



Illinois Department of Human Services

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To: All Early Intervention Stakeholders

From: Ann Freiburg, Chief *AMF*
Bureau of Early Intervention

Date: November 29, 2021

Re: Early Intervention (EI) Weekly Update

The ICEI telehealth workgroup met again recently to develop recommendations for how live video visits can be used beyond the pandemic. When these are shared, the Bureau will review them to determine next steps.

Illinois continues to see concerning trends related to COVID-19. As of November 21, 2021, all but four counties are considered areas of *high transmission*. It is important that everyone continue using the strategies outlined in the [revised plan](#) to mitigate the spread of this virus. **In addition, everyone (providers, service coordinators, and families) should continue wearing masks, washing hands, and maintaining social distance.**

The [Illinois Department of Public Health's website](#) continues to be the best source of information on [regional conditions](#) and the activities permitted within each region. For details about approved activities, review the [updated plan](#). If you need information about where you can get a vaccine, visit: <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/vaccination-location>.

In addition to addressing pandemic-related issues, the Bureau has also begun working on a plan to address the extended early intervention services created by Public Act 101-654. A group of stakeholders has been recruited to identify questions/areas of concern and to assist with the development of policies, procedures, forms, and resources. [Initial information for families](#) has already been posted. As we learn more from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) about what is required for implementing extended services, additional information will be shared.

The pandemic exacerbated already-existing disparities within many public systems. As a result, the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) created a plan for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Racial Justice. The four main goals of this work are to: (1) build a persistent and pervasive culture that supports and advances equity and racial justice; (2) ensure equity and racial equity literacy and knowledge that leads to normalization of thought and action; (3) create institutional policy and practice changes to promote/achieve equity, racial justice, access, and inclusion; (4) advance systems policy and practice changes to promote/achieve equity, racial justice, access, and inclusion. The Bureau has engaged the Center for Equity and Excellence to guide the work in Early Intervention. Specifically, the focus will be to gain a deeper understanding of the gaps in Early

Intervention services and supports for young children, birth to 3 years, and their families, including any racial disparities, why they exist, and identification of actionable steps that can be taken. These may include strategies at the local and state level – in policy/procedure, recruitment and retention efforts, practice, and professional development. The work aims to increase the number of eligible Black and brown children receiving Early Intervention services to be more representative of our population by identifying barriers to screening, referral, evaluation, and services. Three Child and Family Connections offices will initially be involved in these efforts, but it is anticipated that the strategies identified will have statewide applicability.

Stakeholders are also engaged to help the Bureau plan for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) spending. These funds are being provided to state educational agencies and lead agencies to help recover from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and to reopen schools and sustain operations safely. Illinois received just over \$7 million for system investments. These funds must be used by January 28, 2024. This [fact sheet](#) provides additional information about the guidelines for these funds.

Please continue to monitor the [Provider Connection's website](#) for updates to policy and procedure. The [EITP's website](#) and [Facebook](#) page, and the [EI Clearinghouse's website](#) should also be monitored for information and resources.

During the week of Thanksgiving, the Bureau extends its sincere appreciation for our stakeholders' commitment to the children and families we serve.