

STRENGTHEN AND GROW CHILD CARE GRANTS



GRANT OVERVIEW

Illinois was awarded federal relief dollars through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to ensure that child care programs can weather the pandemic – and emerge from it stronger than before. So far, this funding has been used to provide Child Care Restoration Grants and the Child Care Workforce Bonus program. In 2022, the Strengthen and Grow Child Care Grant (SGCC) will provide stable, predictable funding to support high-quality child care and invest in our critical child care workforce.

Strengthen and Grow Child Care Grant applications will open in January 2022, and the program will start in February 2022 and run through January 2023.

The Strengthen and Grow Child Care Grants will be available to all programs who:

- are licensed as a child care center, child care home, or group child care home
- were in operation as of March 2021 and continue to care for children today
- operate full-day and full-year, defined as a program that is open and offering at least eight consecutive hours of care per day, five days per week
- currently participate in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and enrolled 10% or more of the program's licensed capacity with children in CCAP during any month from January 2020 to the date of the program's application
- receive no more than 50% of total early childhood program / site revenue from Early Childhood Block Grant funding (including Preschool for All (PFA) and/or Prevention Initiative (PI)) or Head Start/Early Head Start
- do **not** accept a 2022 Child Care Restoration Extension Grant award (programs can apply for either 2022 CCRG Extension or SGCC, but not both)

The Strengthen and Grow Child Care Grant will provide child care homes with \$2,500 per program per quarter, group day care homes with \$3,750 per program per quarter, and child care centers with \$6,250 per classroom per quarter. Additional add-on funds are available for programs in areas where families are facing greater systemic barriers, such as low employment, poverty, or crowded housing. Funds will be awarded in advance of each quarter so that programs can plan to incorporate them into their regular operating budgets, creating predictable and stable funding models.

What to Expect and How to Apply:

- Programs will be required to spend at least 50% of their quarterly award on **new** investments to recognize, reward, and adequately compensate their workforce to acknowledge the key role that early childhood staff play to deliver high-quality care.
- Programs can spend the remaining award on additional workforce investments or can use funding to enhance their child care environments and the early childhood education programming they deliver. Funding can also be used in a program's continuing response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- More information and tip sheets can be found on the [SGCC website](#).
- **Applications will be available starting January 3, 2022. Programs are strongly encouraged to prepare their applications in advance to ensure smooth processing and speedy awards in January.**

This program will be administered by the Illinois Department of Human Services in partnership with the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA). More information on the program can be found on the [SGCC webpage](#). For questions, please email grants@inccrra.org or call 1-855-939-4858.

Strengthen and Grow Child Care Grants: Funding Philosophy

- Strengthen and Grow Child Care Grants were designed to align with the Early Childhood Funding Commission's [recommendations](#).
- The new grants were designed taking all funding streams into account to maximize access to stable and predictable funding in order to improve quality and support workforce development.
- These grants prioritize equitable and transparent funding across all of Illinois, focusing on those hardest hit by the pandemic, including those providers operating without existing grant-based revenue.
- Programs that operate without predictable grant funding from sources like Head Start and Preschool for All struggle the most to pay reasonable wages and make investments in quality programming.
- In alignment with what the Funding Commission heard from the field, the SGCC grants will provide the additional resources that providers with minimal existing grant-based public funding need so that they can make necessary investments in workforce development and quality programming.
- As recommended by the Funding Commission, the State can no longer make our investments in early childhood one funding stream at a time, but rather must take all sources of programs' funding into consideration. To achieve truly equitable funding, we must intentionally support those providers who have historically had the least funding stability, especially where they are serving low income families. The SGCC grant focuses on supporting these providers.
- For those providers not eligible for SGCC, the IDHS Division of Early Childhood (DEC) will be extending CCRG funding for an additional six-months at 30% of initial CCRG funding in order to provide a more stable off-ramp of stabilization funds.