



GATEWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY®  
Illinois Professional Development System



# Director

## Download

### Winter 2023 Newsletter

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## STRENGTHEN AND GROW

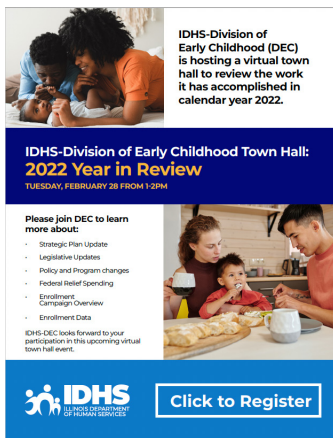
### CHILD CARE GRANTS



**SGCC Round Six applications will be opening on February 27, 2023, and close on March 17, 2023!**

If your program has an SGCC eligible application from previous rounds, you can simply submit a budget request for round six and upload a round six attestation. If your program is applying for SGCC for the first time, please watch this [technical assistance video](#) first to prepare you to complete and successfully submit your application.

For more information, additional eligibility, or frequently asked questions, visit [www.ilgateways.com/financial-opportunities/strengthen-and-grow-child-care-grants](http://www.ilgateways.com/financial-opportunities/strengthen-and-grow-child-care-grants).



## IDHS-Division of Early Childhood (DEC) Town Hall

IDHS-DEC is hosting a virtual town hall **Tuesday, February 28, 2023**, to review the work it has accomplished in the calendar year 2022.

Please join DEC to learn more about:

- Strategic Plan Update
- Legislative Updates
- Policy and Program Changes
- Federal Relief Spending
- Enrollment Campaign Overview
- Enrollment Data

IDHS-DEC looks forward to your participation in this upcoming virtual town hall event. [Click to register!](#)

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## Birth to Five Illinois Updates

**Grants:** Birth to Five Illinois distributed \$3.1 million in funding in FY23. We issued \$2.6 million in **Implementation Grants** (funded by IDHS) to 24 existing local early childhood collaborations to support the Governor's focus on regaining and increasing enrollment in ECEC programs and services. Birth to Five Illinois issued \$575,00 in **Planning Grants** (funded by IDHS and the Early Childhood Governance and Finance Project of the New Venture Fund) to help nine grantees develop new local early childhood collaborations in parts of the State where there are none. For more information, visit [our Grants page](#).



**Staffing:** Since the last Directors Download, Birth to Five Illinois is fully [staffed](#) with the addition of three new positions (Assistant Director, Data Coordinator, and part-time Data Consultant) that were created to assist with shortcomings in our ability to meet our mission. We are thrilled to have attracted such a wealth of experts from around the State who are both committed to ECEC and believe in the need (and ability) to transform our systems.

**Regional Councils:** All [39 Regions](#) throughout the State have begun convening both their Action and Family Councils, meeting various barriers and experiencing many successes. In our mission to elevate the experience of community members (especially families/caregivers/ECEC providers), these Councils are working to provide qualitative (life experience) narratives that are more meaningful than the static data points the system has historically relied on to make decisions about what funding, programs, and services are needed at the community level.

**Family Stories:** Birth to Five Illinois is on a mission to shift the ECEC landscape across Illinois by centering the voices and experiences of families. Where there are families, there are stories: stories of bureaucracy and systemic failure, and stories of families and children thriving in the face of compassionate providers and exemplary services. We invite you to check out the [stories](#) submitted from around the State and feel free to [submit your own!](#)

**A National Day of Racial Healing:** Racial Equity is one of our Values/Goals: *In an effort to move Illinois' ECEC system to one where racism no longer impacts a child's success, we will work to dismantle barriers that have limited access to high-quality services for minoritized children in every corner of our State.* In addition to our ongoing story-sharing platform, this January as part of the National Day of Racial Healing hosted annually by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, we asked our Regional Teams and Council Members to consider the impact of racial injustices within the ECEC system by sharing their stories of hurts and their hopes for racial equity in early childhood.

[Read what was shared.](#)



The Gateways Scholarship Program pays up to 100% of tuition at [participating colleges](#) for Early Childhood Education and Child Development (ECE/CD) coursework and degrees.

Newly expanded [guidelines](#) could mean that you and your staff are now eligible!

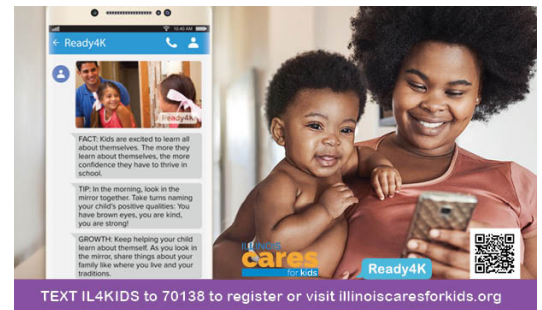
For more information, visit [www.ilgateways.com/financial-opportunities/scholarship](http://www.ilgateways.com/financial-opportunities/scholarship) or email [scholarship@inccrra.org](mailto:scholarship@inccrra.org).

## Illinois Cares for Kids - Ready4K

Ready4K, a free research-based text messaging program, is available for families with children from birth through grade 5. [Register](#) for one of Ready4K's weekly informational sessions to learn more about the program and discuss implementation.

Unable to attend the webinar? Email [lkiper@inccrra.org](mailto:lkiper@inccrra.org) and a recording can be sent to you.

Visit [illinoiscaresforkids.org/ready4k](http://illinoiscaresforkids.org/ready4k) for more information.



**Gateways Professional Development Advisors (PDA)** are available to assist you with planning and achieving your career goals. They can help enhance the quality of your child care program by increasing your staff's professional development! Advisement services are free and can be done via phone, video chat, or email.

PDA's can provide the following:

- Assistance in choosing a degree and program that fits your needs
- Provide guidance on achieving a Professional Educator License or other professional credentials
- Help identifying scholarships and financial aid to assist with college expenses
- Guidance through career goal development and more!

A PDA can assist you with planning and achieving your career goals. [Request](#) a Professional Development Advisor today!



## Chicago Early Learning Workforce Scholarship

Applications are now open for the 2023-2024 **Chicago Early Learning Workforce Scholarship**.

Current Chicago Early Learning (birth through Pre-K) staff and Chicagoans interested in becoming early childhood educators, the Workforce Scholarship will match you with the right higher education program for you.

Advance your career by earning one of the following:

- Basic & Advanced Certificates
- Associates Degree
- Bachelor's Degree (Associate to Bachelor pathway)
- Professional Educator License (with ECE Endorsement)
- Coursework to earn:
  - Endorsements
  - Gateways Credentials

Learn more and apply at [ChicagoEarlyLearning.org/Scholarships](https://ChicagoEarlyLearning.org/Scholarships).



## FREE Masks for Licensed Child Care Providers

IDHS, INCCRRA, and the CCR&R System are providing limited quantities of masks to licensed child care providers across Illinois.

### Licensed centers, licensed family child care

Order masks through the webstore, now available with free shipping! The webstore will confirm that you are a licensed program by using the DCFS Sunshine website. If your program is not listed on the [DCFS sunshine website](https://dcfs.sunshine.org), you cannot order from the webstore.

### Licensed centers

Order up to seven boxes of masks for free, shipping included.

### Licensed family child care

Order up to two boxes of masks for free, shipping included.

Visit the webstore today at [www.shopinccrra.com](https://www.shopinccrra.com).



## Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity Scholarship

Have you thought about going back to school to earn a credential, associate's degree, and/or bachelor's degree, but you're not sure where to start or how to get support? Do your staff need more skills, knowledge, and motivation to be the best in their roles? Join the hundreds of workforce members who have enrolled at Illinois colleges and universities through the ECACE Initiative!

Opportunities are available through the [ECACE](https://ecace.org) Initiative for early childhood teachers, teaching assistants, directors, and others who are currently working—or previously worked—in child care, preschool, Head Start, family child care, or similar settings in Illinois.

Generous scholarships are available to those who qualify to pay for tuition, fees, and other expenses—up to the total cost of attendance. The scholarships are for those who are committed to entering and/or remaining in the field of early childhood.

We know that directors need more support and quality staff. This can be an opportunity to encourage your staff to increase their credentials and to incentivize new employees to stay in the field by developing their skills.

One participating director decided to take advantage of the scholarship herself, and when she realized how easy it was to access the scholarship and return to college, she wanted her staff to join her as well. Another family child care owner and assistant worked with an ECACE higher education navigator about the scholarship and both of them started the application process together and are now attending college together.

Fill out this survey to be connected with a local ECACE Higher Education Navigator, who can help you and your staff find and enroll in the right degree or credential program to meet your needs and provide more information about scholarships and other available supports.

# How to make Snow Paint

Making two-ingredient snow paint is such a fun craft and sensory activity for kids! The craft is not only a boredom-buster winter activity but is also a great way to open up a conversation with your kids about the changing weather and snow in winter.

## Here's what you need:

- School glue
  - Shaving cream
  - Container for mixing
  - Paintbrush
  - Dark construction paper
1. Mix 1 part school glue with 2 parts shaving cream in the mixing container.
  2. Once the snow paint is mixed, spoon into a bowl if that makes it easier for your little one.
  3. Dip your paintbrush into the mixture and paint your masterpiece on the dark construction paper.



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