

EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION

A TOOLKIT FOR FAMILIES

The goal of this toolkit is to provide the information and resources families need to recognize and utilize early childhood intervention programs in Illinois.

It is made possible through the generous support of an Autism Speaks Family Services Chapter Grant.

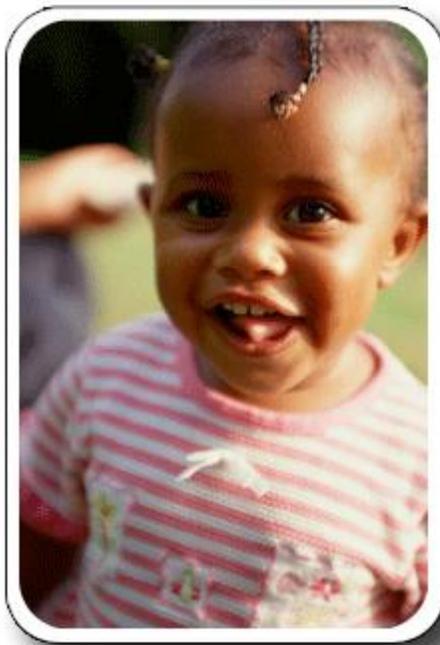


Equip for Equality – Special Education Clinic

EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION

A Toolkit for Families

This toolkit is designed to give families the tools to advocate for their children with disabilities. The kit will explain the purpose and goals of early intervention as well as the process for how to enroll your child in early intervention, how to resolve disputes as well as outline the process of transitioning out of early childhood intervention into preschool. The end of this tool kit includes resources to help parents.



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WHAT IS EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION?

Early childhood is an essential developmental time period in a child's life. Early childhood intervention is a support system provided by the state to help ensure children with developmental disabilities or delays and their families are supported during this important developmental period.



PURPOSE of EARLY INTERVENTION

Early Intervention is designed to provide services, such as therapy, counseling, and education, to children from birth to age three who have a developmental delay, a high probability of a developmental delay, or who are a risk of having a developmental delay. These services serve the purpose of helping them achieve the highest possible degree of development.

Research has consistently demonstrated that early childhood is a key time period of development. The quality of early learning experiences provided to children has a demonstrated impact on the child's school readiness and achievement in early school years. For example, in a recent study, of 800 children followed from preschool through second grade, students who received poor early child care scored lower on measures of cognitive and social skills throughout their early

Intervention is likely to be more effective and less costly when it is provided earlier in life rather than later.

school years. Furthermore, a child's cognitive development was found to be directly correlated to the quality of the early childhood classroom practices. These effects were found across both low-income and upper-income families, demonstrating the need for quality child care across the board.

Within Illinois, over 20,000 children and their families currently receive Early Intervention services. But many more families are eligible to receive services than are currently enrolled. Research has shown that at 9 months of age only 9% of eligible children with delays receive services. At 24 months still

only 12% of eligible children receive early intervention services. There is an urgent need to identify and expand services to eligible infants earlier when the developing brain is most capable of change.

GOALS of EARLY INTERVENTION

The Early Intervention system is designed to support children and families who present with a variety of different needs. Additionally, EI serves not only to support children with existing delays but to also prevent children who are at risk of developmental delays from falling behind their peers. Goals include:

- Enhance the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities;
- Reduce educational costs by minimizing the need for later special education through early intervention;
- Minimize the likelihood of institutionalization, and maximize independent living;
- Enhance the capacity of families to meet their children's needs.

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

ELIGIBILITY

Is your child under 3 years old and either;

- Is currently developmentally delayed;
- Has been deemed to have an established condition;
- Has been evaluated and diagnosed with a physical or mental condition with a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay; or
- Is at-risk of developing a delay or special need that may affect their development or impede their education?

Eligibility is determined by the requirements of Part C of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. If you believe your child may be eligible for Illinois Early Intervention Program services you should call your local Child and Family Connections (CFC) office to arrange for an intake visit by a service coordinator. This coordinator will schedule the free evaluations and serve as your personal contact through the time your child receives Early Intervention services. A list with contact information is included at the end of this toolkit.

You do retain the right to refuse Illinois Early Intervention services. If you do refuse services you are still be able to return for services at a later date so you do not forfeit your child's eligibility for services at a later point.

AREAS of EI SERVICES

Once your child is determined to be eligible for Early Intervention Services, there are a variety of developmental domains that can be addressed.

- Physical Development
- Cognitive Development
- Communication
- Social or emotional development
- Adaptive Development



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Services provided include:

- Assistive technology such as hearing aids
- Early identification screening and testing
- Family training, counseling and home visits
- Health services necessary to enable a child to benefit from other early intervention services
- Medical services (for diagnostic or evaluation purposes)
- Nursing services
- Nutrition services
- Occupational therapy to develop fine motor skills
- Physical therapy
- Psychological Services
- Social work Services
- Special instruction/developmental therapy
- Speech language pathology and audiology services
- Transportation and related costs
- Vision services



These services are provided in several ways. Most often early intervention includes **direct services** in which a therapist will provide one-on-one interactions with the child and family. Direct services should be at least monthly if provided. Services may also involve **monitoring** in which an evaluation and re-evaluation of the child's needs will be reviewed to provide training and assistance for further support. Your child may also receive a **consultation** for specific challenges.

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THE PROCESS OF OBTAINING EI SERVICES

REFERRAL

Part C of the IDEA requires that parents of a child suspected of having a developmental delay or disability be referred to the EI services system within two working days after a child has been "identified." A child may be identified through referral from a variety of sources, e.g. social or community agencies, child care providers, physician's office, therapists.

How to Refer Your Child for Early Intervention Services

- Contact your local Child Family Connection, see Appendix B
- Call the Illinois EI Helpline 1-800-323-4769
- Contact the Early Intervention Program:

ADDRESS 823 East Monroe
Springfield, IL
62701

PHONE 1 (217) 782-1981 (Option 1)

FAX 1 (217) 524-6248

TDD/TTY 1 (800) 558-6482

- Ask for more information from your pediatrician



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EVALUATION



Each system must include the performance of a timely, comprehensive, multidisciplinary evaluation of each child, birth through age two, referred for evaluation, including a family-directed identification of the needs of each child's family to appropriately assist in the development of the child.

REQUIREMENTS

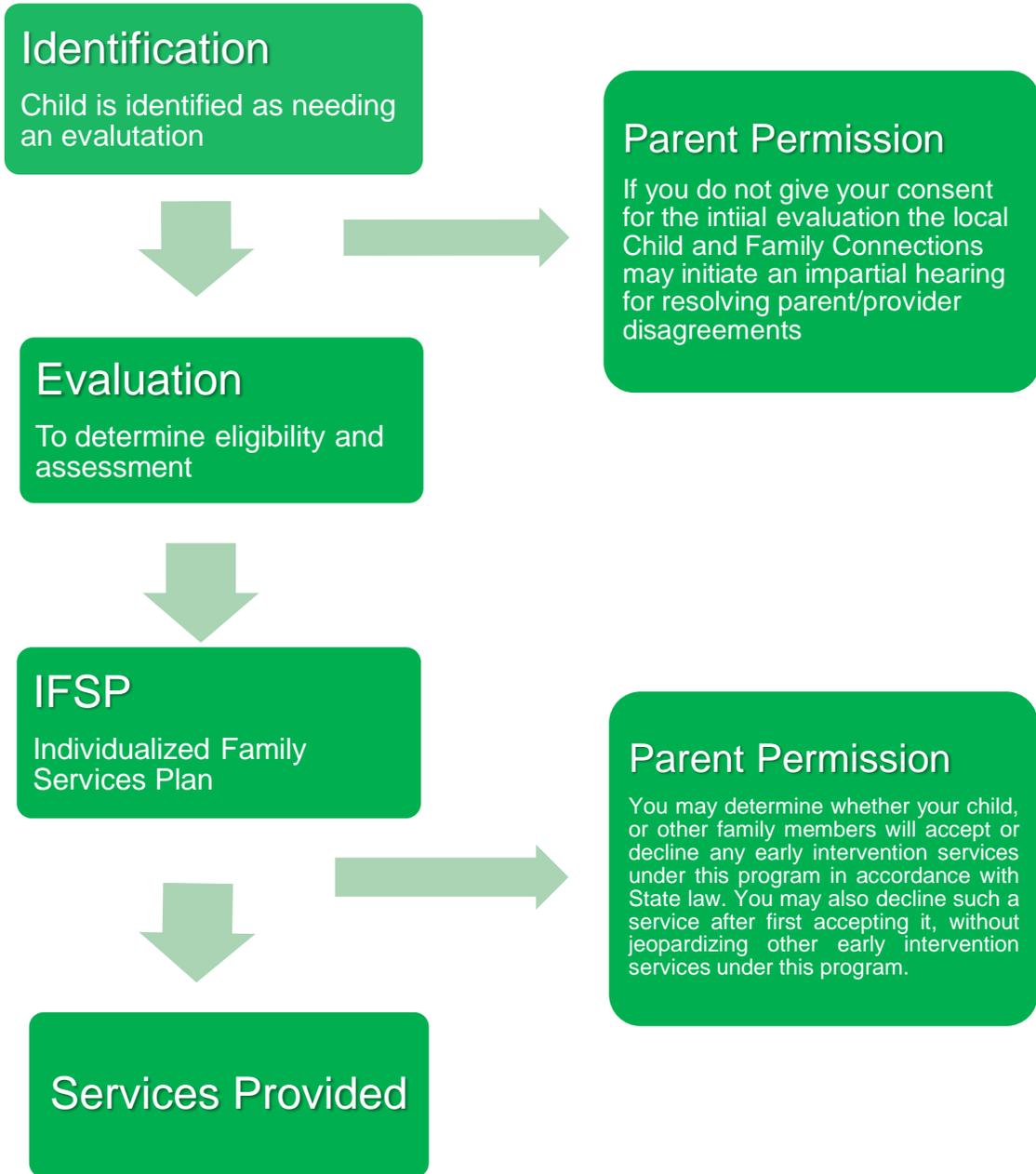
- **Criteria for Child assessment:**
 - Administered by trained personnel
 - Assessments meet clinical standard
 - Include evaluation of child's medical records
 - Assessed 5 areas of development: physical, cognitive, social-emotional, communication, adaptive

- **Criteria for Family Assessment:**
 - Family-directed
 - Voluntary at all stages
 - Administered by trained personnel,
 - Includes personal interview
 - Must include the family input

- **Timeline:**
 - The evaluation must be completed within 45 days of the initial request

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FLOW CHART TO OBTAIN SERVICES



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INDIVIDUALIZED FAMILY SERVICE PLAN IFSP



After an evaluation, families receive an Individualized Family Service Plan that outlines the child's needs and services they will receive. An IFSP is similar to an IEP (for children over age 3), but it also includes family support services, nutrition services and case management. The key components and requirements are outlined below.

COMPONENTS

- *Child's Status*: this includes the child's present levels of physical, cognitive, communication social or emotional and adaptive development at time of evaluation.
- *Family Information* – including the family's resources, priorities and concerns related to the child's development.
- *Goals & Outcomes* – goals can be viewed as the outcomes expected to be achieved for the child and the family, as well as criteria to determine progress made towards achieving these goals.
- *Services* – a detailed description of the specific services to be provided including the frequency, intensity and method of delivery of those services.
- *Other Services* – related services and nutrition services must be detailed as well.
- *Dates & Duration of Services* – both the time of when services will begin as well the length of time the services will continue must be included.
- *Coordinator* – the individual who will be responsible for the coordination and implementation of the plan must be identified.
- *Transition* – this includes the steps to be taken as the child transitions from early intervention to an IEP when they reach age 3.



REQUIREMENTS

- The IFSP must be completed within 45 Days from the initial eligibility determination.
- The IFSP must have a periodic review at least once every six months to ensure the plan is still relevant and individualized to the child's needs.
- Annual Review, which is more comprehensive than the periodic review, must also be completed to ensure your child still requires services.
- Accessibility and convenience of meetings for the family is essential.
- Required meeting participants include the child's parents or guardians, the staff who will provide the early intervention and professionals who have special training concerning the types of services the child will receive.

COST of SERVICES

- In Illinois, families with income below 185% of the poverty level is entitled to completely free services.
- However, screening; assessment; social history; IFSP development, review and modification; and service coordination must be free to all families.
- For families above 185% pay a sliding-scale for services, intervention and related services may be charged on sliding scale.

What services are provided at no cost to the family?

All evaluations and service coordination provided through the EI program are free. If your child is determined to be eligible and you enter the EI program, staff will develop your Individualized Family Service Plan for free.

If you speak a language other than English, the program will provide services in your native language.

What is the family participation fee in the Illinois EI program?

Families may pay a family participation fee for services. This fee is set each year and based on your income, family size, and whether you have excessive out-of-pocket medical expenses. Families never have to pay more in fees than the system pays for the services.

If you have private insurance, this can help reduce the amount the EI program pays for your child, which may then reduce your family participation fee. If you use

your private insurance for services provided the EI payments may be used towards your annual deductible. Your service coordinator and providers will have more information about your family's specific fees and the billing process.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS

Children receiving early intervention services must be provided services in their natural environments, as in the settings that are natural or normal for the child's age peers who have no disabilities. To the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the child, early intervention services must be provided in natural environments, including the home and community settings in which children without disabilities participate.

DISPUTES WITH IFSP

If you disagree with any step in the process including identification, evaluation, placement of the child, or provision of appropriate early intervention services parents have multiple options to resolve the dispute.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

- 1) **State Complaint:** This option involved a complaint to the lead agency for the EI system in Illinois. With early childhood services, the lead agency is the Department of Human Services (DHS).

If a parent believes DHS is violating a law or rule regarding the early intervention program, they may send a complaint. The complaint must include; a statement that DHS has violated a requirement of Part C of the Act, the facts of the situation, signature and contact information of the complainant, and the name and residence of the child involved along with a description of the problem and proposed resolution.

- Send a complaint within 60 days of the dispute to:

Part C Coordinator
DHS - Bureau of Early Intervention
Department of Human Services
823 East Monroe
Springfield, IL 62701



Once received the state has 60 days to investigate this complaint and send a response.

- 2) **Mediation:** May be used to resolve any dispute involving evaluation or placement of a child. The mediation process provides an alternative to filing for an impartial hearing and can be a more efficient way to resolve disagreements. Things to keep in mind include:

- **Voluntary.** The agreement must be voluntary and freely agreed to by family and DHS. The mediator may only help the parties communicate and come to agreement but may not force or order a resolution of the dispute. The state must bear the cost of the process. Can be done simultaneously with an impartial hearing or complaint.

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- **Confidential.** Any information gathered during the meeting may not be used in a later due process hearing regardless of whether there was an agreement met during mediation.
 - **Legally Binding.** Keep in mind once signed the agreement is enforceable in any state court or federal court.
- 3) **Impartial hearing (due process hearing):** An administrative proceeding that is similar to a court hearing. There is a 45 day timeline that requires the hearing be resolved within the 45 day time period.
- When filing for due process any party has a right to the following:
 - Be accompanied and advised by counsel
 - Present evidence and confront, cross examine witnesses
 - Prohibit the introduction of evidence that was not disclosed by the opposing party with 5 days prior to hearing.
 - Obtain a written or electronic record of the hearing and the decision.
 - The decision of the impartial hearing officer may be appealed for judicial review.
 - *Keep in mind: **If you have evidence supporting your case it should be in writing. Always document everything possible.***

TRANSITIONING FROM C TO B

At age three, the child becomes eligible to receive special education services from the local school district rather than through DHS. The school district will need to evaluate the child because not every child who receives early intervention services will be eligible for special education services. If the child is found ineligible for special education services under Part B of IDEA, the parents may use mediation or due process procedures to challenge that decision.

The transition process begins with planning transition strategies and actions. This transition plan must be included in the child's IFSP at 30 months of age. Additionally, a report must be provided to local school district, including information about the child's strengths and needs, learning style, current goal and objectives, overall progress summary, and recommendations for future services. This referral must occur by 33 months, and evaluation must be completed by 36 months.



TRANSITION to SCHOOL



If your child is found eligible for special education services for preschool or kindergarten under Part B of the IDEA, the school district must have a transition conference including the family, the school representative and the Family Support Specialist at least 90 days before the child's third birthday. This transition process is designed to smoothly transition a child from early intervention into special education services.

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TRANSITION PROCESS

TIMELINE

30 MONTHS

- Six months before your child's third birthday, your service coordinator will begin talking to you and your local school district about the transition.
 - The service coordinator will:
 - Inform you in writing of the educational rights of students with disabilities under the law.
 - Inform the school district that your child will shortly reach the age of eligibility for preschool services, and work with the school district to complete any necessary referral information.
 - The school district will conduct an evaluation and assessment of your child and will hold an eligibility meeting to determine your child's eligibility for preschool services

32 MONTHS

- The service coordinator may also convene an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team meeting to discuss and document progress toward child outcomes and functional goals.
 - If an annual IFSP meeting is not otherwise due, this meeting will take place no more than 120 days prior to your child's third birthday.
 - If the IFSP team is able to participate in the transition meeting described above, it will not be necessary to convene a separate IFSP team meeting.

33 MONTHS

- At least 90 days before your child turns three years old, the service coordinator will convene a transition meeting to discuss services for your child.
 - If your child is eligible for preschool services, you, the local school district, and the service coordinator will attend the meeting. The school district is required by law to participate in the meeting.
 - If your child is not eligible for preschool services, you and the coordinator will meet with providers of other services appropriate for your child.
 - In addition to discussing services for your child, the meeting will include a review of your child's program options for the period from your child's third birthday through the remainder of the school year.

- You have the right to refuse any services recommended for your child or your family.
- At either the transition meeting or final IFSP meeting discussed above, the team will establish a transition plan.
 - The plan will provide for the transition of your child to school-based services and for training you and the rest of your family on this process.
 - The plan will also document referrals to any services and whether you decided to accept or reject those services.
- If your child is eligible for preschool services, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting will be scheduled within 60 days of the assessment to develop your child's written IEP and determine the least restrictive educational placement.

PREPARATION

How should you prepare yourself and your family for this?

- There are many steps you can take to ease the transition for you and your child, including:
 - Gathering as much information as possible about the new programs.
 - Locating another family whose child has been in the proposed program to learn about their experiences.
 - Taking your child to visit the proposed program in advance so your child can become acquainted with the new people and the new environment.
 - Talking to the teachers and administrators of the program about your experiences in early intervention, your child's strengths and needs, and your expectations for the new program.
 - Evaluating the proposed program carefully. Remember that you have the right to approve or refuse the services recommended for you or your child.
- The more information you gather and the stronger the relationships you develop, the easier the transition will be for you and your child.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION OR NEED ASSISTANCE TO OBTAIN EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION OR TRANSITION SERVICES FOR YOUR CHILD?



Contact Equip for Equality
(all services are free of charge):
800.537.2532 (voice)
800.610.2779 (TTY)
contactus@equipforequality.org
www.equipforequality.org

This toolkit is intended as a guide for people with disabilities and their families. Nothing written here shall be understood to be legal advice. For specific legal advice, an attorney should be consulted.

Equip for Equality, an independent, private, nonprofit organization, is the Illinois state Protection & Advocacy System whose mission is to advance the human and civil rights of children and adults with disabilities. This publication was made possible by a grant from the Chicago Bar Foundation. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not represent the official views of the Chicago Bar Foundation.

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TOOLKIT RESOURCES FOR PARENTS



Appendix A – Websites for Further information

Agency	Website	Information
Illinois Department of Human Resources	www.dhs.state.il.us	Provides an overview of early intervention services including the procedural safeguards and timelines.
Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse	www.eiclearinghouse.org	Website includes resources for parents and a description of how to get started if you suspect your child is eligible for EI services.
Wrightslaw	www.wrightslaw.com	A helpful website for both EI and Special Education information in an accessible format. Provides an overview of legal framework of IDEA
U.S. Department of Education	www2.ed.gov	The Department of ed includes the Office of Special Education Programs OSEP and provides an overview of federal programs.
National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities	Nichey.org	Provides resources for parents about developmental delay and information about a parent's role in early intervention.
Zero to Three	www.zerotothree.org	Website includes information about early development including news and policy updates about early intervention.

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Appendix B: CFC Sites in Illinois

CFC	CFC Site Address, Phone, Fax, and Toll Free Numbers	Serving County
1	Child & Family Connections Access Services of Northern Illinois 1752 Windsor Rd., Ste. 102/ PO Box 16390 Loves Park, IL 61132-6390J 815/654-6170 Fax: 815/654-6197 Toll Free #: 800/921-0094	Boone Bureau Marshall Ogle Putnam Winnebago
2	Child & Family Connections Lake County Health Department 3010 Grand Ave., 2nd Floor Waukegan, IL 60085 847/377-8900 Fax: 847/377-8939 Toll Free #: 888/539-3033	Lake
3	Child & Family Connections Regional Office of Education for Carroll, Jo Daviess, & Stephenson Co. 302 W. Exchange St. Freeport, IL 61032 815/297-1041 Fax: 815/297-9032 Toll Free #: 888/297-1041	Carroll DeKalb Jo Daviess Lee Stephenson Whiteside
4	Child & Family Connections DayOne Network 1551 E. Fabyan Pkwy. Geneva, IL 60134 630/879-2277 Fax: 630/761-9810 Toll Free #: 888/282-0997	Kane Kendall
5	Child & Family Connections PACT, Inc. 750 Warrenville Rd., Suite 300 Lisle, IL 60532 630/493-0400 Fax: 630/493-1995 Toll Free #: 800/637-7181	DuPage County including the following Cook County zip codes: 60103, 60126
6	Child & Family Connections Clearbrook Center 1835 W. Central Rd. Arlington Heights, IL 60005 847/385-5070 Fax: 847/385-7260 Toll Free #: 800/585-1953	Cook County North Suburban including the following zip codes: 60004, 60035, 60043, 60053, 60056, 60062, 60067, 60068, 60070, 60074, 60076, 60077, 60082, 60089, 60090, 60091, 60093, 60095, 60106, 60107, 60120, 60133, 60143, 60149, 60157, 60169, 60172, 60173, 60192, 60193, 60194, 60195, 60196, 60201, 60202,

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		60203, 60204, 60666, 60712, 60714, 60005, 60006, 60007, 60008, 60010, 60015, 60016, 60018, 60022, 60025, 60026, 60029
7	Child & Family Connections Suburban Access, Inc 4415 W. Harrison St., Suite 201 Hillside, IL 60162 708/449-0625 Fax: 708/449-7071 Toll Free #: 888/566-8228	Cook County Central Suburban including the following zip codes: 60104, 60130, 60131, 60141, 60153, 60154, 60155, 60160, 60162, 60163, 60164, 60165, 60171, 60176, 60301, 60302, 60303, 60304, 60305, 60402, 60513, 60521, 60525, 60526, 60527, 60534, 60546, 60558, 60706, 60707 60804
8	Child & Family Connections Easter Seals Society of Metropolitan Chicago 9455 S. Hoyne Ave. Chicago, IL 60643 773/233-1799 Fax: 773/233-2011 Toll Free #: 866/266-7167	*Cook County Chicago Southwest including the following zip codes: 60620, 60628, 60629, 60633, 60638, 60643, 60499, 60652, 60655, 60805, 60827 *This CFC serve those families who reside within the City of Chicago when the zip codes cross the city lines.
9	Child & Family Connections Fantus Health Center 1901 W. Harrison St., Rm. A2101 Chicago, IL 60612 312/864-6575 Fax: 312/864-9332 Toll Free #: 888/816-3188	Cook County Chicago Central/ West including the following zip codes: 60601, 60602, 60603, 60604, 60605, 60606, 60607, 60608, 60612, 60616, 60623, 60624, 60632, 60644, 60661
10	Child & Family Connections LaRabida Children's Hospital 1525 E. 55thSt., Suite 203 Chicago, IL 60615 773/324-7434 Fax: 773/324-7469 Toll Free #: 800/862-1912	*Cook County Chicago Southeast including the following zip codes: 60609, 60615, 60617, 60619, 60621, 60636, 60637, 60649, 60653
11	Child & Family Connections 945 W. George St., Suite 300 Chicago, IL 60657 312/942-7800 Fax: 312/942-7811 Toll Free #: 800/289-7990	Cook County Chicago North including the following zip codes: 60610, 60611, 60613, 60614, 60618, 60622, 60625, 60626, 60630, 60631, 60634, 60639, 60640, 60641, 60642, 60645, 60646, 60647, 60651, 60654, 60656, 60657, 60659, 60660
12	Child & Family Connections Easter Seals Society of Metropolitan Chicago 17300 S. Ozark Ave. - North Bldg. Tinley Park, IL 60477 708/429-8231 Fax: 708/429-8246 Toll Free #: 800/597-7798	*Cook County South Suburban including the following zip codes: 60406, 60409, 60411, 60415, 60417, 60419, 60422, 60423, 60425, 60426, 60428, 60429, 60430, 60439, 60438, 60443, 60445, 60448, 60449, 60452, 60453, 60455, 60456, 60457, 60458, 60459, 60461, 60462, 60463, 60464, 60465, 60466, 60467, 60469, 60471, 60472, 60473, 60475, 60476, 60477,

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		60478, 60480, 60482, 60487, 60491, 60501, 60803
13	Child & Family Connections Reg. Office of Education # 26 1301 N. Main St., Suite 3 Monmouth, IL 61462 309/734-3336 Fax: 309/734-1145 Toll Free #: 866/426-2160	Fulton Hancock Henderson Knox McDonough Mercer Rock Island Schuyler Warren
14	Child & Family Connections 3000 W. Rohmann Ave. West Peoria, IL 61604 309/672-6360 Fax: 309/681-0190 Toll Free #: 888/482-4300	Henry Peoria Stark Tazewell Woodford
15	Child & Family Connections Services of Will, Grundy, & Kankakee Counties, Inc. 2300 Glenwood Ave. Joliet, IL 60435 815/730-2617 Fax: 815/730-2650 Toll Free #: 888/329-0633	Grundy Kankakee LaSalle Will
16	Child & Family Connections 103 S. Country Fair Dr. Champaign, IL 61821 217/693-7958 Fax: 217/693-7967 Toll Free #: 800/877-1152	Champaign Ford Iroquois Livingston McLean Vermilion
17	Child & Family Connections ROE of Adams/Pike Counties 510 Maine St., Suite 615 Quincy, IL 62301 217/222-9592 Fax: 217/222-9593 Toll Free #: 888/222-9592	Adams Brown Calhoun Cass Greene Jersey Morgan Pike Scott
18	Child & Family Connections Sangamon Co. Public Health Department 2833 South Grand Ave., East Springfield, IL 62703 217/535-3100 Fax: 217/793-3991 Toll Free #: 888/217-3505	Logan Mason Menard Sangamon
19	Child & Family Connections Macon County Community Mental Health Board 132 S. Water St., Suite 604 Decatur, IL 62523 217/423-6199 Fax: 217/233-7028 Toll Free #: 800/758-2705	Clark Coles Cumberland DeWitt Douglas Edgar Macon Moultrie Piatt Shelby

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20	Child & Family Connections ARC Community Support Systems 1901 S. 4th St., Suite 209 Effingham, IL. 62401 217/347-5601 Fax: 217/347-5119 Toll Free #: 888/459-5437	Bond Clay Effingham Jasper Macoupin Richland	Christian Crawford Fayette Lawrence Montgomery
21	Child & Family Connections Regional Office of Education #13 2 Eagle Center, Suite 1 O'Fallon, IL 62269 618/622-6581 Fax: 618/622-8662 Toll Free #: 888/594-8364	Madison Monroe Randolph St. Clair	
22	Child & Family Connections Regional Office of Education #13 101 S. Lincoln Blvd. Centralia, IL 62801 618/532-4919 Fax: 618/532-0856 Toll Free #: 800/661-0900	Clinton Franklin Jefferson Marion Washington Williamson	
23	Child & Family Connections Wabash & Ohio Valley Special Education Dist. 800 S. Division St./PO Box 320 Norris City, IL 62869 618/378-2131 Fax: 618/378-3127 Toll Free #: 800/463-2759	Edwards Gallatin Hamilton Saline Wabash Wayne White	
24	Child & Family Connections Archway, Inc. 2751 W. Main St./ PO Box 1180 Carbondale, IL 62901-1180 618/529-3147 Fax: 618/549-8137 Toll Free #: 888/340-6702	Alexander Jackson Massac Pope Union	Hardin Johnson Perry Pulaski
25	Child & Family Connections Options & Advocacy for McHenry Co. 365 Millennium Dr., Suite A Crystal Lake, IL 60012 815/477-4720 Fax/TDD: 815/788-0704 Toll Free #: 888/376-8828	McHenry	