to child care providers on their inclusive practices, and/or itinerant ECSE teachers and specialists traveling to community-based programs for part of the day to provide services to individual children.
- Learning from the lessons of the pilot, additional school districts use their increased IDEA funding from the 117th Congress's omnibus bill⁵⁶ in addition to potential philanthropic funding to start building their own models of providing inclusive ECSE services more often in community-based settings.

Examples in Action: Start Early staff compiled this list of [case studies of other communities nationwide that provide ECSE services in community-based settings](#), including Atlanta, GA, Guilford County, NC, Palm Beach County, FL, and Wake County, NC. In Illinois, three school districts – Collinsville CUSD 10, Mannheim SD 83, Springfield SD 186 – have implemented the Implementing, Sustaining and Scaling-Up High-Quality Inclusion project that Lake County districts could learn from.⁵⁷

Recommendation #8: Increase awareness of the benefits of early intervention (EI) and reduce the delays children and families experience in receiving their early intervention services.

Opportunities Addressed: Parents report that pediatricians are not making timely referrals to EI. There is a waitlist for early intervention services, especially for in-person services. There is a shortage of staff who reflect the language and culture of children and families.

Rationale: Parents who received EI services in Lake County were overwhelmingly satisfied with the positive impact on their child’s development. State-level policy changes increased the number of children and families who are now eligible for EI, and Lake County needs to explore how it can respond to these policy changes and ensure that all children who are eligible can experience the clear benefits that families in EI have reported.

Tactics:

- For longer-term and large-scale impact, support advocacy to:
 - Increase state and federal funding to respond to projected growth in demand for EI services.
 - Continue annual rate increases to improve recruitment and retention of EI professionals.
 - Decrease Service Coordinator caseloads to increase the quality of care families receive and promote Service Coordinator retention⁵⁸
- The Child and Family Connections at the Lake County Health Department can lead, and philanthropists can fund an effort to ensure primary referral sources for EI, especially health professionals, early childhood providers and families, understand EI eligibility criteria and the benefits of EI services, including virtual services. This would include efforts to increase referrals from birthing hospitals and neonatal intensive care units to EI for infants with identified disabilities or risks for delays. This would also include efforts or initiatives to increase developmental screening and referrals from pediatricians to EI, rather than taking a “wait and see” approach.
- Philanthropists could fund a collaborative investigation between Child and Family Connections staff, EI providers, higher education faculty, and pre-service professionals/students about barriers to educating, recruiting, and retaining a more robust EI workforce and how to build a more equitable, accessible student pipeline for the future. This investigation could focus specifically on how to build a workforce that includes more Spanish-speaking EI providers and providers of color who better reflect the population receiving services. It could also focus on building the workforce in disciplines that are currently sparse in Lake County, such as occupational therapy.

Examples in Action: The [Raising Illinois coalition](#), led by Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI), Erikson Institute, Ever Thrive Illinois, Illinois Action for Children, Start Early, and Women Employed, is currently pursuing advocacy on many of the tactics described above to increase awareness of and access to EI services in Illinois.

Recommendation #9: Increase family awareness and utilization of services through greater coordination of outreach, referrals, and enrollment.

Opportunities Addressed: Families have difficulty searching for and finding child care or a preschool to meet their needs. Parents expressed they want more support with parenting and child development.

Rationale: The early childhood system is complex and comprised of an overlapping network of programs and services that have different eligibility requirements and are administered by different entities that are not always connected. There are multiple points of entry into this system for a family, and depending on where they enter, they often lack access to information about the full breadth of programs/services for which they could be eligible and that could benefit them. Families and children are more likely to get their comprehensive needs met when the administrators and providers of each component of the early childhood system coordinate so that, no matter where a family enters, they can easily learn about and enroll in the programs and services that would most benefit them. Ensuring that there is no wrong door and creating opportunities to centralize points of contact simplifies the experience for families during a hectic time when their children are young.

Tactics: Coordinating across early childhood programs occurs along a spectrum from a lightly coordinated system that requires less start-up effort to a highly coordinated system that requires more start-up effort. Early childhood administrators/providers could collaborate on and philanthropists could help fund or incentivize participation in coordinated enrollment efforts such as:

- **Improving the child care information available to families.**
 - Advocacy should be supported to improve the state websites ([DCFS Provider Look up](#) and [Illinois Care for Kids](#)) and Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Services to make it easier for families to find child care to meet their needs. This includes changing the Illinois Department of Human Services administrative rule about publicly sharing whether individual child care providers accept Child Care Assistance Program payments or not and incorporating this information into the databases and searchable criteria, along with up-to-date information on ages served, hours of operation, languages spoken, location, and ideally current openings.
- **Coordinated information campaigns.** This would involve:
 - Asking all early childhood programs and services in Lake County to share outreach materials (in English and Spanish) for all other parts of the system with their parents, and/or working to create and distribute coordinated

informational resources (digital and print) help educate parents about the different early learning and family support program options. The outreach materials should include at a minimum, brief descriptions, contact information, and links for:

- The Lake County Health Department and its programs (iGrow, WIC, Child and Family Connections, health clinic, mental health supports)
 - The YWCA of Metro Chicago as the CCR&R
 - The YWCA and One Hope United as Head Start/Early Head Start providers
 - The elementary school districts
 - 211/United Way of Lake County which can connect families to full breadth of resources they may need
 - United Way of Lake County Success by 6, especially Bright by Text which helps create 'surround sound' messaging for all families about key developmental milestones, early learning strategies to use at home, community resources and upcoming events
- Distributing information about all early childhood programs and services at natural gathering points for families. This could include distribution in hospitals as part of a welcome kits for new babies, at pediatricians' offices, at park districts, libraries, churches, laundromats, and social service locations. Social media, especially Facebook mom groups, should also be utilized.
- **Coordinated eligibility determination**, which would create one way, such as a unified eligibility application, for families to know what they qualify for, as well as a community referral system so families could connect to the programs they qualify for once they know.
 - **Coordinated applications**, which involves a single application that is used universally by all early childhood programs during a shared open enrollment period. Programs also collaborate on waitlist management.
 - **Matching based on preference**, which involves enrolling families across early childhood programs based on families' preferences and programs' capacity on a rolling basis through the entire year.⁵⁹

Examples in Action: iGrow at the Lake County Health Department is a coordinated enrollment system for all the home visiting and doula programs in Lake County. This simplifies access for families by having one primary point of contact, and it helps increase

enrollment and reduce wait lists across home visiting programs. Chicago has implemented a coordinated application for preschool called [Chicago Early Learning](#) in which families can use one application to apply to their preferred preschool programs across Chicago Public Schools and community-based programs.⁶⁰ Louisiana also has a robust [coordinated enrollment system](#) through their Ready Start Networks.

Recommendation #10: Center family and provider voice in all decisions that will impact the early childhood system.

Rationale: Families are the primary users and beneficiaries of the early childhood system. Family voice should continue to be centered in system assessment and improvement planning, and they should have power in decision making.

Tactics:

- Early childhood programs and administrators as well as philanthropists should work in partnership with the Birth to Five Action Council, including the family advisory council for the Lake County Region. As plans and investments are considered, work with the council to test assumptions and ideas, to build and strengthen partnerships, to plan solutions collaboratively, and coordinate public and private investments.
- Families should also be included in exploration and planning of new initiatives within specific school districts and with specific program providers

Conclusion

Through this assessment of the Lake County early childhood system, we have identified many strengths to build on as well as opportunities to improve. The funded capacity in publicly funded programs has increased in recent years and enrollments are recovering after dropping at the beginning of the pandemic. Income eligibility and access to the child care assistance program (CCAP) has expanded. The professional development supports for the workforce are strong and have increased with new scholarships and higher education navigators. School Districts are taking a greater role in early learning, including for infants and toddlers, and they are offering more inclusive blended, preschool classrooms. The infrastructure is growing stronger to connect families to programs and resources, for example, with iGrow, the YWCA of Metro Chicago as the relatively new CCR&R and new Head Start grantee, and 211 services through the United Way.

Yet along with these assets, there are also opportunities for improvement. Currently, there are not enough publicly funded slots to serve all eligible children, the CCAP program is underutilized, and many families cannot afford the cost of care. Early intervention has a waiting list and many children with special needs are still not served in inclusive settings. Efforts to expand access will

be challenged unless significant investments are made to support the early childhood workforce. In addition to advocacy to address these issues at scale, local action can be taken to build partnerships and networks to share resources, braid and blend funds, increase compensation, and increase equitable access for families to the types of early learning programs that will meet their needs and help their children develop to their fullest potential.

Sharing the information in this report back with the group full group of partners, the program leaders (especially those who provided information and who serve in the priority partner communities), and the Birth to Five Action Council will be important next steps to demonstrate transparency, express gratitude for their contributions, and build trust. Program leaders and educators across program settings would benefit from multiple opportunities to dialogue about the findings, discuss the recommendations, and explore ways they can work together to strengthen the Lake County system. Continuing to build relationships across the system and promote collective effort will have the greatest impact over time. With families, professionals, and community members as partners, the system can be improved to better support families and help children in Lake County thrive.

Appendix A

Priority Partner Community Demographic and Economic Data

Northeast: Waukegan

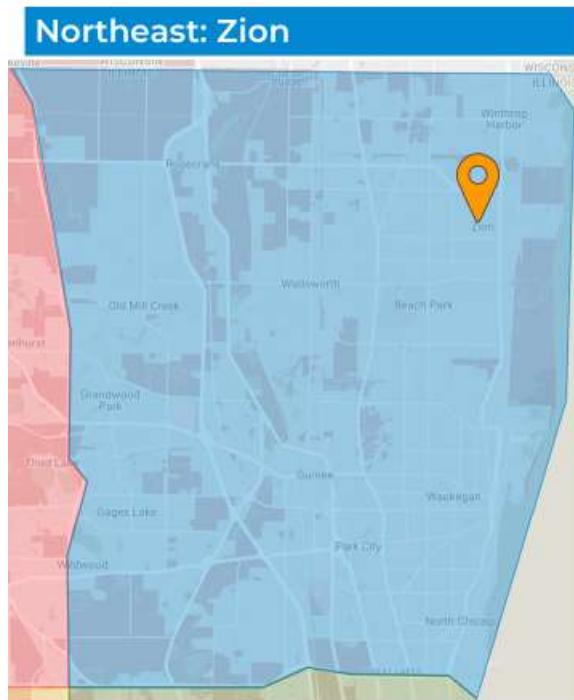
Waukegan Demographics	2020 data
Total Population	89,361
Households	29,822
Total children 5 and <5	8,552
Children 0-2 years old	3,971
Children 3-5 years old	4,581
Limited English-speaking households	Spanish- 9.58% Other- 1.25%
Economic Well-Being	
Children 5 and <5 with 1 working parent	3,280
Children 5 and <5 with 2 working parents	2,526
Population Living in Poverty	
Children 5 and <5 in poverty (100% FPL)	1,652
Children 5 and <5 low income (200% FPL)	4,331

Children 0-4 Race/Ethnicity

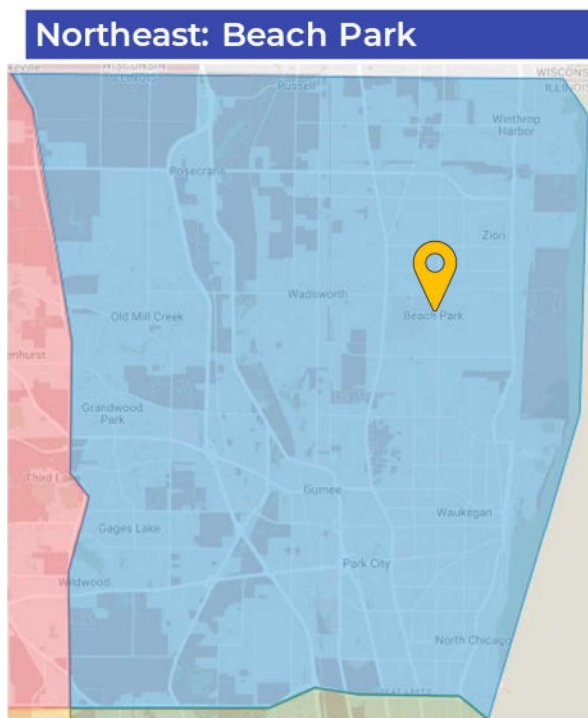
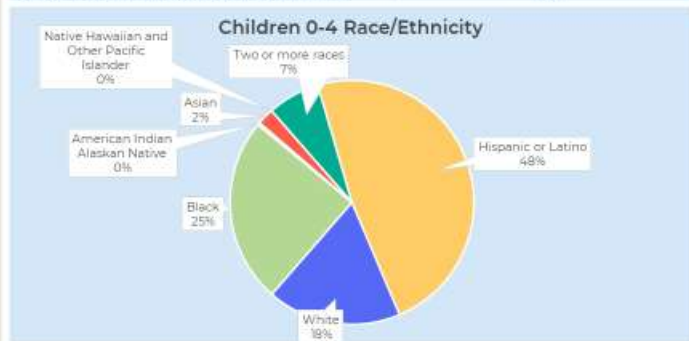
Northeast: North Chicago

North Chicago Demographics	2020 data
Total Population	29,967
Households	7,694
Total children 5 and <5	1,872
Children 0-2 years old	1,057
Children 3-5 years old	815
Limited Englishspeaking households	Spanish- 5.56% Other- .69%
Economic Well-Being	
Children 5 and <5 with 1 working parent	3,280
Children 5 and <5 with 2 working parents	2,526
Population Living in Poverty	
Children 5 and <5 in poverty (100% FPL)	468
Children 5 and <5 low income (200% FPL)	1,111

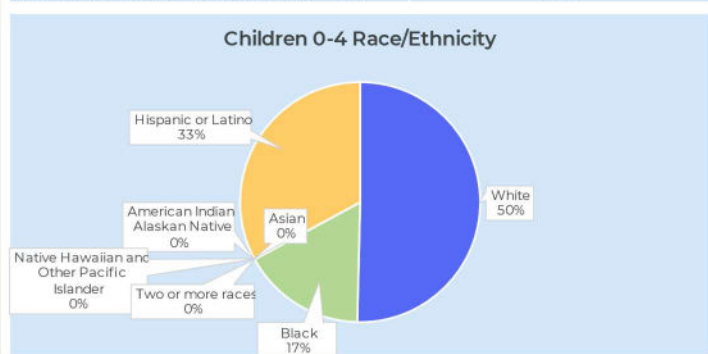
Children 0-4 Race/Ethnicity



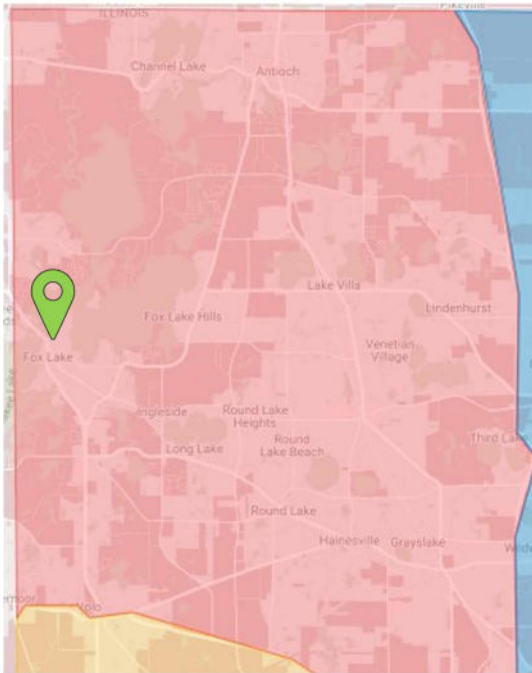
Zion Demographics	2020 data
Total Population	23,677
Households	8,815
Total children 5 and <5	1,514
Children 0-2 years old	685
Children 3-5 years old	829
Limited English-speaking households	Spanish- 2.50% Other- 1.20%
Economic Well-Being	
Children 5 and <5 with 1 working parent	782
Children 5 and <5 with 2 working parents	365
Population Living in Poverty	
Children 5 and <5 in poverty (100% FPL)	508
Children 5 and <5 low income (200% FPL)	901



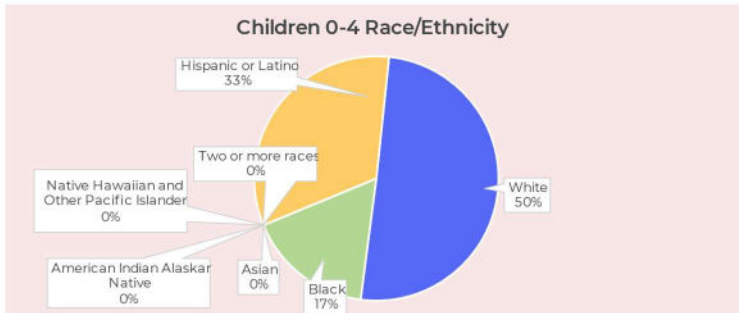
Beach Park Demographics	2020 data
Total Population	13,433
Households	4,427
Total children 5 and <5	1,350
Children 0-2 years old	807
Children 3-5 years old	543
Limited Englishspeaking households	Spanish- 3.24% Other- .10%
Economic Well-Being	
Children 5 and <5 with 1 working parent	302
Children 5 and <5 with 2 working parents	416
Population Living in Poverty	
Children 5 and <5 in poverty (100% FPL)	302
Children 5 and <5 low income (200% FPL)	416



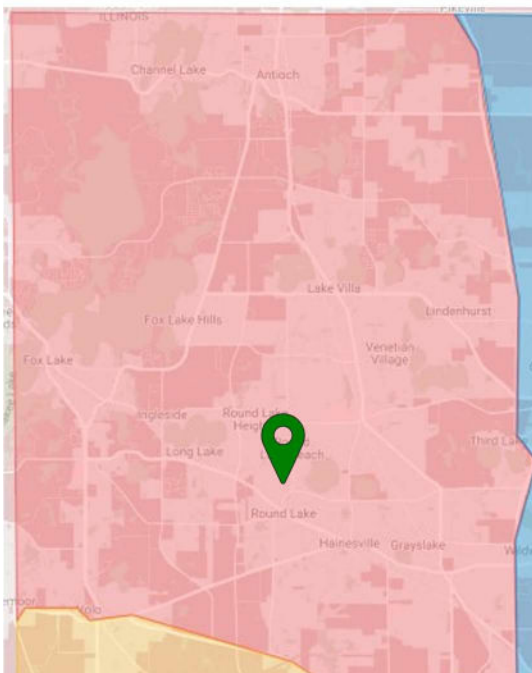
Northwest: Fox Lake



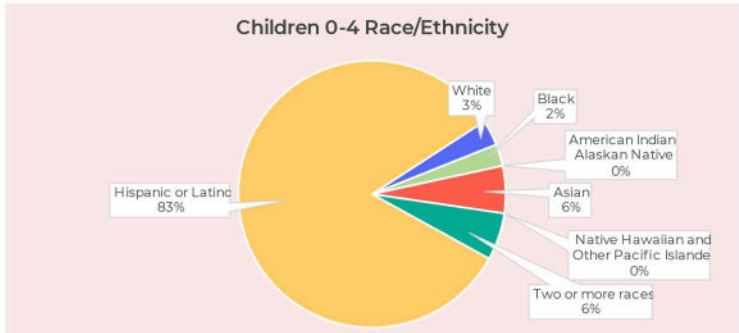
Fox Lake Demographics	2020 data
Total Population	10,739
Households	4,911
Total children 5 and <5	833
Children 0-2 years old	490
Children 3-5 years old	343
Limited Englishspeaking households	Spanish- 0.45% Other- 0.74%
Economic Well-Being	
Children 5 and <5 with 1 working parent	262
Children 5 and <5 with 2 working parents	243
Population Living in Poverty	
Children 5 and <5 in poverty (100%FPL)	138
Children 5 and <5 low income (200% FPL)	281

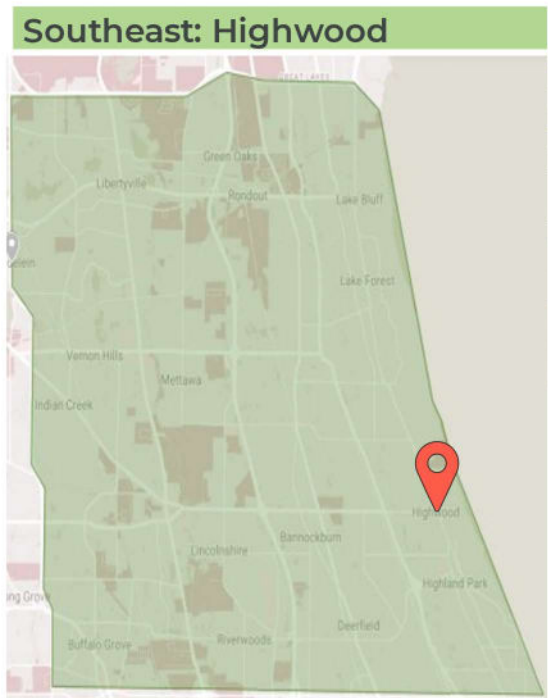


Northwest: Round Lake Area

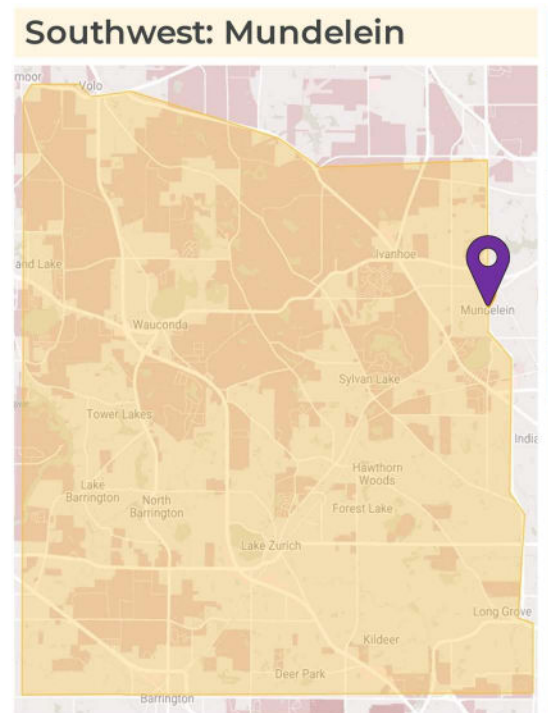
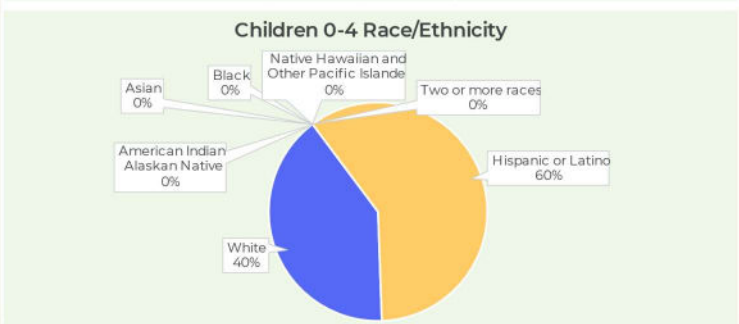


Round Lake Area Demographics	2020 data
Total Population	56,301
Households	18,333
Total children 5 and <5	5,087
Children 0-2 years old	1,030
Children 3-5 years old	4,057
Limited Englishspeaking households	Spanish- 10.96% Other- 8.70%
Economic Well-Being	
Children 5 and <5 with 1 working parent	825
Children 5 and <5 with 2 working parents	2,004
Population Living in Poverty	
Children 5 and <5 in poverty (100%FPL)	517
Children 5 and <5 low income (200% FPL)	1862

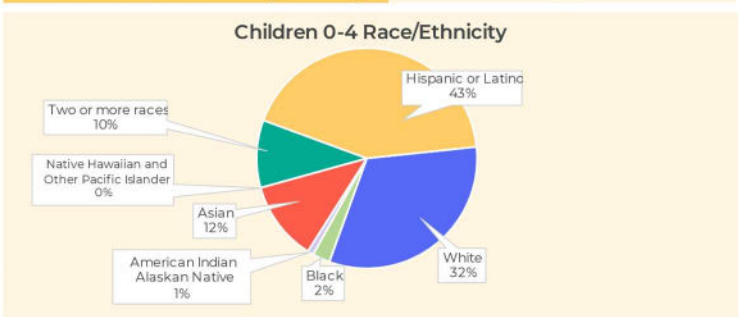




Highwood Demographics	2020 data
Total Population	5,293
Households	1,967
Total children 5 and <5	693
Children 0-2 years old	368
Children 3-5 years old	325
Limited Englishspeaking households	Spanish- 2.83% Other- 0.39%
Economic Well-Being	
Children 5 and <5 with 1 working parent	191
Children 5 and <5 with 2 working parents	314
Population Living in Poverty	
Children 5 and <5 in poverty (100%FPL)	214
Children 5 and <5 low income (200% FPL)	287



Mundelein Demographics	2020 Data
Total Population	31,564
Households	11,085
Total children 5 and <5	2,956
Children 0-2 years old	1,473
Children 3-5 years old	1,483
Limited Englishspeaking households	Spanish- 5.91% Other- 5.51%
Economic Well-Being	
Children 5 and <5 with 1 working parent	353
Children 5 and <5 with 2 working parents	1,287
Population Living in Poverty	
Children 5 and <5 in poverty (100%FPL)	249
Children 5 and <5 low income (200% FPL)	701

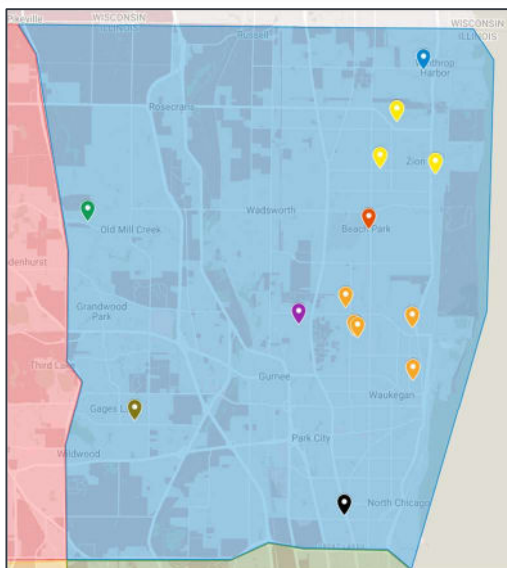


Appendix B

The charts below illustrate which school districts provide each type of early childhood program.

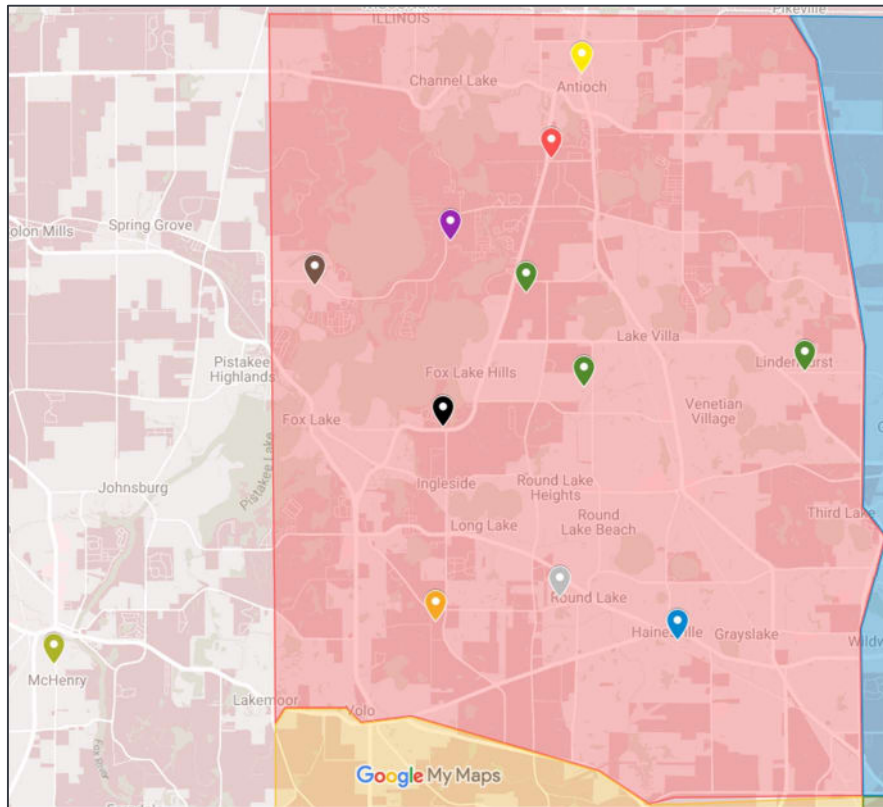
Northeast: School District Providers of EC Programs & Program Types

Northeast School District Early Childhood Programs									
	Beach Park	Gurnee	Millburn	North Chicago	Waukegan	Winthrop Harbor	Woodland	Zion	NE Total
Map Key									
Part-Day	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not reported		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6 programs
Full-Day			Not reported	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		2 programs
Preschool For All		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6 programs
Tuition-based			Not reported						0 programs
ECSE Self-Contained	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not reported	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6 programs
ECSE Blended		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not reported	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6 programs
Home visiting			Not reported		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				1 program



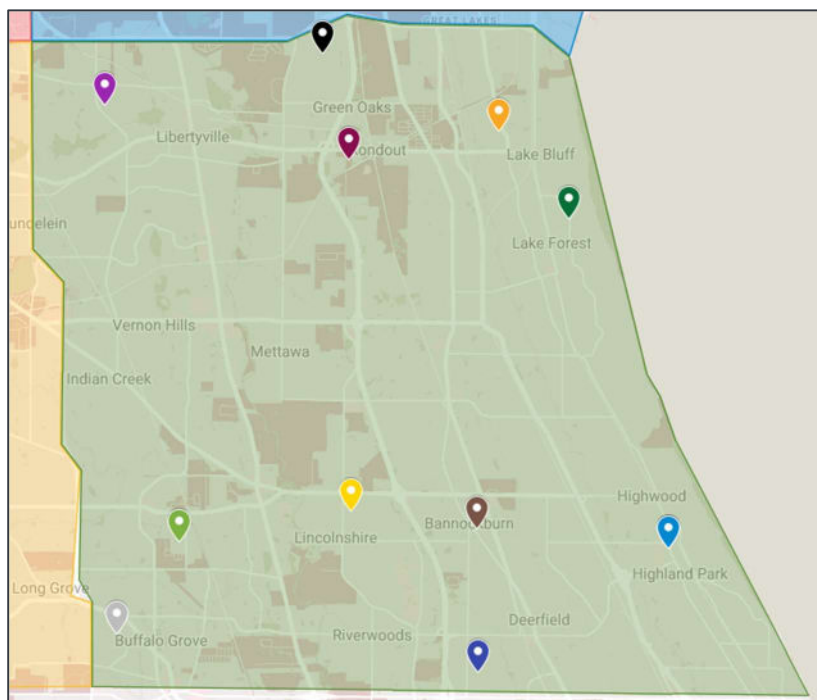
Northwest: School District Providers of EC Programs & Program Types

Northwest School District Early Childhood Programs											
	Antioch	Big Hollow	Emmons	Fox Lake	Gavin	Grass Lake	Grayslake	Lake Villa	McHenry	Round Lake	NW Total
Map Key											
Part-Day	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9 programs
Full-Day				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							1 program
Preschool For All	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5 programs
Tuition-based		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				Not reported	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Not reported		2 programs
ECSE Self-Contained	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Not reported	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not reported	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5 programs
ECSE Blended	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not reported	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not reported	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7 programs
Home visiting		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				Not reported			Not reported	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2 programs



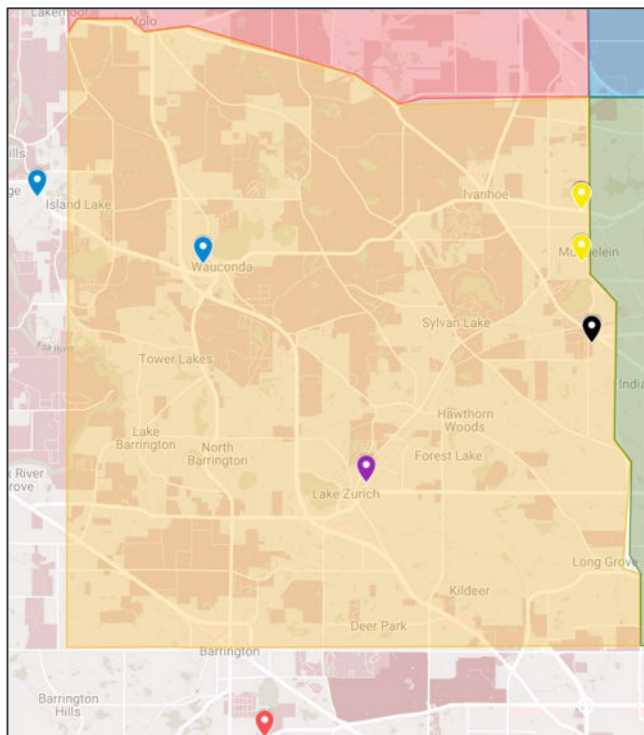
Southeast: School District Providers of EC Programs & Program Types

Southeast School District Early Childhood Programs												
	Aptakisic-Tripp	Bannockburn	Deerfield	Kildeer	Lake Bluff	Lake Forest	Libertyville	Lincolnshire-Prairie View	North Shore	Oak Grove	Rondout	SE Total
Map Key												
Part-Day	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not reported	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			8 programs
Full-Day		Not reported	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								2 programs
Preschool For All												0 programs
Tuition-based	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not reported	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not reported				5 programs
ECSE Self-Contained	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			4 programs
ECSE Blended	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not reported	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not reported			6 programs
Home visiting	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported					Not reported				0 programs



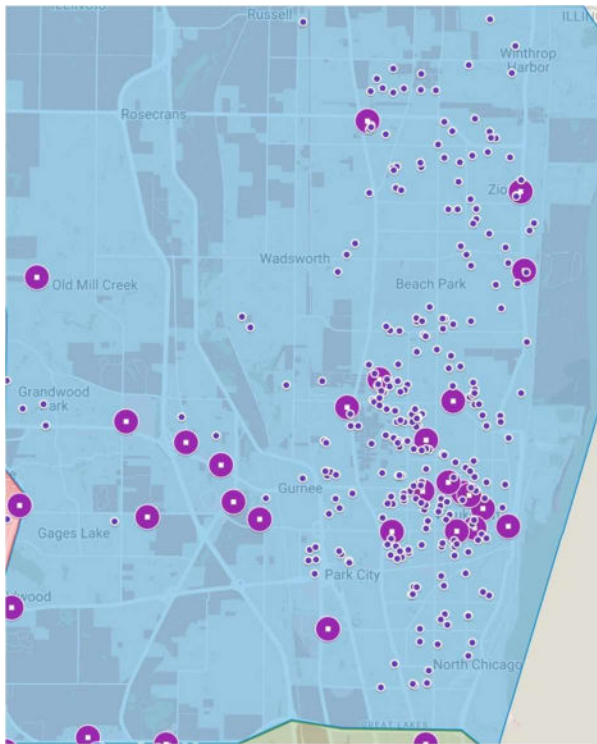
Southwest: School District Providers of EC Programs & Program Types

Southwest School District Early Childhood Programs								
	Barrington	Diamond Lake	Fremont	Hawthorn	Lake Zurich	Mundelein	Wauconda	SE Total
Map Key								
Part-Day	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7 programs
Full-Day								0 programs
Preschool For All	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5 programs
Tuition-based		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not reported	Not reported	3 programs
ECSE Self-Contained	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not reported	4 programs
ECSE Blended	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not reported	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6 programs
Home visiting						Not reported	Not reported	0 programs



Appendix C

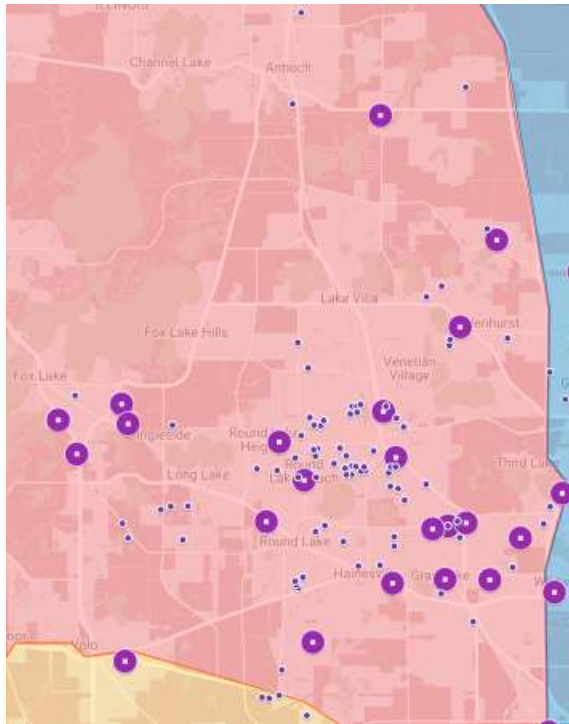
Northeast: Child Care Providers and Key Characteristics



Northeast Lake County Child Care Providers					
	Beach Park	North Chicago	Waukegan	Zion	Total Northeast
Total Number of Licensed Child Care Providers	22	14	171	49	303
Number of Licensed Centers	1	1	14	2	26
Number of Licensed Family Child Care Home	21	13	157	47	277
Number of Providers Billing for CCAP	37	56	293	103	561
Licensed Capacity (all ages 0-12)	234	207	2430	530	4922
% of Providers Licensed to Serve Infants	95%	85%	95%	94%	97%
% of Providers Licensed for Night Hours	73%	86%	74%	69%	83%
% Spanish Speaking	36%	14%	53%	37%	51%
Number at Gold Circle of Quality	0	0	2	0	4
Number at Silver Circle of Quality	1	0	5	1	7
Number at Bronze Circle of Quality	1	1	14	1	17

● Licensed Family Child Care Home
○ Licensed Child Care Center

Northwest: Child Care Providers and Key Characteristics



Northwest Lake County Child Care Providers			
	Round Lake Area	Fox Lake	Total Northwest
Total Number of Licensed Child Care Providers	58	2	115
Number of Licensed Centers	6	1	23
Number of Licensed Family Child Care Home	52	2	92
Number of Providers Billing for CCAP	82	0	122
Licensed Capacity (all ages 0-12)	1263	105	3443
% of Providers Licensed to Serve Infants	95%	50%	94%
% of Providers Licensed for Night Hours	51%	50%	68%
% Spanish Speaking	52%	0%	38%
Number at Gold Circle of Quality	1	0	1
Number at Silver Circle of Quality	2	0	4
Number at Bronze Circle of Quality	5	0	10

● Licensed Family Child Care Home
○ Licensed Child Care Center

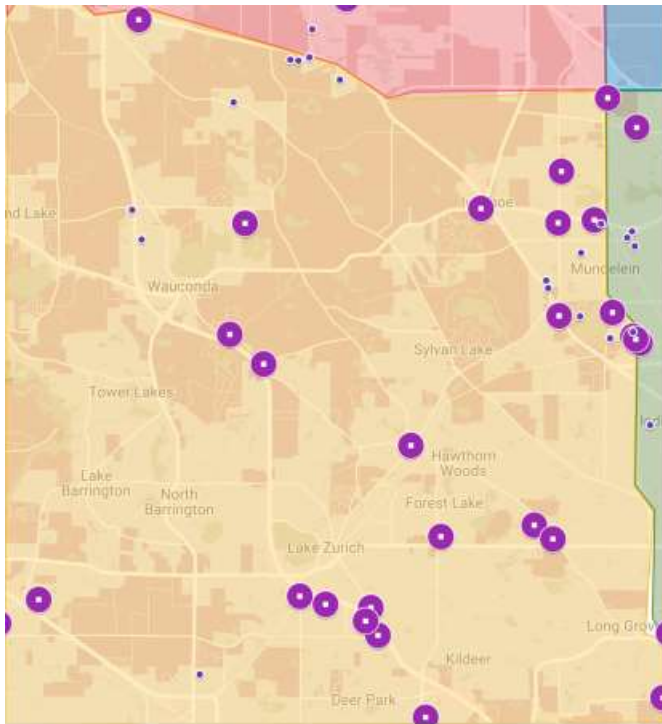
Southeast: Child Care Providers and Key Characteristics



Southeast Lake County Child Care Providers		
	Highwood	Total Southeast
Total Number of Licensed Child Care Providers	2	78
Number of Licensed Centers	0	53
Number of Licensed Family Child Care Home	2	24
Number of Providers Billing for CCAP	0	25
Licensed Capacity (all ages 0-12)	12	4878
% of Providers Licensed to Serve Infants	100%	63%
% of Providers Licensed for Night Hours	0%	15%
% Spanish Speaking	50%	4%
Number at Gold Circle of Quality	0	2
Number at Silver Circle of Quality	0	0
Number at Bronze Circle of Quality	0	3

● Licensed Family Child Care Home
○ Licensed Child Care Center

Southwest: Child Care Providers and Key Characteristics



Southwest Lake County Child Care Providers		
	Mundelein	Total Southwest
Total Number of Licensed Child Care Providers	24	42
Number of Licensed Centers	10	25
Number of Licensed Family Child Care Home	14	18
Number of Providers Billing for CCAP	21	33
Licensed Capacity (all ages 0-12)	811	2559
% of Providers Licensed to Serve Infants	79%	79%
% of Providers Licensed for Night Hours	50%	29%
% Spanish Speaking	33%	21%
Number at Gold Circle of Quality	0	1
Number at Silver Circle of Quality	0	1
Number at Bronze Circle of Quality	2	2

- Licensed Family Child Care Home
- Licensed Child Care Center



[f/startearlyorg](https://www.facebook.com/startearlyorg)

[@startearlyorg](https://twitter.com/startearlyorg)

[in /startearlyorg](https://www.linkedin.com/company/startearlyorg)

[ig /startearlyorg](https://www.instagram.com/startearlyorg)

Endnotes

- ¹ Rosenberg, S., Zhang, D. & Robinson, C. (2008). *Prevalence of developmental delays and participation in early intervention services for young children*. *Pediatrics*, 121(6) e1503-e1509. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/18504295/#:~:text=Results%3A%20Results%20indicated%20that%20approximately,children%20with%20delays%20received%20services.>
- ² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Increase in Developmental Disabilities Among Children in the United States*. Retrieved January, 24, 2023, from <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/developmentaldisabilities/features/increase-in-developmental-disabilities.html>.
- ³ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, College of Education, Early Childhood Collective (2021). Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map. *Lake County demographic data 2020*. Retrieved on October 1, 2022 from <https://search.iecam.illinois.edu/cgi-bin/iecam/search.asp>
- ⁴ Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. (2019, August 20). *Adapted from Brain Architecture*. Retrieved December 29, 2021, from <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/brain-architecture>
- ⁵ Heckman, J. (2021, October 14). *The Heckman Equation, ROI Research Toolkit*. Retrieved December 29, 2021, from <https://heckmanequation.org/resource/13-roi-toolbox/>
- ⁶ Center for American Progress (2022). *Illinois Early Learning Fact Sheet 2021*. Retrieved on October 30, 2022 from <https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Illinois.pdf>
- ⁷ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, College of Education, Early Childhood Collective (2021). Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map. *Lake County demographic data 2020*. Retrieved on October 1, 2022 from <https://search.iecam.illinois.edu/cgi-bin/iecam/search.asp>
- ⁸ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, College of Education, Early Childhood Collective (2021). Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map. *Lake County demographic data 2020*. Retrieved on October 1, 2022 from <https://search.iecam.illinois.edu/cgi-bin/iecam/search.asp>
- ⁹ Data about funded capacity in FY22 received August-December 2022 received from home visiting programs including Antioch School District, Big Hollow School District, Family Focus, Kids Above All, One Hope United, Round Lake School District, SGA Family & Youth Service, and Waukegan School District.
- ¹¹ Data about the characteristics of children served in FY22 received August-December 2022 from home visiting programs including Antioch School District, Family Focus, Kids Above All, One Hope United, Round Lake School District and Waukegan School District. Data about families served in the One Hope United Early Head Start Program not included here.
- ¹² Data about the location of children served in FY22 received August-December 2022 from home visiting programs including Antioch School District, Family Focus, One Hope United, Round Lake School District and Waukegan School District. Kids Above All provided a list of the towns served but not the number of families served in each town.
- ¹³ Data about program model, funding stream, funded capacity, service area in FY22 received August-December 2022 from home visiting programs including Antioch School District, Big Hollow School District, Family Focus, Kids Above All, One Hope United, Round Lake School District, SGA Family & Youth Services and Waukegan School District. Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map. Data about funded capacity of Prevention Initiative programs in FY21 received November 2022.
- ¹⁴ Lake County Health Department. *Child and Family Connections*. Retrieved on November 15, 2022, from <https://www.lakecountyil.gov/2139/Child-Family-Connections>.
- ¹⁵ Lake County Health Department. *Child and Family Connections Early Intervention Cost*. Retrieved on November 15, 2022, from <https://www.lakecountyil.gov/2152/Child-Family-Connections-Early-Intervent>.
- ¹⁶ Illinois Department of Human Services. *Early Intervention – Medical Conditions Resulting in High Probability of Developmental Delay & Division of Specialized Care for Children (DSCC) – rev 08/2020*. Retrieved on November 15, 2022, from <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=96962>.
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- ²⁰ Lake County Health Department Child and Family Connections. Data received via email on October 10, 2022, and December 1, 2022.
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- ²² Hofferkamp, H. (2022, July 14). *Early Intervention Provider Information Notice-Rate Increase Effective July 1, 2022*. <https://providerconnections.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/07-14-22-Provider-Information-Notice-El-Rate-Increase-with-rates-R.pdf>.
- ²³ U.S. Department of Education. (2019, November 7). Section 1419. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statute-chapter-33/subchapter-ii/1419>.
- ²⁴ U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. (2017, January 9). *Dear Colleague: Preschool LRE*. https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/policy_speced_guid_idea_memosdcltrs_preschool-lre-dcl-1-10-17.pdf.
- ²⁵ Data about Early Childhood Special Education received September-December 2022 via Google survey and email from Lake County elementary school districts including Beach Park SD 3, Big Hollow SD 38, Winthrop Harbor SD 1, Emmons SD 33, Antioch CCSD 34, Gavin SD 37, Lake Villa SD 41, Grayslake CCSD 46, Woodland SD 50, Gurnee SD 56, Waukegan CUSD 60, Lake Bluff SD 65, Lake Forest SD 67, Libertyville SD 70, Hawthorn SD 73, Fremont SD 79, Fox Lake SD 114, Zion Elementary SD 6, Rondout SD 72, Oak Grove SD 68, North Chicago SD 187, Barrington CUSD 220, North Shore SD 112, Kildeer Countryside SD 96, Lake Zurich CUSD 95, Round Lake Area SD 116 and Diamond Lake SD 76. School districts not reporting data include Aptakisic-Tripp CCSD 102, Bannockburn SD 106, Deerfield SD 109, Grass Lake SD 36, Lincolnshire-Prairie View SD 103, McHenry CCSD 15, Millburn CCSD 24, Mundelein Elementary SD 75, and Wauconda SD 118.
- ²⁶ Illinois State Board of Education Special Education Department. (August 2020). *Educational Rights and Responsibilities: Understanding Special Education in Illinois "The Parent Guide"*. https://www.childfind-idea-il.us/Materials/Educ_Rights_en.pdf.
- ²⁷ Special Education District of Lake County. *SEDOL Member Districts*. Retrieved on January 13, 2023, from <https://www.sedol.us/site/Default.aspx?PageID=214>; Exceptional Learners Collaborative. *Member Districts*. Retrieved on January 13, 2023, from <https://www.elced.org/domain/61>; TrueNorth Educational Cooperative 804. *Member Districts Hub*. Retrieved on January 13, 2023, from <https://www.truenorth804.org/memberdistricts>.
- ²⁸ Data about funded capacity and children and families served in FY22 received from YWCA and One Hope United in August-November 2022.
- ²⁹ Illinois State Board of Education Early Childhood Department. (August 2022). *Early Childhood Block Grant 3-5 Compliance Checklist Preschool for All/Preschool for All Expansion Fiscal Year 2023*. <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/PFA-Compliance-Checklist.pdf>.
- ³⁰ Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C. § 6301. (2015). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1177>.
- ³¹ Data about preschool and other early childhood programs received September-December 2022 via Google survey and email from Lake County elementary school districts. See list of reporting school districts in endnote 23.
- ³² Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C. § 6301. (2015). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1177>; U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *Non-Regulatory Guidance Early Learning in the Every Student Succeeds Act*. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essaelguidance10202016.pdf>.
- ³³ Preschool slot count includes data collected from the 27 reporting school districts as well as a PFA slot count at two non-reporting school districts (Mundelein Elementary SD 76, Wauconda CUSD 118) which was obtained through a data request to Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM) at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.
- ³⁴ Data on PFA slots in community-based programs received from IECAM at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign on November 29, 2022. Community-based programs with PFA slots include One Hope United-Northern Region, Highland Park Community Nursey School and Daycare Center, American Association of University Women, College of Lake County District 532, and Catholic Bishop of Chicago at Frassati Catholic Academy.
- ³⁵ Illinois Department of Human Services (2021). *Child Care Assistance Program Policy Manual: Co-Payments*, Retrieved on December 13, 2022 from <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=54862>
- ³⁶ Illinois Department of Human Services (2021). *Child Care Assistance Program Policy Manual: Income Guidelines*, Retrieved on November 30, 2022 from <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=118832>
- ³⁷ Illinois Department of Human Services (2017). *Citizenship Status of the Child Policy Statement*. Retrieved on November 11, 2022 from <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=46885>
- ³⁸ Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (2022). Day Care Provider Look-up. Lake County data retrieved on November 30, 2022 from <https://sunshine.dcf.illinois.gov/Content/Licensing/Daycare/ProviderLookup.aspx>
- ³⁹ Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map. Child Care Licensed Capacity. Retrieved on November 30, 2022 from <https://db.iecam.illinois.edu/cgi-bin/iecam/search.asp>
- ⁴⁰ Data about families receiving Child Care Assistance Program received from the YWCA of Metro Chicago on November, 30, 2022.
- ⁴¹ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, College of Education, Early Childhood Collective (2021). Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map. *Lake County Child Care Assistance Program data 2020*. Retrieved on October 1, 2022 from <https://search.iecam.illinois.edu/cgi-bin/iecam/search.asp>
- ⁴² Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (2022). Day Care Provider Look-up. Lake County data retrieved on November 30, 2022 from <https://sunshine.dcf.illinois.gov/Content/Licensing/Daycare/ProviderLookup.aspx>; Illinois Department of Human Services (2022). *Illinois Cares for Kids: Find an Early Learning Program*. Exceleerate ratings for child care providers in Lake County retrieved on November 30, 2022 from <https://www.illinoiscaresforkids.org/provider->

[search/?zip=lake%20county](#); Data about providers billing for Child Care Assistance Program reimbursements received from the YWCA of Metro Chicago on November, 30, 2022.

⁴³ Illinois Department of Human Services (2022). *Illinois Cares for Kids: Find an Early Learning Program*. Excelerate ratings for child care providers in Lake County retrieved on November 30, 2022 from <https://www.illinoiscaresforkids.org/provider-search/?zip=lake%20county>

⁴⁴ Lightcast. Q4 2022 Data Set. Q4 2022 Data Set. *Occupation Table, All Occupations in Lake County IL*.

⁴⁵ Data about the Success by Six programs received from the United Way of Lake County on October 22, 2022.

⁴⁶ Illinois Department of Human Services. *Market Rate Survey of Licensed Child Care Programs in Illinois Fiscal Year 2021*. Retrieved on October 30, 2022 from <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=138558>

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