

Gov. Pritzker Announces New Investments In Child Care Focused On Supporting Providers And Working Families

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CHICAGO – Governor JB Pritzker, together with the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Division of Early Childhood (DEC), announced plans to further advance Illinois as the best state in the country for families to raise young children.

The investments are aimed at supporting providers as they continue serving their local communities and easing financial burdens on working families.

Illinois will enhance its continued investments in the state's early childhood system in the following ways:

- Extending and expanding the Strengthen and Grow Child Care (SGCC) grant program through July 2023. These grants provide funding for eligible child care centers and homes.
- Extending Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) eligibility for job seekers through June 2023.
- Reclassifying some eligibility earned income to unearned income. This will enable more families to access CCAP benefits and make Illinois a leader in this area.

“When I took office in 2019, I pledged to make Illinois the best place in the nation to raise a family,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “By expanding the Strengthen and Grow Child Care and Child Care Assistance programs, we are living up to that pledge and making sure families in every corner of the state have access to quality care for their children during their most crucial developmental years.”

"This comprehensive strategy strengthens the infrastructure of our state's early childhood system and uplifts families across our state," said Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton. "We know that this is crucial to nurturing the promise of young people while giving those who provide care during these important stages of development the resources and support needed to do their best work. Access to affordable, quality childcare is a core building block to a bright future for children, their families and the communities of Illinois."

In December 2021, Governor Pritzker and IDHA Secretary Grace B. Hou announced the launch of the \$300 million Strengthen and Grow Child Care (SGCC) program. SGCC focuses on providing eligible licensed child care centers and homes the stable funding needed to recruit, retain, and invest in a strong workforce.

This next round of SGCC funding will open Monday, November 28, 2022. Further details on eligibility requirements and access to applications can be found on the [Gateways Director Portal](#).

This round of funding will be released in February 2023 and run through April 2023. Programs that receive no more than 75% of total early childhood program/site revenue from Early Childhood Block Grant funding (including Preschool for All and/or Prevention Initiative or Head Start/Early Head Start) are eligible to apply. This is up from 50% in previous SGCC funding rounds, making more providers eligible for this support.

In addition to extending and expanding SGCC, the administration will also extend Initial Activity Search (IAS), which was originally implemented in October 2021 to help Illinois families get back on their feet if they faced unemployment during the pandemic. It allows a three-month job search at initial eligibility for Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) families who are not employed or in school/training. This critical support will be extended through June 2023 to ensure stability in child care when a parent loses a job or while they look for a new job or enroll in a workforce development program.

Finally, to help simplify and streamline the CCAP application process – for both families and eligibility specialists – the administration, at the recommendation of the Child Care Advisory Council, will reclassify some eligibility earned income to unearned income to help address inconsistencies in calculating eligibility. This change will go into effect December 1, 2022. For more information on income eligibility, please visit <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=104995>.

“Strengthen and Grow Child Care grants provide stable, predictable funding to support high quality child care and invest in our critical child care workforce. Thanks to Governor Pritzker’s leadership, we will continue to advance Illinois’ child care system in the year ahead,” said Grace B. Hou, Secretary, Illinois Department of Human Services.

“Advancing the child care network helps families across our state to succeed,” said Kirstin Chernawsky, Director, Division of Early Childhood, Illinois Department of Human Services. “The Governor’s vision and key efforts support children from early childhood onward. These changes support families, providers, and children across Illinois.”

Just a year ago, Governor Pritzker and Secretary Hou announced the launch of the Child Care Restoration Grants (CCRG), which have provided over \$900 million in financial assistance to child care businesses that experienced interruption or loss of enrollment due to COVID-19. Thanks to this investment, 97 percent of child care providers who

were open pre-pandemic and received support through CCRG were still open a year later. As the state transitions from a pandemic response to preparing for long-term sustainability, CCRG will come to a close December 31, 2022.

To date, over \$1 billion in funding has reached more than 12,000 child care providers, with over 85 percent of eligible child care centers and 60 percent of licensed family child care homes receiving direct relief. Currently, more than 100,000 Illinois children are served through CCAP.

For more information on early childhood education and care, visit the [Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Early Childhood](#).