



GATEWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY®
Illinois Professional Development System

Director

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Spring 2023 Newsletter

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SMART START

TRANSITION GRANTS



The Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Early Childhood is excited to announce **Smart Start Transition Grants**. These grants will be administered by INCCRRA and will transition licensed child care programs from the Strengthen and Grow Child Care grants to Smart Start Child Care in the future. Smart Start Transition Grants focus on providing stable and predictable funding in order to improve quality and support workforce development.

To make sure you are ready to apply in July 2023 for the first round of Smart Start Transition Grants, start this [checklist](#) today!

The federal government changed the unique entity identifier used across the federal government from the DUNS number to the Unique Entity ID (UEI). Entities doing business with the federal government will now require the Unique Entity ID created in [SAM.gov](#). This transition allows the government to streamline the entity identification and validation process, making it easier and less burdensome for entities to do business with the federal government. Use this [tip sheet](#) to obtain your UEI #.

Watch the [website](#) and your email for details, tip sheets, technical assistance videos, and more. If you have questions, you can email grants@inccrra.org.

GATEWAYS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

UNLOCK YOUR POTENTIAL



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.

For more information, visit www.ilgateways.com/financial-opportunities/scholarship or email scholarship@ilgateways.com.

TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE FOR CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

Trauma-Informed Practice for Child Care Providers

This 2-hour [online training](#) fulfills the licensing requirement specified in Illinois House Bill 158 which requires all licensed day care providers, directors, and classroom staff to complete a training on early childhood emotional learning, infant and early childhood mental health, early childhood trauma, and adverse childhood experiences.

Completions will be automatically tracked on your Professional Development Record, like all i-learning trainings. Any questions about the requirement should be directed to IDCFS.

Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessments - Coming Soon!

Based on the recommendations from the Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Funding, **Birth to Five Illinois** was built for communities to share experiences, give voice to barriers that prevent them from access, and provide tangible solutions for what high-quality ECEC can look like for children and families.

The State Team, 39 Regional Offices, 39 Action Councils, and 39 Family Councils are hard at work pulling together the ECEC data, analyses, community-determined needs, and recommendations for the 39 Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessments that will be released in June 2023!

Through these reports, Birth to Five Illinois seeks to amplify the voices of those who have historically been minoritized, marginalized, or missing from the decision-making table. Each Regional Needs Assessment offers parents, families, caregivers, ECEC providers, and other community stakeholders a platform for sharing valuable insights about their experiences within their local ECEC system.

Additionally, each report provides local, regional, and state decision-makers with qualitative information about each Region, adding critical context to the quantitative data that is available.

We look forward to sharing these reports soon! Please be in touch with your Region's Council Manager if you have any questions: <https://www.birthtofiveil.com/councils>



Credential Renewal Reminder!

Attention Directors! All Gateways to Opportunity® Credentials must be renewed every 5 years. Applying for Credential renewal is FREE!

There are many benefits to renew early in the year –

1. Skip the end of the year renewal rush
2. Have extra time to take trainings (if needed) before it expires
3. No disruption to meeting ExceleRate® Illinois requirements
4. Great START looks for valid Credentials for new and continued eligibility
5. Peace of mind for another 5 years!

GOOD NEWS! Having Director Portal access allows you to see if your staff have any Credentials that expire on 12/31/2023! Don't have access? Complete the [Gateways Registry Director Portal](#) form then scan and email to onlinehelp@inccrra.org.

Apply online to renew Credentials: <https://registry.ilgateways.com/login> (Click [here](#) for a paper application). For renewal details and training resources, visit www.ilgateways.com/credential-renewal. This link provides you with step-by-step instructions on how to renew Credential(s).

Please email credentials@ilgateways.com with any questions.

Teach Plus Illinois Early Childhood Education Pathways Higher Education Survey



Are you an early childhood educator who chose to pursue licensure after you had some experience in the field? **Teach Plus Illinois** is looking for participants to complete a survey as part of a research study to understand early childhood educators' perspectives on student teaching experiences.

Teach Plus Early Childhood Education fellows are conducting a [survey](#) to better understand barriers to teacher licensure. By participating in this survey, you can play a vital role in shaping the future of our education system. Your feedback will help create more inclusive and effective pathways to licensure, ensuring that all teachers have the support and resources they need to succeed. The journey to becoming a licensed teacher can be complex and daunting, but by sharing your experiences, you can help pave the way for future generations of educators!

Please consider sharing these opportunities with the early childhood educators in your network.



**Illinois
State Board of
Education**

Early Childhood Block Grant Request for Proposals (RFP) 2023-2024

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has released the **Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Fiscal Year 2024 Early Childhood Block Grant** and

is prioritizing applicants proposing to serve the identified preschool deserts to fill critical gaps in underserved areas across the state.

This application is open to a wide range of programs with experience providing educational, health, social, and/or child development services to young children and their families. Family Child Care homes are eligible to apply in joint applications with an administrative agent from a Local Education Agency (LEA) or another applicant.

Entities awarded a grant are funded for five (5) years subject to appropriation and may apply for additional slots under this RFP. Applicants who do not wish to apply for additional slots do not need to apply under this RFP.

The deadline to submit requests is **June 14, 2023**. For more information, [click here!](#)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ADVISOR

Gateways offers a **FREE** service to help with planning and achieving career goals!

The Gateways **Professional Development Advisor (PDA) Program** provides an experienced professional that can help with...

- Choosing a degree program when returning to school
- Guidance on how to achieve various professional credentials
- Identifying scholarships and financial aid opportunities to help support taking college coursework
- Planning career and professional development goals and overcoming roadblocks along the way to achievement

Request a Professional Development Advisor on our [website](#) today!

Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity Scholarship Program

The **ECACE Scholarship** has been expanded for the **2023-2024 school year** to include those who already hold a bachelor's degree. [Applications](#) for the scholarship will be available at the end of May!

Potential Recipients: The ECACE scholarship provides funding for those who work or have worked in early childhood and want to continue to work with children birth through age five in settings such as child care, school or center-based preschool programs, Head Start, and family child care.

Scholarships provide tuition, fees, and for things such as books and transportation, covering up to the full cost of attendance. Scholarships are not awarded based on financial need, though they may be prioritized by need.

Eligible Pathways/Higher Education Programs:

[Eligible applicants](#) must be seeking one of the following at a [participating institution](#):

- Associate or bachelor's degree in early childhood
- Gateways Credential (ECE, FCC, I/T, IDC)
- Additional endorsement (ECE or Special Ed, ESL, Bilingual if candidates already hold an ECE endorsement)
- Master's Degree, a post-baccalaureate program, or alternative licensure to earn a professional educators license (PEL)

Need Help Applying?:

Work with a navigator to find an institution, apply for a scholarship and financial aid, or receive other support. Complete an [interest form](#) to get started.

For more information, please visit www.isac.org/ECACEscholarship



Pressing Flowers

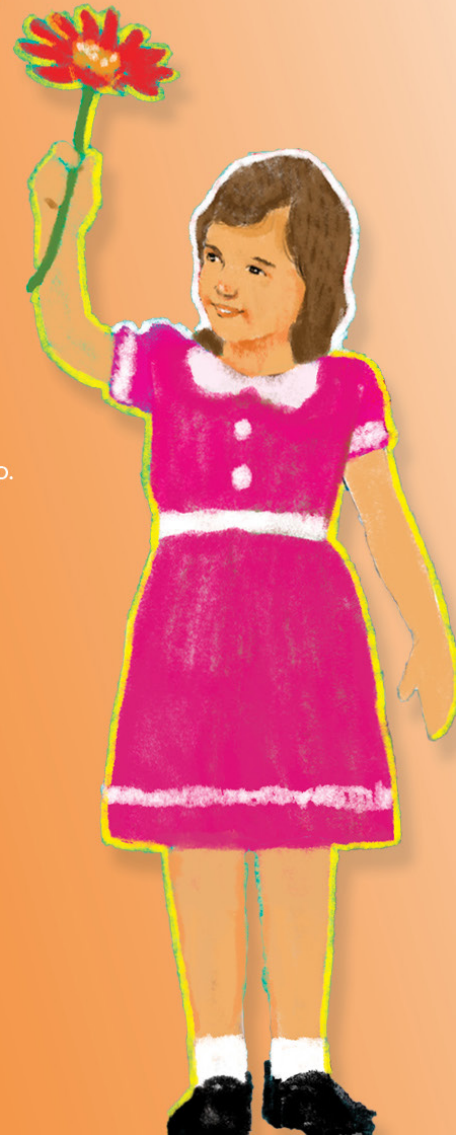
Bring the outside indoors by creating pressed flower art with your child while discussing the properties and appearance of different blossoms.

Materials

- Flowers (Note: Press the flowers soon after picking or buying them, or place them in the refrigerator until you are ready. Make sure the flowers are fully dry before you begin.)
- Heavy items for weight, like books, canned food, etc.
- Cardstock or construction paper (one for each flower)
- Paper and colored pencils for drawing (optional)
- A heavy book
- Newspaper
- Glue

Directions

1. Cut the cardstock or construction paper into 6-inch squares.
2. Open the heavy book to the middle and spread the newspaper on the bottom page.
3. Place one flower (or more) gently on the newspaper, then put more newsprint on top. Close the book. Tip: Use several layers of newspaper to ensure that no moisture or color from the flower gets on the book.
4. Place heavy items on top of the book for weight. Ask your child what she thinks will happen after the flower is left in the book for a few days. How about after a week?
5. Leave the flower for several days.
6. After three or four days, open the book and encourage your child to gently remove the flower.
7. Use new sheets of newspaper to repeat the process.
8. After two or three repetitions, the flower will be flattened and dried.
9. Spread clear glue on the squares of cardstock or construction paper. Your child can gently glue the flower to the paper to preserve it.
10. Optional: Your child can draw details around the flower to show the stem or leaves of the plant it came from, or to illustrate an insect that might like the flower. Now you can share the pressed flowers with family and friends! Help your child describe where you found the flower, what it looked and smelled like, and the process of pressing it.



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