



ILLINOIS EARLY CHILDHOOD INCLUSION POLICY SUMMIT

Website for additional information on summit:

www.eclre.org/good-to-know/illinois-early-childhood-inclusion-policy-summit.aspx

Presenters

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Early CHOICES, Preschool LRE Initiative for Illinois

Agenda

- Why an Early Childhood Inclusion Policy Summit
- Stakeholder engagement
- How we structured the day and engaged attendees
- Follow up and Reconvening of Summit



Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

www.ed.gov/early-learning
www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**POLICY STATEMENT ON
INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN
EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS**
September 14, 2015

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy statement is to set a vision and provide recommendations to States, local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, and public and private early childhood programs, from the U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Health and Human Services (HHS) (the Departments), for increasing the inclusion of infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities in high-quality early childhood programs.¹

It is the Departments' position that all young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs, where they are provided with individualized and appropriate support in meeting high expectations. This joint ED and HHS policy statement aims to advance this position by:

- Setting an expectation for high-quality inclusion in early childhood programs;
- Increasing public understanding of the science that supports meaningful inclusion of children with disabilities, from the earliest ages, in early childhood programs;
- Highlighting the legal foundations supporting inclusion in high-quality early childhood programs;
- Providing recommendations to States, LEAs, schools, and early childhood programs for increasing inclusive early learning opportunities for all children; and
- Identifying free resources for States, programs, early childhood personnel², and families to support high-quality individualized programming and inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood programs.

Though this policy statement focuses on including young children with disabilities in early childhood programs, it is our shared vision that all people be meaningfully included in all facets of society

¹ Early childhood programs refer to those that provide early care and education to children birth through age five, where the majority of children in the program are typically developing. These include, but are not limited to, private or publicly funded center or family-based child care, home visiting, Early Head Start, Head Start, private preschool, and public school and community-based pre-kindergarten programs, including those in charter schools.

² Early childhood personnel refer to professionals who provide early care and education services to children birth through age five, including public or private preschool teachers, home and center-based child care providers, Head Start and Early Head Start teachers, home visitors, early interventionists, early childhood special educators, and related services personnel.

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All young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs where they are provided with appropriate support in meeting high expectations



State Recommendations

- Create a State-Level Interagency Task Force and Plan for Inclusion
- Ensure State Policies Support High-Quality Inclusion
- Set Goals and Track Data
- Review and Modify Resource Allocations
- Ensure Quality Rating Frameworks are Inclusive
- Strengthen Accountability and Build Incentive Structures.
- Build a Coordinated Early Childhood Professional Development System
- Implement Statewide Supports for Children's Social-Emotional and Behavioral Health
- Raise Public Awareness



Preschool Least Restrictive Environment



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

January 9, 2017

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to reaffirm the position of the U.S. Department of Education (ED or Department) that all young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs where they are provided with individualized and appropriate supports to enable them to meet high expectations. Over the last few years, States and communities have made progress in expanding early learning opportunities for young children, with all but four States investing in free public preschool programs.¹ The Federal government, while aligning with the movement of States, has led several efforts to increase access to and the quality of early childhood programs, such as the Preschool Development Grants and expansion of Head Start. States have focused on improving the quality of early learning programs, including the development of early learning program standards and incorporating these into Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS).²

In September 2015, ED and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a [policy statement on promoting inclusion](#) in early childhood programs to set a vision on this issue and provide recommendations to States, local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, and public and private early childhood programs.³ Despite the expansion of early childhood programs, there has not yet been a proportionate expansion of inclusive early learning opportunities for young children with disabilities. Given this concern and the ED-HHS policy statement on early childhood inclusion, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is updating the February 29, 2012, Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) to reaffirm our commitment to inclusive preschool education programs for children with disabilities and to reiterate that the least restrictive environment (LRE) requirements in section 612(a)(5) of the Individuals with Disabilities

¹ Walter N. Ridley Lecture: Pre-Kindergarten Access and Quality are Essential for Children's Growth and Development (November 2, 2016), available at: <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/walter-n-ridley-lecture-pre-kindergarten-access-and-quality-are-essential-childrens-growth-and-development>. For more detailed but less recent information on State investments in public preschool see: Barnett, W.S., Friedman-Krauus, A., Gomez, R.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., Weisenfeld, G.G., & Horowitz, M. (2016). *The state of preschool 2015: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

² QRIS statewide systems are implemented in over half of the States and others are developing such systems. ED and the Department of Health and Human Services have supported States in further developing such systems under Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge and the Child Care Development Fund. For more information see: <https://qrisonline.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm?do=qrisonline>.

³ See U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services Policy Letter on the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs (September 14, 2015), available at: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/pandw/iviteminar/point-statement-full-text.pdf>.

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.



<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/preschool-lre-dcl-1-10-17.pdf>



Proposal to Illinois Council for Developmental Disabilities

Illinois will have a vision statement and agreement to use the vision and guidelines by key stakeholders in Illinois to implement policy/practice changes aligned with the DOE & HHS recommendations to states on inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood programs. **As a result of stakeholder engagement, awareness of best practices in inclusion will be increased and inclusion will be prioritized when considering future Illinois policy and program design.**

- *The Early Childhood Inclusion Policy Summit is sponsored by the Early Learning Council, Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities, Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development and the Illinois Interagency Council on Early Intervention. The Summit is funded by the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities and coordinated by Early CHOICES.*

Summit Planning



inclusion
of Children with
Special Needs
Early Childhood Inclusion Policy Summit

Steering Committee
Listening Sessions
System Scans
Increasing knowledge of inclusion

Steering Committee

- Stakeholders from across agencies, geography, and focus areas
- Met monthly
- Topics –
 - Pre-learning webinar
 - Vision
 - Invitees
 - Structure of the day
 - Speakers

Listening Session Summary

Throughout Illinois

- Participants
 - Families
 - Providers
 - Child Care
 - Head Start
 - Early Intervention
 - School Districts
 - Coaches
- Inclusion
 - Access
 - Participation
 - Supports

Categories of Input

- *Awareness and understanding of inclusion*
- *Access to inclusive settings and evidence-based practices*
- *Resources to support high quality inclusion*
- *Workforce*

System Scans and State of the State

- Program standards scans
- How is Illinois doing on Inclusion?

Early Childhood Programs Required to Prioritize or Enroll Children with Disabilities

Head Start and Early Head Start: At least 10% of children must have IFSPs and IEPs

Early Head Start/Child Care Partnerships: At least 10% of children must have IFSPs and IEPs

Preschool Expansion Grant: Children with IEPs and at risk based on screening must be prioritized. Federal grant requires enrollment of children with disabilities

Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative: Children with concerns based on developmental screening prioritized for enrollment

Home Visiting: Children with disabilities prioritized for enrollment

Child Care: Children with disabilities prioritized for enrollment

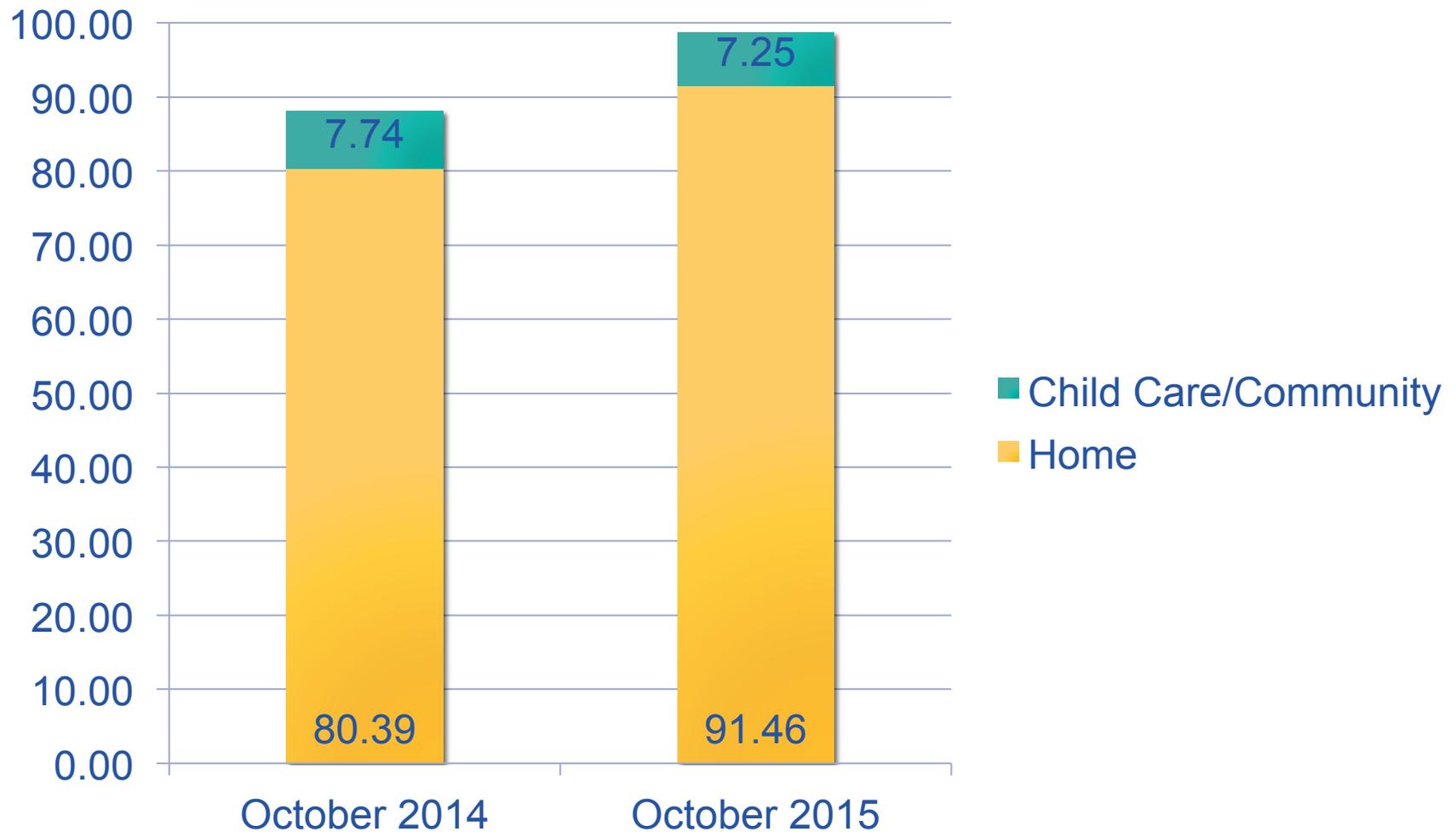
Summary of Illinois Data

Useful Data Sets:

Education Environment Code Data

Natural Environment Data

Illinois Part C Indicator 2: Services in Natural Environments



Part B Indicator 6 Data

Where are children 3-5 with IEPs receiving the majority of special ed services

- Percent of children who attend a regular early childhood program and receive the majority of special education and related services in the program (Indicator 6a)
 - **National data- 45% Illinois data 38%**
- Percent of children who attend a special education classroom, separate school or residential facility (Indicator 6b)
 - **National data- 25% Illinois data 28%**

How did we bring participants along in understanding inclusion?

1. Pre-Learning Webinar

- Research
- IDEA Review
- Professional Support
- National Survey

2. IL Stats



Research Spotlight



Justice et al., 2014

Children's growth and learning are related to their peers' skills and the effects are most pronounced for children with disabilities.

Rafferty et al, 2003

Children with severe disabilities in inclusive settings had higher scores on language and social skills assessments than children in segregated settings.

Early Childhood Inclusion: The IDEA FACTS



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATION

January 9, 2017

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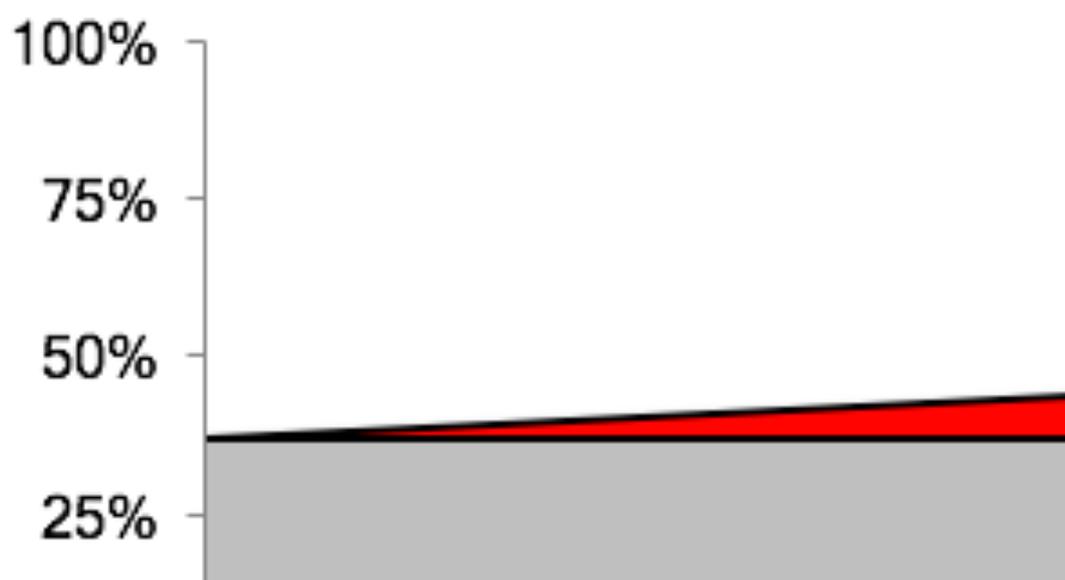
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Early Childhood Inclusion

The Practice FACTS

Increased only **7.2%**



238 people responded to the survey.

This included representation from 32 states and 1 territory.



Early Childhood Inclusion: The FACTS

★ Research is clear: it's effective

SCIENCE

★ IDEA is clear: it's preferred **LAWS**

★ The profession is clear: it's the right thing to do

PROFESSION

★ Rates of inclusion have not increased by enough; most children with disabilities are not being included.

PRACTICE

National Survey Results

- Overall, the challenges and solutions have changed very little
- **Major change** = attitude and belief challenges moved from being the second highest rated category of challenges to the highest rated



What we know from research....

- Highlight research that can be used to change attitudes.
- Discuss research findings that are accessible and meaningful
- ★ Inclusion benefits children with and without disabilities.
- ★ High-quality inclusive classrooms with higher ratios of more competent peers, in particular, are related to positive outcomes
- ★ Children with disabilities do not need to be “ready” to be included
- ★ Inclusion is not more expensive

Summit: February 28, 2017

- 95 people attended from public and private entities that engage with early childhood
- Diana Rauner- President of the Ounce of Prevention Fund and First Lady of Illinois
- Richard Gonzales- HHS
- Christy Kavulik- OSEP
- Kate Anderson Foley-ISBE
- Erin Barton- Researcher
- Bridget Brown- Self Advocate



Summit Discussion Areas

- Strengthening and Supporting a Competent Workforce
- Improving Access to Inclusive Early Childhood Settings
- Systems Alignment and Collaboration





Discussion #1: Strengthening & Supporting a Competent Workforce

- *How do we shift policies and resources at a systems or community level to ensure that early childhood teachers, providers, and leaders have the knowledge and skills required to serve children with diverse needs in all early childhood settings?*

Discussion #2: Improving Access to Inclusive Early Childhood Settings

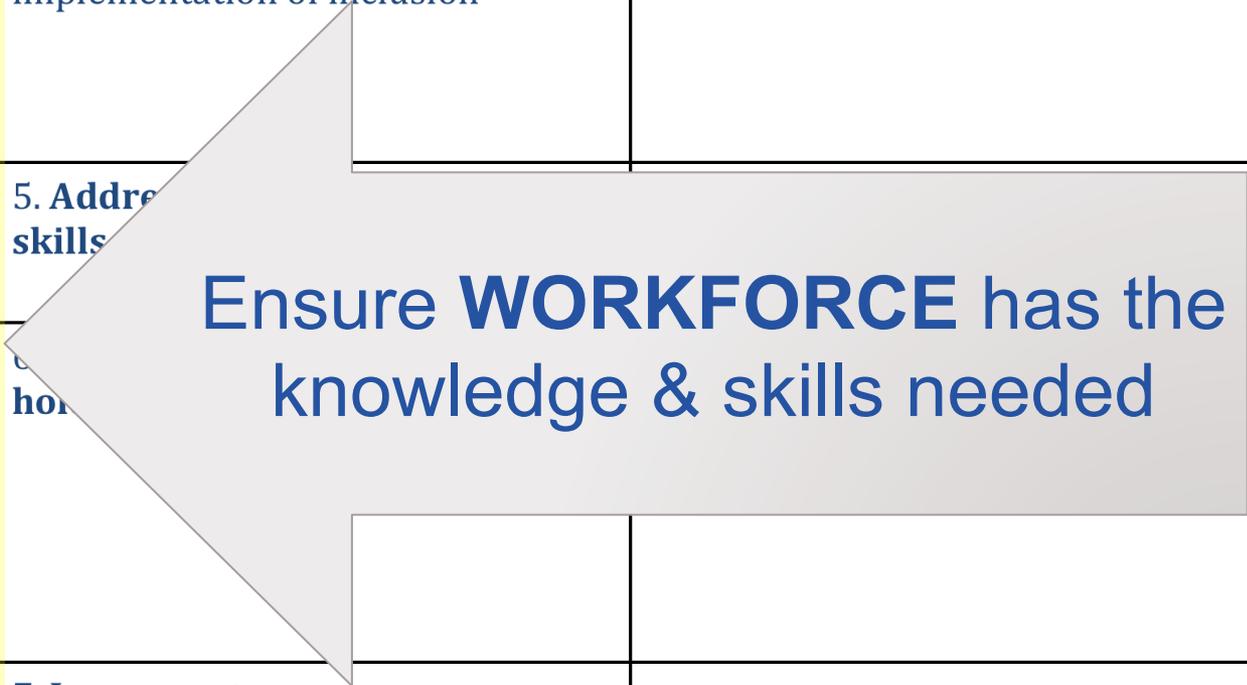
- *How can we assure inclusion of children with special needs is a priority in program design and resource decision-making so that all children have access to high quality opportunities across early childhood settings?*

Discussion #3: Systems Alignment and Collaboration

- *How do we work across agencies to leverage existing structures and systems to establish a coordinated, efficient, and sustainable infrastructure for inclusion in early childhood?*

SUMMIT OUTCOMES

Check out the website at:

Workforce	Access	Collaboration
1. Move toward shared competencies in our ECE workforce (teachers & leaders) that promote high quality, inclusive programs	4. Address funding restrictions and challenges to support implementation of inclusion	8. Cultivate a shared Illinois vision/approach to inclusion
2. Improve our pre-service preparation for ECE providers	5. Address skills	
3. Surface and address priority needs for professional development (on-going & embedded) within ECE settings to increase high quality inclusion	6. Address	
	7. Incorporate our common definitions of inclusion and natural environments into policy & practice	

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1. Move toward shared competencies in our ECE workforce (teachers & leaders) that promote high quality, inclusive programs	4. Address funding restrictions and challenges to support implementation of inclusion	8. Cultivate a shared Illinois vision/approach to inclusion
2. Improve our pre-service preparation for ECE providers	5. Address beliefs, attitudes and skills to increase access	9. Better understand who we are serving and how we are doing as system
3. Surface and address priority needs for professional	6. Emphasize quality while still holding the field accountable	10. Facilitate and support successful ECE collaboration toward inclusion
<p>Ensure ALL children have ACCESS to inclusive high quality opportunities across settings</p>		
	7. Incorporate our common definitions of inclusion and natural environments into policy & practice	

Workforce	Access	Collaboration
1. Move toward shared competencies in our ECE workforce (teachers & leaders) that promote high quality, inclusive programs	4. Address funding restrictions and challenges to support implementation of inclusion	8. Cultivate a shared Illinois vision/approach to inclusion
<p>2. Improve systems and 5. Address beliefs, attitudes, and</p> <p>Ensure COLLABORATION occurs across systems/agencies to establish a coordinated, efficient & sustainable infrastructure for inclusion</p> 		9. Better understand who we are serving and how we are doing as system
professional development (on-going & embedded) within ECE settings to increase high quality inclusion		10. Facilitate and support successful ECE collaboration toward inclusion
	7. Incorporate our common definitions of inclusion and natural environments into policy & practice	

Since the Summit...

- Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities Funding Opportunity
- Inclusion Clarification from Illinois State Board of Education
- Partnership to improve inclusion in child care
- Home Visiting inclusion survey
- Home Visiting and Early Intervention convening
- Sharing Inclusion Summit outcomes across Illinois and Nationally

Summit Reconvene

- June 5, 2018
- 65 People Attended
- Goals
 1. Lift up inclusion and its critical value in early childhood
 2. Celebrate successes to date in policy & practice
 3. Zero in on promising cross-cutting opportunity areas and create actionable strategies to address

What are you doing in your state?

