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State Budget Update**State budget impasse continues**

The budget stalemate continues as Illinois now enters a fourth month without a state budget. Although funding is flowing for some early learning services through the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), federal dollars and court orders, many services important to the most vulnerable children and families in the state remain unfunded. Additionally, in the absence of a budget and adequate revenue, the state is struggling to even cover those court-ordered payments, which means payment delays are likely as time goes on. Where services are unfunded, agencies are being forced to close their doors, suspend services or make other difficult decisions.

Home visiting services funded through the Department of Human Services (DHS) remain unfunded, even though providers received contracts to continue providing services after July 1. A number of home visiting programs have already significantly reduced or suspended services, and others are remaining open but with reduced staff time and pay.

The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) also continues to struggle as the highly-restrictive eligibility rules remain in place. Even though child care payments are being made, in some cases, child care providers have closed their doors as they are unable to enroll enough eligible children. In many cases, the restricted eligibility is making it difficult for children to access preschool or Head Start services, where those programs also work in coordination with child care. Public hearings about the rules were held on October 6 at the Howlett Building in Springfield and on October 7 at the Bilandic Building in Chicago.

A few weeks ago, Comptroller Munger [announced](#) she would begin issuing payments to Early Intervention (EI) providers, following pressure from advocates that those payments were covered by existing court orders. Those payments have begun to be made.

We encourage advocates to continue pressuring the governor and General Assembly to work together to develop a fully-funded FY2016 budget. To take action, see the latest budget updates, Ounce statements and recent news stories by visiting the [FY2016 Budget Resource](#).

ISBE has released the dates and locations for its [FY2017 budget hearings](#). Please weigh in and share your testimony during the three scheduled hearings.

Please help spread the word about the budget impasse to your networks by sharing social media posts from the Ounce on [Twitter](#) . Help us understand the impact of the impasse in your community by completing our [survey](#).

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Legislative Highlights

Federal update

Shortly after their return to Washington, DC, Congress passed a continuing resolution (CR), which kept the federal government operating when the new federal fiscal year began on October 1. The current CR will expire on December 11, and heated debate over spending levels, sequestration and the debt ceiling is expected, particularly with the recent resignation announcement by House Speaker John Boehner. The CR largely maintains current funding levels.

Current budget framework bills include small increases for Early Head Start, Head Start and the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), although there are concerns that additional CCDBG funds are needed in order for states to be able to implement changes to child care because of the recent CCDBG reauthorization. Continuing funds were not included in the current bills for Preschool Development Grants, putting preschool services for 100,000 children at risk across the country. The need for this continuing funding hits close to home, as Illinois was granted \$80 million over the next four years-\$20 million each year until 2018-in [Preschool Development Block Grant](#) funds. Classrooms are opening in 18 Illinois communities as a result of the federal funding

One major hurdle to increased early childhood funding is the ongoing impact of sequestration spending caps. Earlier this year, the House and Senate distributed sums of money to each of the appropriations subcommittees that were far less than in previous years due to sequestration. As a result, Congress has very limited flexibility to provide funding increases for early childhood education programs or any other spending unless they come to an agreement to exceed those caps. A carefully crafted budget deal, with an agreement to raise the spending caps, is needed to ensure that we can make continued progress in addressing the continuum of learning and care for our most at-risk children and their families.

Congress will also be reviewing Child Nutrition Reauthorization with early childhood advocates supporting a number of bills. Learn more about the [reauthorization](#) from our partners at the Greater Chicago Food Depository, as well as from Sen. Bob Casey, the author of legislation targeting improvements to the [Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) to strengthen nutrition programs in communities and in early learning settings.

SNAP eligibility increase becomes law in Illinois

On July 28, Gov. Rauner signed bill SB 1847 into law. This law will increase Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility by raising the gross income limits from 130% to 165% of the Federal Poverty Level. This change will make an additional 40,000 households across Illinois eligible for food assistance. The law will take effect January 1, 2016.

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Resources, Reports and Other Publications

Integrated Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Model and Capacity Building Project

The Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership (ICMHP) is working closely with multiple partners to design a multi-year expansion project that advances the goal of a universal,

effective and sustainable infant/early childhood mental health consultation (I/ECMHC) model in Illinois.

As this project begins, infant/early childhood mental health consultants are being sought to complete a [survey](#) to offer insight into current consultation practices, pathways to becoming an infant/early childhood mental health consultant, current professional development needs, as well as programmatic, organizational and system considerations. The project provides an opportunity to highlight the invaluable work currently in the field. If you provide I/ECMHC consultation in any capacity within any early childhood-serving system in Illinois, please complete the [survey](#) by the end of October.

Final Inclusion Statement issued by US Department of Education (ED)

The "[Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs](#)" released jointly by ED and the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is now available. The document supports access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs for all young children with disabilities, where they are provided with individualized and appropriate support in meeting high expectations. The statement was written with input from of early learning professionals, families and other early learning stakeholders.

2015 KIDS COUNT Data Book released

The [KIDS COUNT Data Book](#) by The Anne E. Casey Foundation, is an annual report that measures child well-being across 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The data book uses an index of 16 indicators to rank states. Illinois ranked 20th overall based on domains including child and economic well-being, economic education, health, and family and community. The latest report also factors in the effect of parents' education, health and other life circumstances on their children.

2014 NIEER State of Preschool Yearbook

The [2014 State of Preschool Yearbook](#) by National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), is an annual report that examines state-funded prekindergarten programs in the United States during the 2013-2014 school year. The report tracks the trends among early childhood education and the progress of improving education. The Yearbook offers narrative, as well as data in the forms of tables and charts. The report shows that Illinois continues to be a national leader in providing access to preschool for 3-year-olds (third nationally), but only 20th for access for 4-year-olds and 30th and 31st on critical measures of state spending.

Poverty Data released

The US Census Bureau recently released three reports: "[Income and Poverty in the United States: 2014](#)", "[Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2014](#)", and "[The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2014](#)". These three reports share findings on the income, poverty and health insurance coverage in the United States. The reports provide a wide array of findings, including the fact that 21.1% of children under age 18 (15.5 million) were in poverty, and 6.2% of children younger than 19 were uninsured, which is a small decrease from 2013 rates.

Healthy Habits for Happy Smiles

The Office of Head Start released a series of [handouts](#) for pregnant women and parents of young children with tips on oral health. The handouts offer general information to families to encourage good oral health. The handouts are offered in both English and Spanish.

Blogs

- **Stop Bullying From the Beginning**
Stop Bullying is a federal initiative by the Department of Health & Human Services, which features resources on how to end bullying. A [blog post](#) by the Ounce

emphasizes the importance of monitoring and developing children's social-emotional skills to ensure that they can establish healthy social interactions with peers. When parents and early learning providers focus on healthy development and relationships, children will be more likely to establish healthy relationships with peers and adults.

- **Help Homeless Children and Youth Now**

The Homeless Children and Youth Act is federal legislation that would facilitate services for homeless children, youth and families to receive homeless assistance. A [blog post](#) by the Ounce supports the Act's aligning of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness with the definition most commonly used in education settings. By aligning the definitions, the Act would help target housing resources to young children and families and reduce a strenuous system of documentation that typically bars homeless families from accessing services. By diminishing the traumatic and adverse childhood experiences associated with homelessness, the Act would make possible increased opportunities for vulnerable children to achieve success in early learning settings.

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News and Announcements

- [Illinois budget impasse impacting kids](#)
- [This is what a state's budget crisis means for its residents](#)
- [Protesters keep heat on as no end to Illinois budget battle in sight](#)
- [One in five Illinois children live in poverty](#)

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Events

October 23

Illinois Association for Infant Mental Health Fall 2015 Conference

This year's conference will feature Oscar Barbarin, Ph.D., a professor in the Department of Psychology at Tulane University. Barbarin's research focuses on the development of boys of color and the relationships of parenting practices.

[Register Here >](#)

November 6

Bright Futures Illinois Learning Event Series

Series offers an opportunity for parents, community leaders, and education professionals to learn about universal children's savings account (CSA) programs.

[Learn More >](#)

Parent and Teacher Resources

[Read our recent articles](#) about preparing your child for quality early learning programs.

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33 West Monroe Street Suite 2400
Chicago, IL 60603 · 312.922.3863
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