

State: Illinois

Grantee: Chapin Hall

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Partner(s): Illinois Department of Human Services, Office of Early Childhood; Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies; Illinois Head Start Association

Evaluating Investments to Expand High Quality Child Care Utilization and Supply in Illinois

Illinois proposes a partnership that includes the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Office of Early Childhood, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA), the Illinois Head Start Association (IHSA), and Rachel Gordon, Professor at the University of Illinois Chicago. This diverse set of organizations and individuals will together address research questions and analyses identified by IDHS leadership and key stakeholders as they seek to improve the early care and education (ECE) system in Illinois. This partnership's central goals are building evidence to inform the design, implementation, and evaluation of new policies and programs intended to increase families' access to high quality child care and expand the amount of high quality child care, particularly in low-income communities, in Illinois.

The partnership is committed to active dissemination of research results and implications to a broad array of stakeholders to improve existing efforts to improve outcomes for the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) population of families in Illinois. Similarly, we will seek feedback on results to develop implications and inform future research and action.

This partnership builds on the OPRE-funded evaluation of parts of the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 in Illinois, which has developed multiple ECE, employment and education administrative data sources. It adds additional administrative data sources on providers, particularly on Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and Head Start participation by individual children. We propose to collect additional data from the providers and the workforce to better understand implementation of policy and programmatic changes.

The proposed partnership will also focus on improving the capacity of IDHS and the ECE system to conduct research and analysis and do so in a manner that is responsive to decision-making timelines. The capacity-building activities of the partnership are intended to extend throughout the Office of Early Childhood and across the Illinois ECE system.

The research proposed includes evaluating both eligibility policy changes that will be put into place during 2019 and 2020 and programmatic initiatives to improve quality that are currently being planned. To do that, partnership will require agility that is reflected in the data infrastructure that has been and continues to be built.