



Director

Download

Spring 2026 Newsletter

In This Issue

Smart Start
Workforce Grant
Reminders

Illinois Department
of Early Childhood's
Newsletter

Send in your
Official Transcripts
to Gateways

Early Childhood
Access Consortium
for Equity (ECACE)
Scholarship

LeadCare
Cook County
FREE
Lead Service

SMART START WORKFORCE GRANTS



If you are a **Smart Start Workforce Grant** program, check out these quick reminders:

- Smart Start Workforce Grant FY26 Round 3 reporting should have been completed by April 30, 2026. FY26 Round 3 funding use period was for January – March 2026.
- FY27 Round 1 payments will be sent in two batches once funding is approved by the state. One small payment in late June and the remainder in fiscal year 2027.
- **FY27 Round 2 applications open July 1, 2026.** FY26 Round 1-3 reporting will be required for approval of funds.

For more information, visit our website www.ilgateways.com/smart-start/smart-start-workforce-grants.

Illinois Department of Early Childhood's Newsletter

The Illinois Department of Early Childhood is working to develop transformational systems that support families and child care providers across the State of Illinois. Over the last year, they have been listening to families and providers across the state express their desire for a more cohesive system for all their child care needs.



IDEC is excited to share with all of you that July 1 is almost here.

To stay connected with their work, [sign up for their monthly newsletter](#), which shares updates on their seamless transition, technology rollouts, and more!

Semesters end, but the journey continues!

Did you or your staff graduate or complete coursework this year?

Now's the time to send official transcripts to Gateways!

The college or university can send transcripts electronically to transcripts@inccrra.org or mail them to:

INCCRRA
1226 Towanda Ave
Bloomington, IL 61701



Consider applying for a Gateways Credential.

1. Log in to your Gateways Registry account registry.ilgateways.com/login or email a paper application to credentials@ilgateways.com.
2. Select Gateways Credentials in the “Apply” section. Click the “Apply Now” button to create a new application.



Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) Scholarship

The 2026–2027 Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) Scholarship Program application is now available.

The priority consideration deadline for the 2026–27 academic year is **May 31, 2026**. Applications submitted after this date may still be considered if scholarship funds remain available after all eligible on-time applicants have been awarded.

To be considered for the scholarship, students must complete the online application process by:

- Submitting a complete ECACE Scholarship Program application, including all required documentation, to ISAC; and
- Completing the FAFSA or Alternative Application, if applicable.

Applicants will be notified by ISAC regarding their eligibility status. If an applicant is determined to be ineligible based on the information provided, ISAC will issue a Notice of Ineligibility for Scholarship letter. The ECACE Scholarship Program is administered by ECACE. All questions regarding the scholarship should be directed to ECACE.

[Learn more and apply today!](#)

LeadCare Cook County FREE Lead Service

LeadCare Cook County offers **FREE** lead service line replacement to licensed and license-exempt 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.

Act fast to upgrade your lead service line for free: LeadCare Cook County will no longer accept new enrollments after July 31, 2026, or until spots are filled.

Lead service lines, which bring water into your home from the water main, can be the largest source of lead in drinking water and can cost providers up to \$20,000 to replace! LeadCare Cook County pays to have a licensed plumber inspect your water service line and replace it if it's made of lead with funds from Cook County Government. The program even covers the cost of restoring your yard 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.

Space in the program is limited, and time is running out to receive free lead service line replacement. Secure your spot today to save money, protect children's health, and demonstrate your commitment to families in your community.

Learn more by visiting LeadCareCookCounty.org/MoreInfo.

All children should have access to safe drinking water!



LeadCare
Cook County



NEED MONEY TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL?

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 ilgateways.com or email scholarship@ilgateways.com.

BASIC TRANSCRIPT REVIEW (BTR)

Your Basic Transcript Review (BTR) may need updating!

The BTR sorts your college coursework into four different categories and can be viewed through the Registry as part of your Professional Development Record (PDR). To check out your BTR and see if it needs updating, click the link below and log in to your Registry account. <https://registry.ilgateways.com/component/wsuser/login>

If your BTR needs to be updated, you can submit official transcripts by mailing them in their original envelope to Gateways to Opportunity, Attn: Official Transcripts, 1226 Towanda Plaza, Bloomington, IL 61701. You can also have them sent by your college or university to transcripts@inccrra.org.

Simple Outdoor Activities

Here are 7 simple ways to enjoy the outdoors!

- 1. Play in the rain** - put on your rain gear and play in puddles!
- 2. Catch the wind** - create a wind sock, kite, or pinwheel.
- 3. Go on a walk or bike ride** - observe the natural world.
- 4. Plant a garden** - a tiny seed can grow into a plant.
- 5. Watch for wildlife** - make a bird feeder and go bird watching.
- 6. Look to the skies** - lie down and watch clouds.
- 7. Go on a picnic** - Bring a blanket and some delicious sandwiches or snacks.



Gateways to Opportunity is administered through INCCRRA and funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services' Division of Early Childhood and the McCormick Foundation. Gateways to Opportunity, the arch logo and Illinois Professional Development System are registered trademarks of INCCRRA.

Copyright © 2026 INCCRRA, All rights reserved.
Our mailing address is: INCCRRA • 1226 Towanda Ave • Bloomington, IL 61701

You received this email because you are a member of the Gateways to Opportunity Registry and are listed as the Director of a licensed center. Please unsubscribe at the bottom of the Director Download email to let us know if you wish to unsubscribe from this list. This will only remove you from receiving the Director Download. All other program specific emails will still continue to be sent. To ensure you receive future emails of the Director Download, add directordownload@ilgateways.com to your address book. GR123 © 2026 INCCRRA