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Provider Information Notice

TO: Early Intervention Providers and Payees

FROM: Benjamin Delgado, Jr., Chief
Bureau of Early Intervention 

DATE: December 15, 2022

RE: Request for Feedback for Division of Early Childhood (DEC)

The Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Early Childhood's Director Chernawsky has requested the gathering of input from our internal and external Early Intervention (EI) Stakeholders on our strategic plan draft objectives.

Below you will find the DEC strategic Plan Draft Objectives. Please look them over and provide your feedback on the objectives by **Tuesday, December 20, 2022.**

Below are areas you may wish to consider as you review the objectives listed within each of the five (5) goals and the DEIRJ cross-cutting priority:

1. How do the objectives listed align with our DEC Mission, Vision and Values?
2. Do the objectives listed under each goal area help us work toward achieving the Identified goal/priority?
3. Are there any suggested additions or changes to the listed objectives that should be considered by DEC?

Please provide your feedback through email to the [DHS Early Intervention Questions](#) mailbox.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.



**DIVISION OF
EARLY CHILDHOOD**

MISSION

DEC enhances equitable access to child care, home visiting, and early intervention programs and services that support whole child development

VISION

Illinois' pregnant persons, young children and families have the supports they need to achieve their full potential

VALUES

- **Whole Child Focus:** Support children and their families through their formative years by enriching a child's environment through family, child care, education and community engaged-efforts to promote critical brain development of the early years.
- **Equity:** Design and maintain programs that center equity, cultural humility, and anti-racism in service design and delivery, committing to transparent accountability policies/measures and honoring and respecting the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of children and their families; DEC prioritizes serving children and families with access to fewer resources and opportunities.
- **Quality Service Delivery:** Deliver reliable, responsive, and compassionate programs and services for the children and families we serve, rooted in science-based best practices.
- **Relentless Pursuit of Mission:** Tirelessly commit to driving improved access to and quality in DEC's early childhood education and care programs by approaching our mission thoughtfully, efficiently, proactively, and flexibly.
- **Respect & Dignity:** Prioritize kindness, and care by building family, provider, and DEC staff trust through responsible and empathetic programs and services that understand and consider each individual and family's unique needs, experiences and life-decisions.
- **Stability & Sustainability:** Develop and implement reliable services and supports that provide children, families, and providers continuity across social and political changes while remaining flexible enough to meet emerging needs.

DIVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD (DEC): DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS & OBJECTIVES

(Draft Action Plans and Key Performance Indicators to follow shortly)

Goal 1: Enhance Access & Enrollment

Improve family access and enrollment in DEC programs and help connect families to other programs that foster child and family wellbeing to maximize program reach for all eligible children and families.

Objective 1: Equitable Access

Expand the Division's understanding of families' access to DEC services across the state by assessing census data, coupled with program eligibility criteria, to determine the number of eligible children and families within each IDHS region (by age group) vs number of children and families enrolled in DEC programs by **May 2023**.

Objective 2: Customer Service Policies

Assess current customer service policies by collaboratively working to identify gaps in program policies and develop a plan to address by **December 2023**.

Objective 3: Contract Expansion

See Goal 5.

Objective 4: Workforce Development

Increase the workforce and retention rates by increasing provider contracts by **June 2025**.

Objective 5: Public Awareness

Enhance media outreach to ensure clients and providers are aware of DEC programs and services by **December 2025**.

Goal 2: Strengthen Quality ECEC Delivery

Strengthen DEC mechanisms to augment, enhance, and transform provider education and care delivery, including investments in measurement and evaluation, workforce, and knowledge sharing.

Objective 1: Program Development, Planning, & Management

Plan and implement a consistent approach to continuous quality improvement within DEC and with DEC providers, using information collected through contract monitoring, regular and ongoing collaboration with grantees and providers, and new learning and research in the field of early childhood by **December 2025**.

Objective 2: Workforce Development

Implement a systematic approach to ongoing workforce development, acknowledging longevity and experience in the field, for early childhood professionals including training, technical assistance and consultation, as well as supporting access to higher education opportunities for all DEC programs, grantees, and contracts by **December 2025**.

Objective 3: Research and Evaluation

Partner with research organizations and institutions of higher education to conduct well designed research and analysis of DEC programs to inform program development and continuous quality improvement by **December 2025**.

Goal 3: Optimize Data & Technology

Enhance technology and analytics infrastructure and capabilities to enable innovation, data-informed decision making, and modernized, reliable user experiences for families and providers.

Objective 1: Make Data Available

Define what “accessible and available data” means and develop a plan to make data that is currently available accessible to all internal and external partners who need it for various management functions by **July 2025**.

Objective 2: Make Data Accessible

Use a Human-Centered Design approach to technology development and to ensure streamlined access to case information for clients and ensure the DEC and all internal and external stakeholders have access to dashboards that will provide meaningful data to enhance informed decision making and program deliverables to families by **July 2025**.

Objective 3: Make Data Transparent

Develop and execute data-informed best practices to ensure all internal partners capture and report data to track program outcomes and impact by **July 2025**.

Goal 4: Build the Division's Capacity

Empower and invest in DEC's workforce, promote employee growth, cultivate positive workplace culture, and foster collaboration across IDHS to enhance DEC's ability to optimize service delivery.

Objective 1: Create and conduct workforce assessment

Complete a comprehensive workforce assessment to support DEC growth and capacity by **June 2024**.

Objective 2: Implement change management

Implement change management activities to support a complete transition from the Division of Family and Community Services (FCS) to an autonomous Division of Early Childhood (DEC) by **June 2024**.

Objective 3: Hire and conduct thorough training of more staff

Conduct comprehensive staff training and professional development by **June 2024**.

Objective 4: Establish workplace culture initiatives

Develop resources that support the establishment of positive workplace culture by **December 2023**.

Objective 5: Implement IDHS Collaboration Frameworks

Implement IDHS/DEC collaboration framework by **June 2024**.

Goal 5: Evaluate & Adjust Funding

Assess funding allocation and distribution mechanisms to drive improved quality and access to early childhood education and care (ECEC) and work to ensure adequate and equitable funding levels for families and providers while remaining adaptive to evolving federal and state

Objective 1: Stable CCAP Funding

Develop and begin implementation of a plan to make enhancements to Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) funding methods and eligibility/copy requirements to provide sustainable funding to providers and enroll and retain families by **July 2023**.

Objective 2: Early Intervention Funding Methods

Develop and begin implementation of enhancements or changes to Early Intervention funding methods to provide equitable access to Early Intervention services across the state by **July 2024**.

Objective 3: Equitable Allocation of Funds

Develop a data-driven plan to equitably allocate funds across the state by **July 2023**.

Objective 4: Collaborative Budgeting

By January of each year, collaborate with external partners and stakeholders to develop a budget proposal and advocacy plan to increase funding for FY24 and beyond.

In addition to the prioritized goals above, DEC has identified “centering equity and racial equity in the planning and implementation process to ensure equitable outcomes” as a cross-cutting priority.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Racial Justice (DEIRJ)

Objective 1: DEIRJ Needs Assessment

Develop a needs assessment tool and complete a DEIRJ Needs Assessment by **November 2023**.

Objective 2: DEIRJ Staff Engagement

Engage all DEC Staff in DEIRJ beginning **March 2023**.

Objective 3: Expand Personnel Diversity

Increase diversity of DEC staff by **January 2024**.

Objective 4: DEIRJ in Contracts

Embed DEIRJ in contracting process by **September 2024**.

Objective 5: Eliminate Barriers

Eliminate eligibility/enrollment barriers that cause disparities in access to services by **June 2024**.

Objective 6: Strategic Plan Alignment

Ensure the DEIRJ Plan is in alignment with the goals of the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) Comprehensive Strategic Plan that includes a plan of action for annual Division-wide activities by **June 2025**.