



**SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS**

**FILED**  
INDEX DEPARTMENT

OCT 24 2023

IN THE OFFICE OF  
SECRETARY OF STATE

October 24, 2023

Executive Order 2023-09

**Executive Order to Manage Preparation for the Consolidation of Early Childhood Education and Care Programs into a New State Agency**

**WHEREAS**, there are over 875,000 children under the age of five in Illinois, nearly half of whom are under the age of three; and,

**WHEREAS**, at birth, a baby's brain is 25% the size of an adult's brain. Yet, an infant's brain has roughly 86 billion neurons, almost all the neurons the human brain will ever have; and,

**WHEREAS**, from three to fifteen months, neuron connections form at a rate of 40,000 per second. By age three, synaptic connections have grown to 100 trillion; and,

**WHEREAS**, ages three to five are critical years to build executive function skills like focusing attention, remembering instructions, and demonstrating self-control. Without these skills, children are not fully equipped to learn. By age five, 90% of brain development is complete; and,

**WHEREAS**, prenatal programs improve regular care of birthing parents, reducing risk of infant low birth weight and mortality; and,

**WHEREAS**, prenatal programs lead to an increase in regular child wellness visits, screenings, and immunizations; and,

**WHEREAS**, early childhood education and care not only improve school readiness and literacy but also improve cognitive development for future success in life, school, and the workforce; and,

**WHEREAS**, research shows that for every dollar invested in high-quality early childhood education, society gains over \$7 in economic returns in the long-term; and,

**WHEREAS**, supporting children means supporting their parents and families. Research shows that early childhood education and care programs can reduce parental stress and improve family well-being and that high-quality child care and early education can increase employment options and earnings for parents and families; and,

**WHEREAS**, preschool programs provide frequent exposure to language, building a child's skills to become a fluent reader; and,

**WHEREAS**, the child care and early education industry is the workforce behind all other workforces. High-quality child care enables parents and families to consistently work and earn an income to support their children; and,

**WHEREAS**, a strong early childhood system ensures a healthy and strong future for Illinois; and,

**WHEREAS**, in Illinois, early childhood education and care programs are managed by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)—each funding and administering a separate set of programs with federal and State dollars; and,

**WHEREAS**, Illinois currently spends more than \$1.4 billion on early childhood education and care; and,

**WHEREAS**, in December 2019, I established and charged the Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding to make recommendations on funding goals and funding mechanisms that would provide equitable access to high-quality early childhood education and care services for all children birth to age five; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Commission issued its final report in March 2021, including the recommendation to centralize early childhood programs into a single, newly formed State agency dedicated to early care and education; and,

**WHEREAS**, with the support of the Illinois General Assembly, I launched SMART START Illinois, a commitment to expand access to early childhood education and care services, expand access to home-visiting programs, strengthen Early Intervention services, establish new child care workforce compensation contracts that increase pay for providers and child care workers, and eliminate preschool deserts; and,

**WHEREAS**, the goals of SMART START Illinois can be catalyzed by the creation of a new State agency; and,

**WHEREAS**, one agency that unites early childhood programs and funding will result in better coordinated State-funded programs, more equitably allocated resources across the State, less bureaucracy for providers, and greater access for parents and families; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Illinois State Board of Education will appoint an Early Childhood Transition Director who will work with IDHS and DCFS, other relevant state agencies, the Governor's Office, and experts and stakeholders to prepare for a transition to a single State agency administering early childhood education and care programs; and,

**WHEREAS**, an advisory committee will be established to help inform and provide feedback to the Transition Director and the State.

**NOW THEREFORE**, I, JB Pritzker, Governor of the State of Illinois, by virtue of the executive authority vested in me by article V of the Constitution of the State of Illinois, do hereby order as follows:

Section 1. The Illinois Department of Human Services shall:

- a) Partner with the Early Childhood Transition Director in all facets of planning and preparation regarding the proposed change in early childhood governance,
- b) Aid in the preparation of policy, regulatory, and resource changes necessary to accomplish the goal of creating a new State agency focused on early childhood programs and services,
- c) Assist in the development of a plan to transition the administration of the following programs into the new State agency: the Child Care Assistance Program, Early Intervention Services, Home-Visiting Programs, and State support of the federally funded Head Start programs,
- d) Support efforts to convene providers, family members, advocates, and other stakeholders, as needed, and
- e) Promote effective interagency collaboration and system integration to improve early childhood services.

Section 2. The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services shall:

- a) Partner with the Early Childhood Transition Director in all facets of planning and preparation regarding the proposed change in early childhood governance,
- b) Aid in the preparation of policy, regulatory, and resource changes necessary to accomplish the goal of creating a new State agency focused on early childhood programs and services,

- c) Assist in the development of a plan to transition the responsibility of daycare licensing to the new State agency,
- d) Support efforts to convene providers, family members, advocates, and other stakeholders, as needed, and
- e) Promote effective interagency collaboration and system integration to improve early childhood services.

Section 3. The Illinois Department of Central Management Services shall:

- a. Partner with the Early Childhood Transition Director in all facets of planning and preparation regarding the proposed change in early childhood governance,
- b. Aid in the preparation of policy, regulatory, and resource changes necessary to accomplish the goal of creating a new State agency focused on early childhood programs and services,
- c. Support appropriate coordination with relevant collective bargaining units, and
- d. Promote effective interagency collaboration and system integration to improve early childhood services.

Section 4. The Illinois State Board of Education is encouraged to:

- a) Aid in the preparation of policy, regulatory, and resource changes necessary to accomplish the goal of creating a new State agency focused on early childhood programs and services,
- b) Assist in the development of a plan to transition the administration of the following programs into the new state agency: the Preschool for All program, the Preschool for all Expansion program, and the Prevention Initiative home-visiting program,
- c) Assist in the development of a plan to coordinate early childhood special education services, bilingual education services, and the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment with the new State agency,
- d) Support efforts to convene providers, family members, advocates, and other stakeholders, as needed, and
- e) Promote effective interagency collaboration and system integration to improve early childhood services.

Section 5. Executive Order 2010-08, creating the Office of Early Childhood Development within the Office of the Governor, is hereby rescinded.

Section 6. Nothing in this Executive Order shall be construed to contravene any federal or State law or regulation. Nothing in this Executive Order shall affect or alter the existing statutory powers of any State agency or be construed as a reassignment or reorganization of any State agency.

Section 7. This Executive Order supersedes any contrary provision of any other prior Executive Order.

Section 8. If any part of this Executive Order or its application to any person or circumstance is found to be invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, this invalidity does not affect any other provision or application of this Executive Order, which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application. The provisions of this Executive Order are severable.

Section 9. This Executive Order shall take effect immediately upon filing with the Secretary of State.

  
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JB Pritzker, Governor

Issued by the Governor: October 24, 2023

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