Increasing Access to Early Care and Education for Children Involved with the IL Child Welfare System

The IL Early Access Project

PROJECT GOAL

Increase access to early care and education (ECE) programs among young children involved with the IL child welfare system

PROJECT TEAM

Brightpoint, Chapin Hall, DCFS, East Side Aligned, Start Early

DATA

- **Key Informant Interviews** with 18 leaders and decision-makers in ECE and child welfare
- **Policy Scan** of relevant local, state, and federal policies and procedures related to ECE and child welfare
- **Human Centered Design (HCD) Workgroups (Phase 1)** comprised of caregivers, ECE staff, and child welfare staff

PRESENTERS

Lee Ann Huang, Chapin Hall

Carie Bires, Start Early

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BARRIERS to ECE Access for Children involved with DCFS



Ideas

ECE Availability & responsiveness to caregiver needs

- Engage caregivers to identify solutions
- Training on privacy and surveillance, mandated reporter issues, working with families involved with DCFS

Complex eligibility criteria & funding mechanisms

- Simplify eligibility determination processes
- Develop an eligibility tool for ECE and child welfare personnel

Policy misalignment & inconsistent implementation

- Conduct a cross-agency (IDEC and DCFS) policy and procedure review to align and update them

Minimal systems-level knowledge sharing & collaboration

- Convene regular meetings, at local and state levels, between key ECE and child welfare system leaders to build relationships, share updates, and collaborate (IDEC, DCFS, Head Start, school districts/ISBE, private sector)

Data challenges

- Convene a cross-sector work group to examine existing data collection and reporting requirements and identify opportunities for improvement

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