

VOTE YES ON THE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD ACT

SB 1 (Lightford) / HB 5451 (Canty)

The proposal unites State early childhood services into one new agency – the Department of Early Childhood.

Uniting early childhood services in Illinois can make access to services simpler, better, and fairer for families with young children and make more efficient use of state resources. Currently, most early childhood programs are split across three state agencies.

THE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD ACT:

- Creates the Department of Early Childhood effective 7/1/24.
- Transfers statutory authority to administer early childhood programs from ISBE, DHS, & DCFS to the new Department of Early Childhood beginning 7/1/26.
- Requires the new Department of Early Childhood to designate a body by 7/1/26 to advise the Department on an ongoing basis, ensuring it functions transparently, operates with a commitment to racial equity, and devotes attention to data collection and timely public reporting.

*The legislation **does not** substantively change early childhood programs or service delivery.*

WHICH PROGRAMS ARE BEING TRANSFERRED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD?

Illinois Dept. of Human Services (DHS)

- Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)
- Migrant & Seasonal Head Start
- HeadStart Collaboration Office
- Early Intervention
- Home Visiting:
 - State Home Visiting
 - MIECHV
 - Maternal Child Home Visiting

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)

- Early Childhood Block Grant
- Preschool for All (PFA)
 - Preschool for All Expansion (PFAE)
 - Prevention Initiative (PI)

Illinois Dept. of Child & Family Services (DCFS)

- Child Care (Day Care) Licensing

WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR CHANGES?

All early childhood programs will continue to be administered by the legacy agencies through June of 2026. Until then, the Department of Early Childhood will build internal capacity and work with providers, parents, educators, and other stakeholders to reimagine early learning programs. The new agency will begin administering early learning programs in FY27 (July 1, 2026).

Establishing the Department of Early Childhood will **advance the goals of Smart Start Illinois**, making it easier for families to access services, and reduce the administrative burdens placed on providers.

For more information, please contact Ann Whalen (Awhalen@isbe.net), Early Childhood Transition Director at ISBE, or Samir Tanna (Samir.Tanna@Illinois.gov), Senior Legislative Advisor in the Governor's Office.

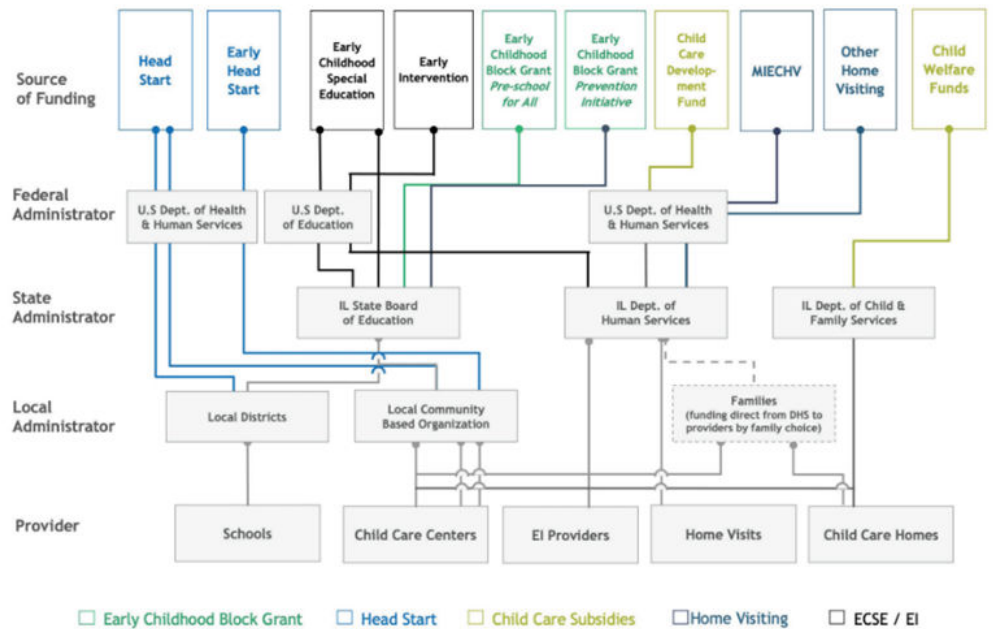
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Illinois' early childhood system is **too siloed** and complex—there is a simpler, better structure for parents and families and for early learning providers.

Ultimately, providers and families bear too much of the burden in navigating the complexity, which results in greater inefficiency. Inefficiency advances inequity in the system by not allowing the state to target resources and programs to areas with service gaps. Unifying programs under the Department of Early Childhood will help address these challenges.

Snapshot of Today's Early Childhood Split Governance and Funding Streams Across Agencies



A single agency will **help the State be more equitable, efficient and effective with state resources.** This will make it:

- ✓ Easier for parents
- ✓ Simpler for providers
- ✓ More cohesive and streamlined for the state

Illinois has a strong history of innovation and improvement in early childhood education and care. The Department of Early Childhood is our next step in **Illinois becoming the best state in the nation for families raising young children, with the nation's best early childhood education and child care.**