

An Early Childhood Program Matrix: Pulling the Pieces Together for Illinois

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Abstract

The early childhood program matrix in this article delineates the various requirements of nine publicly funded programs in Illinois that provide services to young children and families. The first section of the matrix addresses the design of each program and logistics, such as funding, payment, eligibility, and amount of services. The second section of the matrix addresses the ways in which the local community is involved with services and the extent to which the programs are required or encouraged to form collaborations or partnerships with other programs. The third section identifies human resource or personnel requirements. The final section addresses elements of quality assurance—expected program outcomes, assessment requirements, and child outcomes.

Introduction

Identifying and understanding the many components of early care and education in a state can be like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. A decade ago, Gina Ruther first designed a matrix to begin to differentiate between programs in Illinois along a variety of dimensions, such as services provided, funding sources and levels, screening and eligibility requirements, and parent co-payments. The matrix was an effort to begin to describe both the similarities and differences among programs that received federal and/or state funding. As part of the *Who's Caring for the Kids? The Status of the Early Childhood Workforce in Illinois—2008*, a revised matrix of early childhood programs in Illinois was compiled (Fowler, Bloom, Talan, Beneke, & Kelton, 2008). The matrix, which follows, provides descriptions of nine programs currently funded and operating in Illinois. These include the federally funded Head Start and Early Head Start programs, as well as seven state-managed programs, funded through a mix of federal flow-through dollars and state funds. Three state agencies are involved with the state programs—Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (IDCFS), Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), and Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

Each federal and state program must respond to its agency's regulations, funding, and monitoring requirements. At the local level, some of the programs are identifiable by their funding sources and origins and others are not, because funds have been used to establish a broader umbrella of services for young children. In order to ensure that all children in need of services are able to receive them, local communities may work to create partnerships across agencies and funding sources. For example, in Champaign, Illinois, classrooms funded by Head Start, ISBE Preschool for All (PFA), and ISBE Early Childhood Special Education are co-located in the same early childhood center, built by the local education agency. In Rockford, Illinois, 33 half-day PFA classes are embedded in 13 child care centers and one family child care network. The children attend their programs full day, but within the day, they also receive 2.5 hours of PFA services, provided by a certified teacher.

The purpose of this matrix is to assist policy makers, early care and education professionals, and consumers to better understand the requirements and practices associated with these nine programs. The first section of the matrix addresses the design of each program and logistics, such as funding, payment, eligibility, and amount of services. The design includes such factors as (1) description of core services and purposes; (2) funding sources; (3) fiscal year 07 or 08 funding levels; (4) payment process to programs, providers, agencies, or districts; (5) eligibility requirements for children and/or parents; (6) parent co-payments, if required; (7) age range of children served; (8) child-staff ratio; (9) group size; and (10) hours of services per day or week and number of days per year. This section also includes a description of screenings required or provided, services available for children with disabilities or developmental delays, curriculum requirements, and procedures and policies for the transition of children from the program to their next level of services, if applicable.

The second section of the matrix addresses the ways in which the local community is involved with services and the extent to which the programs are required or encouraged to form collaborations or partnerships with other programs. As is evident, some programs require interagency agreements and others do not. Collaborations typically are encouraged. The extent to which referrals and information are provided by various programs also is documented.

Human resource or personnel requirements are identified in the third section, in terms of expectations for minimum staff qualifications and for professional development. Requirements differ significantly across programs in this section.

The final section addresses elements of quality assurance—expected program outcomes and/or assessment requirements—as well as child outcomes. The monitoring process for evaluating outcomes and/or services is also described.

Our intention in sharing this matrix is to encourage other states and entities to develop similar charts to delineate the various requirements of different and distinct programs that provide services to young children and families. In doing so, policy makers and providers may be able to better identify points of intersection across programs and opportunities for collaboration or greater efficiencies. For instance, they may begin to ask questions such as "Can children receive expanded or enhanced services through a combination of funding streams?" "Can professional development efforts planned for programs funded from one agency be shared with programs providing similar services funded by another agency?" "What other economies of efforts can be made to improve outcomes for children?"

Early Childhood Program Matrix

Program Design	
Program	Core Services
Head Start Early Head Start	Comprehensive child development, family-focused program with the overall goal of increasing the social competence of young children from low-income families
IDCFS Child Care	Child care services for children at-risk of abuse and/or neglect served by IDCFS
IDHS Child Care	Child care services for children from low-income families working and/or participating in an approved education/training program
IDHS Early Intervention	Services for children under 36 months of age with diagnosed disabilities, developmental delays, or at substantial risk of significant delays

ISBE Preschool for All	An early childhood program expansion to provide voluntary preschool to all 3- and 4-year-old children and voluntary prevention initiative services for at-risk children (birth to 3) and their families
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	Program to enhance the growth and development of preschool-age children with disabilities
ISBE Title 1	Program to improve educational achievement of children from low-income families in school districts receiving Title I funds
ISBE Even Start	Program to improve educational achievement for low-income families and break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy
Program	Funding Sources
Head Start Early Head Start	Federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Head Start Bureau; 25% non-federal share requirement
IDCFS Child Care	State general revenue and federal Title IV-E
IDHS Child Care	Federal Child Care and Development Fund; state general revenue
IDHS Early Intervention	Federal Department of Education, Office of Special Education; Medicaid Title XIX and Title XXI; state general revenue
ISBE Preschool for All	State Early Childhood Block Grant
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	State general revenue
ISBE Title 1	Federal funding under No Child Left Behind Act
ISBE Even Start	Federal funding, local match requirement
Program	Current Funding Level
Head Start Early Head Start	Head Start: \$243,301,011 to serve 39,137 children FY07 Early Head Start: \$23,524,243 serves 2,699 children and pregnant women
IDCFS Child Care	Foster day care: \$9.8 million Adoption Assistance/Subsidized Day Care–birth to 3 years: \$600,000
IDHS Child Care	\$763,729,958 to serve 192,476 children, 6 weeks to age 12
IDHS Early Intervention	FY08: \$136,750,314 to serve 20,000 families
ISBE Preschool for All	FY08: \$347 million dollars to serve 90,000 children
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	Amount not available
ISBE Title 1	Funding level not set by law but available as a local district option
ISBE Even Start	FY07: \$3.7 million to serve 1,292 families, including 1,352 adults and 1,939 children
Program	Payment Process
Head Start Early Head Start	Federal grants to local agencies from ACF Regional Office
IDCFS Child Care	Reimbursement to providers
IDHS Child Care	Reimbursement to providers
IDHS Early Intervention	IDHS grants for service coordination; all other services fee-based
ISBE Preschool for All	Grants to eligible entities including: public school districts, university lab schools, preschools, child care centers, regional offices of education, charter schools, community colleges, community agencies, park districts, faith-based organizations, and home-based child care networks
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	Grants to local school districts
ISBE Title 1	Grants to local school districts
ISBE Even Start	Grants to local partnerships composed of both a local education agency and a community-based organization or institution of higher education
Program	Eligibility Requirements
Head Start Early Head Start	Federal poverty guidelines are used to determine eligibility based on the age of child and family income. Children remain eligible for 2 years. Ninety percent or more of those found eligible must be from income-eligible families.
IDCFS Child Care	Children must have an open IDCFS case or be identified as at-risk of becoming an open case. Redetermination of eligibility is done every 6 months.
IDHS Child Care	Parents must be employed and/or engaged in an approved education or training program and have combined income of less than 200% of the federal poverty level. Redetermination of eligibility is every 6 months.
IDHS Early Intervention	Children, birth to 3, who have disabilities caused by developmental delay, medically diagnosed physical or mental conditions that typically result in developmental delay, or children who are at-risk of substantial developmental delay are eligible.
ISBE Preschool for All	All children, 3 and 4 years of age (during build-up, those who meet at-risk criteria are given first priority followed by children whose families earn up to four times the federal poverty level) and at-risk children, birth to 3 years of

	age, and their families
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	Children, 3 through 5 years of age, with diagnosed/identified disabilities are eligible
ISBE Title 1	District must be eligible to receive Title I funding.
ISBE Even Start	Eligible families with child under 7 years of age and at least one parent who is eligible for adult education services or who is attending secondary school
Program	Parent Co-Pay
Head Start	None
Early Head Start	
IDCFS Child Care	None
IDHS Child Care	Based on income and sliding fee scale
IDHS Early Intervention	Based on a sliding fee scale
ISBE Preschool for All	None
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	None
ISBE Title 1	None
ISBE Even Start	None
Program	Child Age Range
Head Start	Head Start: Age 3 to mandatory school age
Early Head Start	Early Head Start: Birth to age 3 and pregnant women
IDCFS Child Care	Birth to age 13; to age 21 if developmentally disabled or otherwise in need of care
IDHS Child Care	6 weeks to age 13; ages 13-19 if child is physically or mentally incapable of self-care or under court supervision requiring child care
IDHS Early Intervention	Birth to 3
ISBE Preschool for All	Birth to 5
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	Ages 3 to 5
ISBE Title 1	Ages 3 to 5
ISBE Even Start	Birth through age 7; programs must serve at least a 3-year age range
Program	Child-Staff Ratio
Head Start	Head Start, ages 3 to 5 years – 8:1
Early Head Start	Early Head Start, birth to age 3 – 4:1
IDCFS Child Care	Infants – 4:1, toddlers – 5:1, age 2 – 8:1, ages 3 and 4 – 10:1, Age 5 and up – 20:1
IDHS Child Care	Infants – 4:1, toddlers – 5:1, age 2 – 8:1, ages 3 and 4 – 10:1, ages 5 and up – 20:1
IDHS Early Intervention	Not applicable
ISBE Preschool for All	For classroom activities, 1 teacher and 1 teacher assistant; ages 3 to 5 – 1:10
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	1:5 – Certified teacher 1:10 – Certified teacher and aide in an instructional ECSE classroom
ISBE Title 1	Varies by type of program being operated but normally not over 5 at one time
ISBE Even Start	Varies by program and child education service provider
Program	Group Size
Head Start	Head Start, age 3: 15-17; Head Start, age 4: 15-17 (half day), 17-20 (full day)
Early Head Start	Early Head Start, birth to 3: 8
IDCFS Child Care	Infants: 12, toddlers: 15, age 2: 16, age 3 and up: 20
IDHS Child Care	Infants: 12, toddlers: 15, age 2: 16, age 3 and up: 20
IDHS Early Intervention	Not applicable
ISBE Preschool for All	For classroom activities, 1 teacher and 1 teacher assistant; Ages 3 to 5 – 1:10
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	In an instructional ECSE classroom, certified teacher – 1:5; certified teacher plus an aide – 1:10
ISBE Title 1	Varies but normally not over 5

ISBE Even Start	Varies by program and child education service provider
Program	Length Day/Year
Head Start	4 days/week: 128 days minimum or 5 days/week: 160 days minimum
Early Head Start	Half day: 3.5 to 6 hours: Full day: more than 6 hours Migrant Seasonal Head Start: N.A.
IDCFS Child Care	No requirement; 5 or more hours is considered full day
IDHS Child Care	No requirement; 5 or more hours is considered full day
IDHS Early Intervention	Full year
ISBE Preschool for All	Half day (minimum of 2½ hours): school year or 180 days per year
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	Based on the individual needs of the child
ISBE Title 1	Based upon the type of program being operated
ISBE Even Start	Must be of sufficient duration and intensity to make a significant change in the literacy level of the family; programming provided year-round
Program	Child Screening
Head Start	Within 45 days of child's entry, screening must be completed in the areas of sensory, behavioral, motor, social, language, cognitive, perceptual, and emotional development. Within 90 days, a professional determination must be obtained as to whether or not a child is up to date with preventive and primary health care, oral health care, and mental health care.
Early Head Start	
IDCFS Child Care	The requirements include a physical exam and immunizations prior to entry.
IDHS Child Care	The requirements include a physical exam and immunizations prior to entry.
IDHS Early Intervention	Community-based screening to assess a child's developmental status prior to eligibility determination
ISBE Preschool for All	Children/families are required to participate in a screening before program entry.
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	Local school districts are required to do annual "mass" screening and ongoing screening.
ISBE Title 1	Local school districts are required to do annual "mass" screening and ongoing screening.
Program	Services for Children with Disabilities/Special Needs
Head Start	Inclusive services are provided; at least 10% of each program's enrollment must be made available for children with disabilities/special needs.
Early Head Start	
IDCFS Child Care	Depends on provider
IDHS Child Care	Depends on provider
IDHS Early Intervention	Services are based on individual needs of child and family.
ISBE Preschool for All	Services are provided to children with disabilities based on the decision of the IEP team.
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	All children must be determined eligible for special education and related services by the school district.
ISBE Title 1	Children with special needs served based on appropriateness of services
ISBE Even Start	Services are provided and children with special needs are also referred to other programs and services.
Program	Curriculum
Head Start	Programs must have a curriculum that is consistent with philosophy and goals of the Head Start Program. Head Start Performance Standards are based on sound child development principles about how children grow and learn. Curriculum means a written plan that includes goals for children's development and learning, experiences through which they will achieve these goals, what staff and parents do, and materials needed.
Early Head Start	
IDCFS Child Care	Programs shall provide a variety of activities geared to the age level and developmental needs of children served.
IDHS Child Care	Programs shall provide a variety of activities geared to the age level and developmental needs of children served.
IDHS Early Intervention	Not applicable
ISBE Preschool for All	Preschool for All curricula must be aligned with the Illinois Early Learning Standards, have a basis in research, consider a child's linguistic and cultural background, and consider a wide range of children's abilities, including those with IEPs.
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	Not applicable
ISBE Title 1	Not applicable
ISBE Even Start	Instructional programs must be based on scientifically based reading research for children and adults to the extent such research is available.
Program	Transition
Head Start	Programs must establish and maintain policies and procedures to support successful transitions for enrolled children/families. Early Head Start transition planning must begin 6 months prior to child's third birthday.
Early Head Start	
	Programs should develop plans with parental input that address the individual transitions for children enrolled.

IDCFS Child Care	Development of this plan shall involve both sending and receiving staff.
IDHS Child Care	Programs should develop plans with parental input that address the individual transitions for children enrolled. Development of this plan shall involve both sending and receiving staff.
IDHS Early Intervention	Activities aimed at transitioning children from EI begin at 30 months of age by reviewing with families their rights regarding transition, discussing Part B services or other community options that may be available after age 3, and, if applicable, initiating communication with the LEA. If a child is eligible for Part B, a meeting is held when the child reaches 33 months. Children make the transition from EI one day prior to their third birthday.
ISBE Preschool for All	Programs are encouraged to develop and implement horizontal and vertical transition plans for children and families birth to age 5.
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	Local school districts are required to participate in transition meetings scheduled by EI for children who are receiving EI services and are turning 3 years of age.
ISBE Title 1	Not applicable
ISBE Even Start	Programs assist families to make horizontal and vertical transitions including transitions to school, further education/training, and employment.

Community Involvement

Program	Written Agreements/Contracts
Head Start Early Head Start	Programs are required to initiate interagency agreements with local education agencies and other community agencies within their service delivery area.
IDCFS Child Care	Not required
IDHS Child Care	Not required, but encouraged
IDHS Early Intervention	Local Interagency Councils (LICs) work with local education agencies and other community organizations to develop transition agreements.
ISBE Preschool for All	Participating programs are required to sign the <i>Grant Agreement and Certificate of Assurances</i> . Some programs may have written agreements or contracts with other agencies to provide a range of services.
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	Not required
ISBE Title 1	School-parent contract required
ISBE Even Start	Programs may have written agreements or contracts with other agencies to provide a range of services.
Program	Referrals/Information
Head Start Early Head Start	Agencies must work collaboratively with participating parents to identify and continually access services that are responsive to families' interests and goals.
IDCFS Child Care	Not required
IDHS Child Care	Encouraged but not required except for site-administered child care contractors who must refer families to social service agencies as required or requested.
IDHS Early Intervention	Programs develop and maintain collaborative relationships with primary referral sources, including child care providers, social service agencies, physicians, and other health care professionals.
ISBE Preschool for All	Programs are encouraged to coordinate community collaboration efforts among organizations that provide services to families with children age birth to 5.
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	Referrals are made to ECSE if a child is identified by the school district and is age 3 or older. Infants and toddlers are referred to EI.
ISBE Title 1	Child may be referred for special education services with parent permission.
ISBE Even Start	Projects build a referral network within the local community being served.
Program	Collaboration/Partnerships
Head Start Early Head Start	Staff must play an active role in community planning to encourage open communication to improve service delivery. Staff must take affirmative steps to establish an ongoing collaboration with providers of health, mental health, nutrition, disabilities, family support, child protection, and school services.
IDCFS Child Care	Not required, but encouraged
IDHS Child Care	Not required, but encouraged Providers who are receiving funding from two or more public funding sources to provide full-day/full-year services can apply to be part of the Child Care Collaboration Program. Approved Child Care Collaboration sites are allowed three Child Care Assistance Program policy waivers.
IDHS Early Intervention	Programs form partnerships with local community agencies to ensure a comprehensive continuum of services for families, regardless of the family's income or ability to pay.
ISBE Preschool for All	Services and activities are coordinated with other programs operating in the same service area. Collaborations with local community agencies allow PFA programs to be embedded in full-day early care and education programs.
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	Varies by district
ISBE Title 1	Encouraged as a district option

ISBE Even Start	Partnerships, coordination, and collaboration are the foundation of the program.
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Human Resources

Program	Minimum Staff Qualifications
Head Start Early Head Start	Agencies must ensure that staff and consultants have the knowledge, skills, and experience to perform their assigned duties. At least 50% of teachers must have an associate's degree. By 2013, 50% of teachers must have a bachelor's degree and 50% of assistant teachers must have a CDA.
IDCFS Child Care	Teachers: CDA/CCP credential or 30 semester hours of college credit with 6 semester hours in child care or child development and 1 year experience. Assistants: High school diploma or GED Directors: CDA/CCP credential, 12 semester hours of college credit in child care or child development, and 2 years experience; or 60 semester hours of college credit with 18 semester hours in child care or child development Family Child Care Providers: None
IDHS Child Care	Same as for IDCFS Child Care except for center-based programs participating in Quality Counts QRS requiring a percentage of staff qualifications to exceed licensing requirements.
IDHS Early Intervention	Part C service providers must meet minimum state licensure/certification and/or Part C EI credentialing standards.
ISBE Preschool for All	All PFA teachers must have a bachelor's degree and hold a Type O4 certificate from the Illinois State Board of Education. Noncertified staff assisting in the instruction of children must have 30 hours of college credit.
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	All teachers must be certified in ECSE.
ISBE Title 1	Staff must hold a valid certificate for the position.
ISBE Even Start	Instructional staff: associate degree in a field related to early childhood, elementary or secondary education, or adult education Project Director: training completed in the operation of a family literacy program Paraprofessional: high school diploma or GED
Program	Staff Training
Head Start Early Head Start	Staff training and development includes orientation, Head Start Program Performance Standards, and 15 hours of annual inservice training.
IDCFS Child Care	Directors and child care staff must attend a minimum of 15 hours of annual inservice training.
IDHS Child Care	CCR&R agencies provide training and make professional development funds available to child care staff. Illinois Gateways to Opportunity scholarships are available for teaching staff and directors to attain college credit, degrees, and all credentials identified on the Illinois Gateways to Opportunity career lattice.
IDHS Early Intervention	All professionals receive training on the Part C system. All service coordinators receive IFSP and service coordination training within the first 90 days of employment. Both must obtain 30 hours of continuing education as approved by IDHS. Additionally, providers must participate in ongoing professional development that includes a once-a-month, face-to-face meeting with peers.
ISBE Preschool for All	Staff receive ongoing professional development through the Illinois Resource Center and STARnet. The Administrator's Academy includes a track providing information on early education for children, birth to age 8, and their families.
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	Staff participate in ISBE trainings: STARnet, Choices, and the Autism Project.
ISBE Title 1	Staff must participate in ongoing professional development.
ISBE Even Start	Staff receive ongoing professional development opportunities through the Even Start State Leadership Project, the Adult Education Service Center Network, the Early Childhood Professional Development Center, and the Illinois Family Literacy Conference.

Quality Assurance

Program	Program Outcomes
Head Start Early Head Start	Grantee and delegate agencies must conduct annual self-assessment of their effectiveness and progress in meeting program goals/objectives and in meeting federal regulations for service implementation.
IDCFS Child Care	Development of child care arrangements that provide families access to high-quality care and to ensure children are cared for in a safe and healthy environment that meets their developmental needs
IDHS Child Care	Development of child care arrangements that provide low-income families access to affordable, high-quality child care while they are working and/or participating in an approved education/training activity
IDHS Early Intervention	Outcomes include (1) increase the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities, (2) reduce educational costs to the state, (3) reduce the incidence of institutionalization, (4) enhance the ability of families to meet the needs of their infants and toddlers with disabilities, and (5) support agencies throughout the state in meeting the needs of families in underserved areas.
ISBE Preschool for All	Programs are required to participate in data collection for research conducted by the Illinois State Board of Education.
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	Not applicable

ISBE Title 1	Programs are required to conduct an assessment to determine if program outcomes are being met.
ISBE Even Start	Local program data are collected on 13 Illinois Even Start Performance Indicators, including the 6 legislated indicators (adult related and child related).
Program	Child Outcomes
Head Start Early Head Start	The agencies must focus on assessment of specific indicators of literacy, numeracy, and language skills, and implement and collect data on Child Outcomes Framework domains.
IDCFS Child Care	None
IDHS Child Care	None
IDHS Early Intervention	Child outcomes are developed, and achievement toward those outcomes is measured individually through the IFSP process.
ISBE Preschool for All	Evaluation of children and family progress is supported through evidence-based authentic assessment systems.
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	The Illinois State Board of Education Early Learning Standards and the Illinois State Board of Education Early Childhood Outcomes System apply.
ISBE Title 1	Not applicable
ISBE Even Start	Local projects report data on child outcomes that include language and emergent literacy, reading readiness, reading on grade level, school attendance, and grade promotion.
Program	Monitoring
Head Start Early Head Start	Agencies are monitored every three years by a federal review team to examine management systems and capacity to implement the Head start Program Performance Standards and other regulations.
IDCFS Child Care	Child care facilities are monitored annually; licenses renewed every three years.
IDHS Child Care	Programs are monitored on a regular basis to ensure that services are provided for eligible children.
IDHS Early Intervention	Service providers are reviewed periodically to ensure that needed services are provided based on the IFSP.
ISBE Preschool for All	Preschool for All programs are monitored by ISBE annually for three years and are subsequently monitored a minimum of every three years.
ISBE Early Childhood Special Education	Local school districts are monitored by ISBE on a regular basis and focused monitoring is conducted based on school district data.
ISBE Title 1	Early childhood programs are monitored as part of the regular ISBE monitoring.
ISBE Even Start	Projects receive an on-site monitoring visit at least every four years.

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Susan Fowler's research focuses on the lives of young children (birth to age 8) and their families. She has examined both programmatic and policy factors that influence family involvement in the delivery of services to

their young children who are developmentally delayed, as well as the factors that influence professionals in their delivery and coordination of services. Her research fits three clusters: development of guidelines and practices to help communities and programs coordinate delivery of services to young children and families, particularly as they leave one service system for another; research and development of intervention strategies to enhance language, social, and cognitive development in young children; and increasing our understanding of the roles that cultural and linguistic diversity may play in family's participation in services.

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