



GATEWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY®  
Illinois Professional Development System

# Registry

News



## Spring 2024 Newsletter

*You are receiving this email newsletter because you are a Gateways to Opportunity Registry Member. The Registry News will provide up-to-date information about programs and policy changes. Additionally, we always include something you can use in your classroom. Feel free to share this newsletter by printing a copy for your program, or forwarding it to a friend.*

### In This Issue

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## SMART START



**Smart Start Transition Grant Round 4 applications open on April 1, 2024.** Round 4 funds will cover expenses for July, August, and September 2024. All programs will be required to have their Round 1 and Round 2 Transition Grant reporting completed to be approved for Round 4 funds. The deadline to apply and submit a Round 4 budget request is April 30, 2024.

For more information about Smart Start Transition Grants, visit [here](#).

**Smart Start Workforce Grant applications will open on July 1, 2024.** This grant will offer child care programs stable, ongoing funds that they need to cover costs and invest in quality staff. Eligible programs will receive consistent funding in advance, and funds will cover the cost of higher wages and operating a classroom. Programs receiving these grants will be required to pay classroom staff a wage floor. Smart Start Workforce Grant funds will begin providing funding starting in October 2024. These draft parameters are based on the Governor's FY 25 Budget proposal and are subject to final appropriation by the General Assembly.

For more information about grant requirements and qualification parameters, visit [here](#).

### Data Bits and Bites

The Gateways Registry houses demographic data for **1,414** home visitors registered in Illinois.

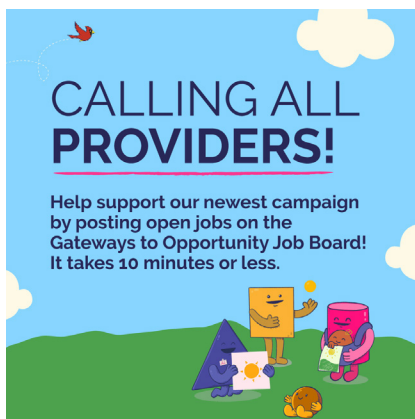
**87.3%** of home visitors have completed a college degree (associate's or higher).

**195** home visiting programs responded to the first Staffing and Salary Survey of Home Visiting Programs.



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## ECEC Workforce Recruitment

Are you hiring for an Early Childhood Education and Care position? Do you know someone else who is?

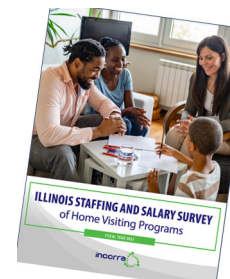
Help support our newest campaign by posting open jobs in Child Care, Home Visiting, Early Intervention & and more, on the Gateways to Opportunity Job Board. It takes less than 10 minutes.

We appreciate your support in helping grow the ECEC field!

**Post a job on our website!**

## Illinois Staffing and Salary Survey of Home Visiting Programs Report

The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) worked alongside the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Bureau of Home Visiting (BHV) and Start Early to conduct the first **Illinois Staffing and Salary Survey of Home Visiting Programs: Fiscal Year 2023**. This survey was open to all Illinois home visiting programs, regardless of their funding streams and utilized quantitative and qualitative analyses to assess the number of home visitors, applicants and their qualifications, home visitor demographics, and the average salaries and benefits offered. Other areas assessed by the survey include information pertaining to fiscal management, enrollment patterns, staff turnover rates, and professional development. As the state works to strengthen and expand support for families, it is critical to understand the workforce trends impacting home visiting program leaders.



## The Gateways Scholarship Program

The Gateways Scholarship Program pays up to **100% OF TUITION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION** and Child Development (ECE/CD) coursework and degrees at participating colleges.

*"While most of my successes have come from hard work and a genuine drive to make a difference, it would not have been possible without my Gateways Scholarship."*

- J. Smith

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



# YOU'VE EARNED IT

## The Great START Program

Do you make \$24 an hour or less AND \$49,920 a year or less\*?

**You may qualify for a Great START wage supplement paid directly to you every six months. If your wages fall within the income limits, APPLY TODAY!**

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

\* All Great START requirements must be met to qualify.

## YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY!



### Gateways Training Tiers

Are you a licensed-exempt provider who has complete at least one tier of the ECE Credential Level 1 training modules?

If so, you are one step closer to earning the benefits of the Gateways Training Tiers program for the CCAP children in your care.

[Learn more and apply!](#)

### LeadCare Complete for Chicago Child Care Providers

LeadCare Cook County offers FREE lead service line identification and replacement to licensed child care providers in suburban Cook County. Lead is invisible. You cannot see, taste, or smell lead in drinking water. Children under the age of six are especially susceptible to the damaging effects of lead, which can lead to brain and nervous system damage.

Lead service lines, which bring water into your facility from the water main, can be the largest source of lead in drinking water and cost providers up to \$20,000 to replace! Backed by Cook County Government, LeadCare Cook County makes it free to have a licensed plumber inspect your water service line and replace it if it's made of lead. The program even covers the cost of restoring your property after replacement. It is a win-win situation for child care providers who would have otherwise had to foot the bill to protect the children in their care.

Learn more about how to save money by replacing your lead service line by visiting [LeadCareComplete.org/INCCRRA](https://LeadCareComplete.org/INCCRRA).

*LeadCare Cook County is administered by Elevate in partnership with Cook County Government.*

**Reduce lead-in-water at your child care facility today!**





# Nature Observation Bingo

Encourage your child to wonder by creating a nature bingo game to take outside to practice observing and exploring together.

## Materials

- Nature Observation Bingo Card
- Paper
- Pencil, crayons, or markers

## Directions

- 1. Let's Be Curious!** Talk with your child about what it means to observe something. Explain that when we look closely at things — safely using our five senses — we notice new and important information.
- 2. Let's Make a Plan!** Print out the Nature Observation Bingo Card template or draw your own bingo cards. Make sure you have enough copies for each observer to have a card.
- Brainstorm together with your child a list of things that you might see, hear, smell, feel or taste while on a walk through your neighborhood or playground. Here are some ideas:
  - a bug the size of your thumb
  - a singing bird
  - a crawling creature
  - a leaf with five points
  - a flying bird
- Help your child draw or write your observation ideas in the spaces provided on the bingo cards. Make sure to mix up the orders on each card, so the winner is a surprise!
- 5. Let's Explore!** Take your Nature Observation Bingo cards, a crayon, and your curiosity outside. Walk around your neighborhood or a playground and look together for your nature ideas to observe.
- Invite your child to mark an X on the bingo square if they find one of the observation ideas.
- If a player completes a row, it's a bingo! Once someone gets bingo, challenge each other to mark off every box.



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