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Pritzker Administration Invests in Early Childhood with Early Intervention Incentive Payments

Payments recognize the value of Early Intervention service providers in supporting infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities

CHICAGO - The Pritzker administration is taking another step to advance the Smart Start Illinois program, a multi-year plan to provide every child with access to preschool, increase funding to child care providers to raise wages and quality, invest in new and expanded early childhood facilities, and reach more vulnerable families with early support. Building on previous announcements and strategies in the Smart Start initiative, today the administration announced a proactive approach to ensure the well-being of its youngest residents with the launch of Early Intervention Incentive Payments, continuing to position Illinois as the best state to raise young children.

These payments recognize the value of early intervention service providers in Illinois who deliver therapies to infants and toddlers in support of their healthy growth and development. The initiative, administered through the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), will provide one-time bonus payments to Early Intervention service providers and service coordinators of up to \$1,300 between August and October of 2023.

“Since day one as Governor, it has been my mission to make Illinois the best state to have kids and raise a family,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “That means investing in the services that reach our littlest Illinoisans—from home visiting and early intervention to child care and preschools. Thanks to my administration’s Smart Start Illinois Plan, coupled with federal dollars from the American Rescue Plan Act, we are proud to launch Early Intervention Incentive Payments—giving our service providers the support and resources they deserve for caring for our state’s children.”

Early Intervention Incentive Payments are designed to recognize and reward early intervention service providers for their commitment to the development and well-being of children. It offers a financial incentive to qualified providers who have dedicated

themselves to providing quality services. Early Intervention Providers, Associate Providers, Service Coordinators, and Interpreters who are credentialed, enrolled, and are carrying a caseload as of June 30, 2023, will have eligibility determined by their credentialed enrollment and billing status. There is no need to apply.

“As a state leader, and as a mother, I know how critical it is to ensure that our children receive the best care possible from their first stages of life. These building blocks are a fundamental part of a child’s development, and the Early Intervention Incentive Payments are a way to ensure that early childhood professionals feel supported and valued for their dedication,” **said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton.** “In Illinois, we will continue to advocate for children, families, and for the early childhood professionals who are making a positive impact across our state, so that our children can receive the support and tools they need for a successful future.”

Early Intervention Incentive Payments are funded through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars and are intended to recognize the difficulties providers faced during the COVID-19 pandemic and encourage staff retention. In addition, these payments complement new investments that are part of Illinois’ Smart Start program, which increased funding by \$40 million for the Early Intervention program and its workforce. Through Smart Start, Early Intervention will be able to increase reimbursement rates by 10% for staff and allow the program to serve more children and to better meet families’ needs.

"The Illinois Early Intervention Incentive Payments are more than just an incentive; they are a testament to our commitment to nurturing the potential of every child. By investing in the Early Intervention workforce, we lay the foundation for a brighter future, ensuring that no child's development is left behind. It rewards not only the providers but also helps every child receive the supports and services they need to develop to their fullest potential," **said Grace B. Hou, Secretary, Illinois Department of Human Services.**

"It is important that we recognize the value, dedication, and commitment to young children and families that Early Intervention service providers and service coordinators show every day. As more families seek Early Intervention services, we must invest in our Early Intervention workforce. Smart Start rate increases for Early Intervention and these Incentive Payments are designed to do just that," **said Bethany Patten, Director, Division of Early Childhood, Illinois Department of Human Services.** “This is a necessary step to achieving the Governor’s vision for high-quality early childhood services.”

"Youth and children have limitless potential. Our commitment to supporting and improving the lives of working families in Illinois is stronger than ever and this program will create a network of excellence in EC education," **said Deputy Majority Leader Natalie Manley (D-Joliet).** “By incentivizing early intervention service providers and

continuums, we will promote quality services that have a lasting impact on the children's physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development for years to come."

"Empowering our Early Intervention professionals by providing adequate compensation lays the foundation for a brighter future for the thousands of infants and toddlers and their families who need and benefit from Early Intervention services. We are excited to see the support from Governor Pritzker and the Division of Early Childhood," **said Karen Berman, Senior Director, Illinois Policy, Start Early.** "These incentive payments, paired with this year's 10% rate increase, are a critical start toward achieving the compensation and supports that recognize the tireless dedication and expertise that Early Intervention professionals bring to Illinois' families every day."

The Early Intervention Incentive Payments align with the state's commitment to providing equitable access to high-quality early childhood education and care. Since 2019, Governor Pritzker has expanded access to high-quality early childhood programming for children across the state.

Early Intervention Providers can find out more by going to the [Provider Connections website](#).

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About the Division of Early Childhood:

The Illinois Department of Human Services' Division of Early Childhood equips pregnant persons, young children and families with the supports they need to achieve their full potential by providing equitable access to whole child development through child care, home visiting, and early intervention programs and services.