



January 19, 2024

## **We, the Village Transparency and Equity Guidelines for IL Transition Advisory Committee Consideration**

To the Illinois ECEC Transition Advisory Committee (TAC),

As advocates committed to the development and success of the new state Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) agency, the We, the Village (WTV) coalition places strong emphasis on the principles of transparency and racial equity during the transition process. These principles are not just important, they are foundational to the successful establishment and functioning of the agency. Recognizing this importance, we appreciate the TAC's commitment to ensuring that both transparency and racial equity are central in their approach. This alignment strengthens our confidence in the process and the future of the new ECEC agency.

Towards supporting this crucial transition, we propose a set of guidelines that are deeply rooted in upholding and prioritizing transparency and racial equity. We define transparency as the open and accountable sharing of information, a practice that is essential for building trust and ensuring effective communication among all stakeholders. We define racial equity as fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all individuals, irrespective of race. This involves a proactive effort to identify and eliminate racial barriers that can hinder equal opportunities. By centering our guidelines around these definitions, we aim to help ensure that these principles are not just upheld but are integral to the operations of the new ECEC agency.

The core of our guidelines for transparency is based on clear, explicit communication and data transparency. We anticipate the new ECEC agency will:

1. Clearly articulate its development actions, achievable goals, and provide a comprehensive roadmap for its evolution. This suggestion is particularly relevant as the TAC works towards releasing a comprehensive report by December 2025.
2. Commit to the collection and release of data from the inception of the agency, encompassing feedback from all stakeholders, including those currently underrepresented.
3. Ensure that all stakeholders can easily access, comprehend, and utilize the data provided by the agency.

We also suggest that the TAC explores best practices in state agency transparency and inclusivity. An example is the ISBE annual report card, which is well regarded in the K-12 education space for its transparent and inclusive approach. Additionally, we applaud the creation of a dedicated TAC website. We anticipate this site will act as a central resource for all pertinent information and updates related to the transition, thus fostering transparency by providing regular public reporting and accountability.

Effective integration of public input is vital. We recommend:

1. Increasing stakeholder participation in decision-making, ensuring transparency in meeting agendas, feedback mechanisms, and decision updates.
2. Using various communication channels like a dedicated website, newsletters, social media, and existing advocacy networks to disseminate ECEC agency information.
3. Hosting sessions to educate stakeholders, particularly early childhood professionals, about ECEC policies and opportunities.
4. Actively seeking diverse perspectives and employing specific outreach strategies to ensure inclusivity across different geographies and provider types.

To measure the effectiveness of transparency and inclusion efforts, we propose:

1. Establishing benchmarks for regular meetings and communication updates, alongside criteria for data accuracy and counteraction of misinformation.
2. Developing explicit goals and metrics to address and rectify existing racial and systemic inequities in Illinois' ECEC, including tailored support for different organization sizes and types.

In addition to guidelines for the new ECEC agency, WTV has specific recommendations for the TAC to ensure that the principles of transparency and racial equity are deeply embedded in the process of designing the new agency:

1. The TAC should offer oversight, ensuring that new ECEC agency development is inclusive and open to the participation of a diverse range of stakeholders. This includes intentional efforts to include voices that are often marginalized or overlooked in similar processes. Moreover, it's crucial for TAC leadership to create a safe and supportive environment that welcomes the contributions of all members, including the perspectives of families and providers.
2. The TAC should operate with the utmost transparency, making its decision-making processes visible and understandable to all stakeholders. This includes clear documentation and communication of the rationale behind decisions and how they align with the goals of transparency and racial equity.
3. The TAC should conduct regular consultations with stakeholders, including but not limited to providers, educators, families, and advocacy groups. These consultations should be structured to genuinely capture and respond to the input and concerns of these groups.

4. The TAC should undertake a thorough racial equity analysis at each stage of the agency design process. This analysis should guide decisions to ensure that the new agency's structure and services do not perpetuate existing inequities but instead actively work to dismantle them.
5. The TAC should establish clear accountability mechanisms for ensuring transparency and racial equity in the agency's formation. This includes setting up independent oversight where necessary and providing regular progress reports to the public.
6. There should be a structured feedback loop where stakeholders can provide input on the TAC's decisions and actions. This feedback should be actively reviewed and used to make necessary adjustments in the process.
7. The TAC should ensure that new agency resources are allocated in a manner that considers racial equity, with special attention to communities and groups that have historically been underserved by ECEC systems.

By meeting these recommendations, the TAC can significantly contribute to the creation of an ECEC agency that is not just effective in its service delivery but also a model for equitable and transparent governance, reflecting the diverse needs and voices of all stakeholders involved in early childhood education and care in Illinois.

Thank you for considering our recommendations. We look forward to a collaborative and fruitful engagement in this transition process.

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We, the Village Coalition is a group of advocates, non-profit organizations, child care providers, school districts, parents and others who have come together to fight for the well-being of Illinois' youngest children. We seek adequate, equitable, sustainable, reliable funding for children's services from birth through age five. We want to ensure all children can access quality education and care, as their parents choose. We want resources to be invested in the children and communities that need it most, in order to eliminate racial, socio-economic, and other disparities. We are working together to make sure that ALL families and early childhood providers have the resources they need to help children succeed.