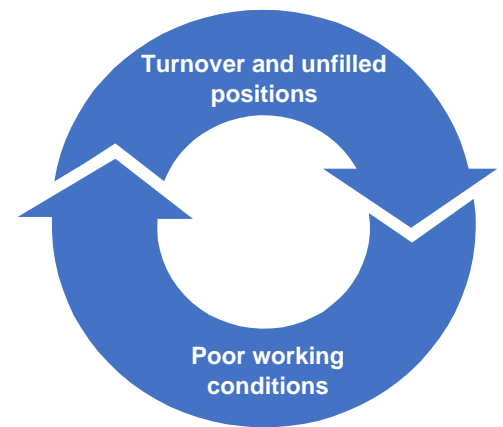


Illinois Early Childhood Registered Apprenticeship: The Missing Piece of Addressing the Workforce Crisis

The Challenge:

To meaningfully address the well documented and systemic early childhood education (ECE) workforce crisis, Illinois must implement a full complement of strategies to confront the specific challenges faced by the field. Currently we are struggling with:

- 1) A workforce shortage across the state with a highly competitive labor market and **not enough individuals** willing/able to work in field even if they would like to;
- 2) A shortage of **well-qualified individuals** to provide quality programming because the costs of appropriate qualifications (one of the greatest predictors of quality in child care) do not pay for themselves in this field; and
- 3) **Inadequate compensation** to attract and retain well qualified staff.



These conditions ultimately have a negative impact on the quality of child care programs and the children and families they serve.

The Response:

The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Division of Early Childhood (DEC) is piloting an **apprenticeship program** to bridge and connect scholarship programs leading to credentials and degrees with on the job/real world training and mentorship tailored to the context of the specific communities where apprentices work. The program will **incorporate child care program contracts**, specifically to provide funding for participating centers for increased compensation based on staff qualifications. This unique component of DEC's Apprenticeship model complements existing efforts underway to upskill staff through the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) and other scholarship programs by materially supporting employers with funding for increasing compensation therefore, incentivizing child care program directors to support their staff in going back to school as well as bringing a new generation of caregivers and teachers into the workforce.

The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) will serve as the apprenticeship intermediary coordinating the pilot program across employers and institutions of higher education; prepare and submit "Standards" and other required documentation; provide technical assistance (TA),

and design and implement a credit bearing mentorship component for site based mentors. The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) will support the child care apprentice sponsor sites with wage supplement contracts.

Background:

Registered Apprenticeship (RA) Programs for ECE teachers have existed in the United States for decades. RAs, much like “residency” programs in other fields, combine classroom instruction, on-the-job training, and mentorship to create a holistic program with an earn-while-you learn approach. RA programs offer a flexible model for early childhood educators to improve their knowledge and skills with the goal of acquiring a credential, license, an associate’s degree, or a bachelor’s degree, all while improving the quality of the early childhood workforce and increasing their wages.

Registered Apprenticeship is a uniquely valuable workforce development strategy, sitting at the intersection of classroom-based and work-based learning. As such an intersectional strategy, Apprenticeship offers a particularly significant opportunity to advance the thinking around workforce development in the field. This model offers support and incentives to 1) ECE employers, 2) ECE workforce members, and 3) Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to ensure that ECE workers have access to quality educational experiences that are connected to career pathways, and tied to those workers’ experience and efficacy in working with young children.

Interrupt Cycle of Dysfunction by Making ECE Jobs Good Jobs:

Apprenticeship + Wage Supplement Contracts

