



# Director

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### Spring 2024 Newsletter

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# SMART START

## WORKFORCE GRANTS

### Start Preparing for Smart Start Workforce Grants

Smart Start Workforce Grants offer child care programs stable, ongoing funds that they need to cover costs and invest in quality staff without burdening families by raising tuition or Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) co-pays. Eligible programs 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. These competitive wages will help to attract more staff and meet parents' needs at a rate that they can afford.

Smart Start Workforce Grant applications will be available in July 2024. Programs are encouraged to start preparing to apply for the Smart Start Workforce Grant now! Local Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies have a Smart Start Workforce Grant Local Expert to help programs prepare. These Local Experts are equipped to provide technical assistance, support, and answer questions related to Smart Start Workforce Grants. Connect with your [local expert](#) today! For general information and questions, programs can refer to the [Smart Start Workforce Grant website](#).

*Smart Start Workforce Grants draft parameters are subject to appropriation from the Illinois General Assembly.*



## Draft Illinois Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan for FFY 2025-2027 Public Hearing and Comment Notice

The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Division of Early Childhood is announcing the opening of a public comment period and planned public hearing on the draft Illinois Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan for FFY 2025-2027. The plan may be found on the IDHS website at the following address - [Illinois CCDF Annual State Plans](#).

Upon review of the plan, public comment may be submitted to the agency via email at [DHS.DEC.Comms@illinois.gov](mailto:DHS.DEC.Comms@illinois.gov) during the following period with the subject: 2025 - 2027 Illinois CCDF Plan Public Comment.

The comment period will run from Monday, May 13, 2024, through Friday, June 14, 2024. Comments may be submitted in writing via email at any time during the comment period. In addition, the public is invited to attend an online public hearing at the time listed below.

Registration is required for the webinar using the link below. Note - there will be an open comment period during the meeting; however, all comments must be submitted in writing to be entered in the official plan record.

### Public Hearing Details:

Event: Draft Illinois Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan for FFY 2025-2027 Public Hearing

Date: Tuesday, June 4, 2024

Time: 5:00 p.m.

[Webinar Registration Link](#)

For questions related to the hearing or to submit comments email - [DHS.DEC.Comms@illinois.gov](mailto:DHS.DEC.Comms@illinois.gov).

## Birth to Five Illinois Releases Regional Action Plans

In the spring of 2023, Birth to Five Illinois released [39 Early Childhood Regional Needs Assessments](#), one report for every Region of the State, with community-driven recommendations for how to make local Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) service delivery more equitable for young children.



Since then, each Region's Birth to Five Illinois Action Council and Family Council developed an Action Plan to move the needle on several recommendations from their needs assessment. Each Regional Action Plan includes goals, the identification of key partners to support implementation, and an initial timeline to advance change.

On behalf of the Birth to Five Illinois Councils and participating community members across Illinois, we are excited to share with you the Birth to Five Illinois Regional Action Plans.

[Regional Action Plans](#)

## 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 10 minutes or less.

We appreciate your support in helping grow the ECEC field!

[Post a job on our website!](#)



# 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.*

## LeadCare Complete for Chicago Child Care Providers

Child care is essential, and INCCRRA fights to raise the bar for child care providers. We also care about providing a safe and healthy learning environment for the children who spend time in child care facilities. Today, we're excited to share two free programs to help you address potential health hazards.

**LeadCare Complete** offers licensed child care facilities in the City of Chicago **free interior plumbing upgrades** to address lead in drinking water, such as filters, faucets, and drinking water fountains. The program also provides lead-in-water test kits to providers who still need to complete their lead-in-water testing requirements. This program is available at no cost to providers through a USEPA grant and support from the City of Chicago. To get started, visit [LeadCareCookCounty.org/INCCRRA](http://LeadCareCookCounty.org/INCCRRA) or contact the LeadCare Complete team at [Info@LeadCareComplete.org](mailto:Info@LeadCareComplete.org) or 773-906-5142.

**LeadCare Cook County** offers licensed providers in suburban Cook County **free lead service line identification and replacement**. When present, a lead water service line can be the largest source of lead in drinking water. Removing this source of lead also helps providers comply with their mandatory lead testing and mitigation requirements. This program is available at no cost to providers through funding from the American Rescue Plan Act and Cook County government. To get started, visit [LeadCareCookCounty.org/INCCRRA](http://LeadCareCookCounty.org/INCCRRA) or contact the LeadCare Cook County team at [info@LeadCareCookCounty.org](mailto:info@LeadCareCookCounty.org) or 773-389-5657.

*LeadCare Complete and LeadCare Cook County are administered by [Elevate](#), a nonprofit organization that wants everyone to have access to clean and affordable heat, power, and water in their homes and communities.*

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



# PRACTICE MATCHING SHAPES WITH A BLOCK BLUEPRINT

## Materials:

- Large construction paper
- Small blocks of different shapes
- Pencil

## Directions

1. Place small blocks of different shapes on a large piece of construction paper to make a picture.
2. With a pencil, trace an outline around each shape and then remove the blocks.
3. Give the construction paper to your child and have her create the same design with the blocks, using your picture as a blueprint. After she has created a blueprint, use it as a guide to make a structure.
4. When the structure is complete, compare it to the blueprint to see what is the same and what is different. Ask your child how the blueprint was helpful and why she thinks blueprints are helpful when building structures.
5. Talk about the importance of planning a design before you engineer it. Walk around your neighborhood and point out places that needed blueprints such as buildings, bridges, and playgrounds.
6. Create another blueprint using more blocks and do the activity again.



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