

# Brightpoint

Strong Families • Thriving Children



# Community Resource Guide

Child Care Resource & Referral

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Supporting families, early childhood education  
and care programs and communities

## **Brightpoint**

(formerly known as Children's Home & Aid) is a distinguished child and family service organization. At Brightpoint, we put families and children at the forefront of every decision we make. We understand that navigating obstacles such as poverty, trauma, and systemic barriers to equity can make this journey challenging, and we offer support through the highs and lows. Our work seeks to dismantle system inequities and create a more even playing field for everyone.

At Brightpoint, we know prevention works, and we are committed to working with families before small problems become life-altering crises. That's why we take a data-driven approach to implement research-based solutions that have proven long-term positive outcomes and create brighter futures.

We envision an equitable world where all children and families thrive in strong communities. You will find us across Illinois, serving more than 30,000 children and families each year in 67 counties. For more information about Brightpoint program services, please call 800-467-9200, Ext 390 or visit [www.brightpoint.org](http://www.brightpoint.org).



## **Early Childhood Community Resource Guide Overview**

Brightpoint Child Care Resource & Referral program is excited to offer to families, early childhood education and care professionals, and community members this Early Childhood Community Resource Guide.

Inside you will find a wide variety of information and programming available to you as a parent, guardian, program, or community advocate. We believe the information in this Guide will help you navigate and access the services and supports you need whether through Brightpoint or its community partners.

The goal and intention of the Community Guide is to:

- Increase awareness and knowledge about the available early childhood resources, services and supports available to families, early childhood education and care providers, and community members.
- Promote overall child and family well-being.
- Help families increase their self-sufficiency through information and education about family support programs.
- Enhance opportunities for collaboration and coordination so that young children, youth, and families can thrive in strong families and communities.
- Advocate for early childhood policies, practices and investments that will improve opportunities for family success.
- Ensure young children and families are a priority in planning and decision making.



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# Early Childhood Education and Care Options



Many families rely on an early learning program so they can work or go to school and to support the development of their children. There are many early learning options available to meet the unique and individual needs of each family. The availability of care may vary based on the age and needs of the child. Understanding the different program options will help you make an informed decision for your children and family. This section of the guide provides an overview of the various early learning options.

## Child Care

Illinois requires the regulation of most early childhood education and care programs. Regulation is through the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Programs earn a license or receive a state exemption. Programs with a license include: child care centers, family child care homes, and group child care homes. Programs that are licensed meet minimum health and safety standards. Families and guardians should receive a summary of the licensing standards upon enrollment.

The following describes the types of license and license exempt program options.

### Child Care Center

A child care center provides care and education to groups of children, in a non-residential setting. This option is often the preference for families with multiple children, all siblings can attend one location. Child care centers usually group children by age ranging from six weeks to 12 years of age. Different types of centers include: child care center, Head Start/Early Head Start, school-age only programs and before/after school care. Centers must meet space requirements, the number of children permitted in a group based on child ages, teacher to child ratios, health and safety standards, staff education requirements, and ongoing professional development training requirements.

## Family Child Care

Family Child Care provides education and care for children six weeks through 12 years of age in a provider's home. This option creates a warm, home-like experience for children. In family child care fewer children are served at a time, and they often offer flexible hours. In Illinois, there are three types of family child care: licensed child care home, group child care home, and license exempt child care home. Licensed child care homes and group homes must meet Illinois Department of Children and Family Services standards for teacher to child ratios, required space per child, health and safety standards, and ongoing professional development training requirements.

## License and License Exempt Child Care Options

- **Licensed Child Care Center** provides care for groups of children between the ages of six weeks through 12 years of age in a classroom setting. Centers must meet teacher to child ratios and group sizes such as: Infants 1 teacher to four children, toddlers 1 teacher to five children, two's one teacher to eight children, preschool 1 teacher to 10 children, and school age 1 teacher to 20 children.
- **Licensed Child Care Home** providers alone may care for up to eight children including the provider's own children, related and unrelated, under 13 years of age; may care for a total of twelve children with an assistant.
- **Licensed Group Child Care Home** providers may care for up to 16 children including the provider's own children, related and unrelated, under 13 years of age, with the help of a full-time qualified assistant.



- **License Exempt Home** providers may care for up to three children including their own children under the age of 13 or the children from one family. This type of care is typically provided by family, friends, or neighbors.

- **License Exempt Child Care Center** programs serve children three through twelve years of age that meet appropriate state or local health and fire safety standards and do not require a license from DCFS to operate. License Exemption categories include:

- programs serving children three years of age and older which are operated by public or private elementary schools, or schools which are registered and/or recognized with the Illinois State Board of Education or accredited by a national organization that regularly recognizes or accredits schools.
- part-day programs serving children three years of age and older which are operated by a religious organization or social service agency in which no child is cared for more than ten hours in a seven-day week.
- programs conducted on federal government premises.
- special activities programs serving children three years of age and older operating on a short-term basis.
- programs providing care for children three years of age and older while the parents are on the premises (treatment facilities, colleges).

A Department of Child and Family Services license must be displayed at a center or home requiring a license. The license must be renewed every three years by a Department of Child and Family Services state licensing representative who visits programs annually to ensure compliance to health and safety standards and conducts surprise or scheduled visits.

Programs that are exempt from licensing must obtain written verification of exemption from the Department of Child and Family Services that confirms their exemption category and compliance with the standards for the health, safety, and development of children. The Department of Child and Family Services written confirmation of exemption is valid for two years.

### **In-Home Caregivers**

In-home caregivers come to the home of the child. This type of care is not regulated by DCFS licensing. Examples of an in-home care provider may be a nanny, a relative, or an au pair.

### **Head Start and Early Head Start**

Head Start and Early Head Start programs are locally operated and federally funded. Programs provide free high-quality early childhood education and care for children in which their family meets income or categorically eligible criteria. Early Head Start serves pregnant women and families with children under age three. Head Start programs serve children between three and five years of age. Head Starts encourages family involvement through regular visits to the child's home, opportunities for parents to volunteer in the program, and special activities. Promoting school readiness and providing resources to meet unique family needs, Head Start and Early Head Start programs work with children, strengthen families, and enhance communities.



## **Illinois State Board of Education Early Childhood Programs**

The Illinois State Board of Education Early Childhood Programs serve expectant parents and families with children birth through eight years of age. Illinois State Board of Education Early Childhood Programs are offered in public schools or community-based settings and are free to families.

- **Prevention Initiative** offers services to expectant parents and families with children up to 36 months of age. Services are free and provided through home visiting or in a community based child care center. Services promote maternal health, attachment and bonding, parent-child interactions, child growth and development supports, referrals and connections to community resources. Curriculum activities are provided to help young children learn and grow and help families understand how their child is growing. Services support overall family well-being and success in school and life.
- **Preschool for All** is for children three to five years of age. The program is voluntary, free, typically a half-day (2.5 hours) and during the school year. A Preschool for All program is offered by public schools or community-based settings. The program provides developmental activities, vision, hearing and developmental screening, research-based curriculum, and family engagement opportunities.
- **Preschool for All Expansion** offers comprehensive services to children three to five years of age for six hours a day during the school year. A Preschool for All Expansion program is offered by public schools or community-based settings. Services include developmental, vision and hearing screenings, research-based curriculum and activities, and comprehensive mental health and family engagement services.
- **Early Childhood Special Education** services for children, three through five years of age and their families. Services through local school districts and special education cooperatives provide specialized

educational services to children with developmental delays or medical diagnosis in a variety of early learning settings such as an early childhood program, preschool, child care, prekindergarten/Preschool for All, or Head Start in order to meet the developmental and educational needs of all children.

## **Illinois Department of Human Services - Early Childhood Home Visiting**

Home Visiting supports expectant parents and families with young children ages birth to five who live in communities that face greater risks and barriers to achieving positive maternal and child health outcomes. Families choose to participate in home visiting programs, and partner with health, social service, and child development professionals to set and achieve goals that improve their health and well-being.

Home visiting provides family support and coaching to expectant parents and families with children from birth through five years of age. Home visiting is free and voluntary and is delivered through planned regular visits with trained professionals to improve child development, family health, parenting skills, family bonding, and more.

The goals of the Illinois Division of Early Childhood Home Visiting program are to:

- Improve maternal and child health
- Prevent child abuse and neglect
- Reduce crime and domestic violence
- Increase family education level and learning potential
- Promote children's development and readiness to participate in school
- Connect families to needed community resources and supports

Home visitors and families develop strong relationships and trust through meeting regularly and addressing families' needs. Home visiting is funded by three different funding sources Illinois State Board of Education, Department of Human Services, and the Office of Head Start.



## **Early Intervention – Child & Family Connections**

Child & Family Connections provides developmental support and services to young children with developmental delays or disabilities and their family. Services include coordination, evaluations and assessments, and individualized family service plans.

### **Early Intervention therapy services include, but are not limited to:**

- developmental evaluations and assessments
- physical therapy
- occupational therapy
- speech-language therapy
- nutrition services
- psychological services and social work services

Children eligible for early intervention services must be experiencing developmental delays in one or more of the following areas: cognitive, physical, language-speech or psycho-social development, vision and hearing, and self-help skills.

Local Early Intervention programs include:

### **ARC Community Support Systems Child and Family Connections**

1901 South 4th Street, Suite 209  
Effingham, IL 62401

**217-318-3512**

Serving Bond, Christin, Clay,  
Crawford, Effingham, Fayette,  
Jasper, Lawrence, Macoupin,  
Montgomery and Richland Counties

### **Child & Family Connections**

4 Eagle Center, Suite 4  
O'Fallon, IL 62269

**618-622-6581**

Serving Madison, Monroe,  
Randolph,  
St. Clair Counties

### **Child & Family Connections**

101 South Lincoln  
Centralia, IL 62801

**618-532-4919**

Serving Clinton, Franklin, Jefferson,  
Marion, Washington and Williamson  
Counties

## **Child Care Provider Supports**

### **Become a Licensed Child Care Provider**

Many families rely on child care so they can search for a job, work, or go to school. Families and communities need access to quality child care and there is a significant need for infant and toddler care and evening and overnight care. Brightpoint Child Care Resource & Referral can provide supports to individuals interested in offering child care. We provide business start-up guidance including data on the availability of child care in specific communities, share resources such as examples of curriculum, handbooks, contracts, policies and information regarding how to meet licensing requirements, prepare your space for children, market your business, and communicate with families.

### **Child Care is a Business**

Providing care for families in your neighborhood, for families in the community or members of your own family can be challenging without formal agreements or contracts. At Brightpoint, you can receive sample contracts and consultation services to create child care contracts for your early learning program.

Some items to consider when creating a contract:

- Hours of care
- Rate and payment procedures, including when to pay and acceptable payment methods
- Holiday, vacation and illness days for the provider and children in care
- Fees such as field trips, curriculum, or late pick up
- Medication administration
- Curriculum
- Guidance and Discipline
- Safe sleep practices
- Transportation of children
- Nutrition, snacks, and meals provided
- Cleaning and sanitation procedures for toys, materials, and the environment
- Daily schedule
- Arrival and departure procedures
- Family engagement and involvement

Communication between caregivers and families by using contracts and agreements lays out the expectations and ensures the child care arrangement is meeting both family and provider needs.

## **Participate in the Child Care Assistance Program as a Provider**

Brightpoint Child Care Assistance Program makes it possible for families and guardians who qualify to receive financial help paying for child care while they look for employment or school, work, attend school or training. The program is also available to family's experiencing homelessness or exiting Intact Family Services, in this situation the work and school requirements are waived for a period of time. All families participating must meet the State of Illinois Child Care Assistance Program guidelines.

The program relies on child care providers to provide child care to families. Child care providers who participate in the Child Care Assistance Program receive payment from the Illinois Department of Human Services. Payment rates vary based upon the age of the children, the number of hours in care and the county where services are offered. To get started, child care providers can take three simple steps to become an approved Child Care Assistance Program provider.

### **STEP 1: Determine if You Qualify – The following child care provider types qualify**

- Licensed Child Care Center
- License Exempt Child Care Center (before and after school program, summer camp)
- Licensed Family Child Care or Group Home
- License Exempt Family Child Care (relative and non-relative)

## **STEP 2: Complete Required Health & Safety Trainings**

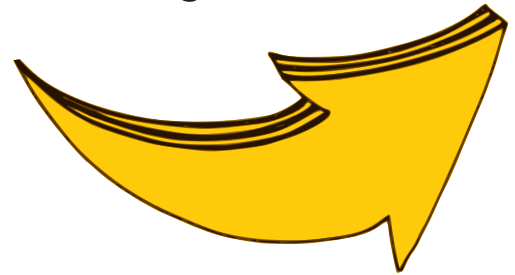
Child care providers and center staff must become an IL Gateways Registry member. After membership is obtained, you can track the completion of the FREE required trainings. Trainings can be completed in-person, at a computer lab or online.

Child care providers and center staff should complete all the trainings listed below. Please note, 100% of License Exempt child care center staff must complete all trainings.

- CPR/First Aid
- Child Abuse Neglect - Mandated Reporter Training
- Child Development, Health, and Safety Basics

The Child Care Resource & Referral program staff or a Health & Safety Coach can help you obtain your registry membership and complete required trainings. Please call 800-467-9200, Ext 390 or visit Illinois Gateways to Opportunity Registry ([www.ilgateways.com](http://www.ilgateways.com)).

### **Step 3: Complete and Submit Required paperwork to the Child Care Assistance Program**





Form Name	Licensed Homes & Group Homes	Licensed Centers	Licensed Exempt Homes	Licensed Exempt Centers
Copy of IL Driver's License o State IS - Must match adderss on CCAP Application			✓	
Copy of Social Security Card			✓	
W9 Form - <a href="http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf">www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf</a>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Authorization Background Check Form from everyone over 13 years of age in the household, employees, and volunteers This process is free.			✓	✓
Copy of Curent First Aid/CPR Card			✓	✓
Copy of Mandated Reporter Training Certificate			✓	✓
Copy of DCFS License	✓	✓		
Copy of DCFS Verification Letter or Exemption				✓
Rate Certification Form	✓	✓		✓
Copy of Fire Marshall Inspection				✓

- Once you are selected as a provider by a family and paperwork and clearances are complete, you will receive notice you are approved to care for the children as a Child Care Assistance Program provider. In some situations, you can care for children before an approval or denial is received, families would pay you privately. Each month you will submit billing certificates for approved families. Families must always report to you and the Child Care Assistance Program any employment or school status changes.
- If you are a non-relative to the child or children in your care, you and anyone over 17 years of age in the household will need to be fingerprinted. There is no cost for fingerprinting.

- If you are a License Exempt Child Care Center or a non-relative caring for children and receiving CCAP payment you will receive an annual monitoring visit from a Health and Safety Coach.
- When a family has identified you as their child care provider and your application and the family's application is approved, you can begin to participate in the Child Care Assistance Program. After the first 30-60 days of care you will begin to receive monthly payments from the Child Care Assistance Program. There are a variety of payment options including paper check, direct deposit or debit card.

Please call the Brightpoint Child Care Assistance Program, to request help with the eligibility or application process, or if you need any forms listed in the above chart, 800-847-6770, Ext 360.

## Caregiver Connections

Caregiver Connections is a partnership between Centerstone Health Systems and Brightpoint Child Care Resource & Referral program. Caregiver Connections offers Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants to provide consultation to child care providers. Services include on-site, video or phone consultation, training, connections to screening resources, evaluations for children and referrals to child and family services. If you have questions or concerns, Caregiver Connections can help with:

**Challenging childhood behaviors:** such as hitting and biting, difficulty listening or following directions, excessive crying or tantrums, trauma, eating or sleeping concerns, possible delays in development, shyness, or inability to play with others.

**Family life events:** that occurred in the home or in an early childhood education and care program including death, substance abuse, depression, divorce, or stress.

Caregiver Connections Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants understand the stress and worry you may face when confronted with these issues. We can work directly with you to find answers to questions or concerns you may have in your early childhood education and care program regarding a child's behavior or development. Through collaboration, we can discuss how best to talk with families about concerns and sensitive issues. As partners we can plan, locate resources and information that can benefit the children, support families, and provide professional development for you to enhance the work that you do.

To learn more, please call Caregiver Connections Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants, 618-380-6604 or please call Brightpoint Child Care Resource & Referral 800-467-9200, Ext 390.

## Helpful Resources

### Brightpoint Child Care Resource & Referral Program

Offers interrelated services and supports to families, early childhood education and care providers, employers, and communities, providing help with finding child care, attending professional

development training or becoming a child care provider. For more information, please call 800-467-9200, Ext 390.

### Brightpoint Child Care Assistance Program

To inquire about eligibility or an application for the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) which helps pay for child care, please call 800-847-6770, Ext 360.

### DCFS Licensing Unit

For questions, concerns, or complaints about a licensed early childhood education and care program's compliance with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) licensing standards, please call 618-257-7500.

### Illinois Care for Kids

The one place Illinois parents, grandparents, caretakers, teachers and child care providers can access all things related to early childhood in Illinois. To learn more, please visit [www.illinoiscaresforkids.org](http://www.illinoiscaresforkids.org).



### Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Sunshine Website

To inquire about a child care program's DCFS licensing status or substantiated complaints, please call 877-746-0829 or visit <https://sunshine.dcfs.illinois.gov/Content/Licensing/Welcome.aspx>.

### Illinois 24-Hour Child Abuse Hotline

Anyone can report child abuse and/or neglect. If you suspect or know of an incident, your confidential and anonymous call may help to keep a child safe. Your call may also help a provider or family be connected to support services. Please call the Illinois 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline at 800-25-ABUSE (800-252-2873 or TTY 1-800-358-5117). **Immediate Danger** if you suspect that a child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed by abuse or neglect or if you believe a child is in immediate danger of harm, **call 911**.

### Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

If you or someone you know is in emotional distress or is feeling suicidal, please call the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline – Please Call or Text 988 or chat [988Lifeline.org](http://988Lifeline.org).

A graphic for the 988 Lifeline. It features a woman's face on the left. Text boxes include: "When You Contact 988", "You don't have to say Who you are or Where you are.", "You will get support from a trained Crisis Counselor.", "Call or text 988, or chat 988Lifeline.org", and "There is Hope." with a heart icon and "988 LIFELINE".

When You Contact  
**988**

You don't have to say  
**Who you are or Where you are.**

You will get support from a trained **Crisis Counselor.**

Call or text 988, or chat  
**988Lifeline.org**

There is Hope.  
**988 LIFELINE**



# High-Quality Early Childhood Education

## Features of High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care

Selecting an early childhood education and care program for your infant, toddler, preschooler, or school age child is an important decision to make for your family. Choosing the right early learning program may require some research. Be sure to visit programs and ask questions to ensure you choose the best early learning provider for your family.

High-quality early learning opportunities matter, and are important to a child's development, but what does high-quality really mean? If you are a family looking for an early childhood education and care program, an individual who is considering providing services to families, or a collaboration that advocates for policies and investments that support early childhood education and care, consider these indicators:

A **State License** and **ExceleRate Illinois Circle of Quality** shows compliance and commitment to high-quality practices. Information about licensing is found on the Illinois Sunshine website [www.sunshine.dcfs.illinois.gov/Content/Licensing/Welcome.aspx](http://www.sunshine.dcfs.illinois.gov/Content/Licensing/Welcome.aspx) and Illinois Cares for Kids website [www.illinoiscaresforkids.org/toddler/early-care-and-education/quality-rating-excelerate-il](http://www.illinoiscaresforkids.org/toddler/early-care-and-education/quality-rating-excelerate-il).

A **Safe and healthy learning environment** is clean, well-supervised by the caregivers or teachers, and has emergency plans and procedures that include



good health and hygiene practices. A variety of age-appropriate toys and materials are readily available to children and within their reach promoting play, development and learning.

**Small groups sizes and low teacher-child ratios** ensure that every child receives attention and is always safe and supervised.

**Relationships that are caring, responsive and nurturing** toward infants, toddlers, preschool or school age children. A child feels safe and secure when caregivers communicate positively providing a sensitive response with smiles, positive attention and interactions.

**Curriculum and experiences** that are age and developmentally appropriate and promote curiosity, play, creativity, and exploration. Play and planned activities support all developmental areas such as social, emotional, physical, language and cognitive learning.

**Positive and frequent talking and interactions** support relationships

between children, families, and early learning partners. Greetings at arrival and departures, acknowledging and naming feelings and frequent two-way communication supports a child's growth and development.

**Family engagement opportunities** create partnerships that support family well-being and build upon family strengths.

**Written program policies and procedures** support families and providers by creating a successful partnership by setting expectations and shared agreements.

**Qualified workforce** includes teachers and caregivers that have education, experience and ongoing access to professional development and supports.

**Financial support** includes scholarships or participation in the Illinois Department of Human Services Child Care Assistance Program or Department of Child & Family Services Protective Service payments.





**Written program policies and procedures** support families and providers by creating a successful partnership by setting expectations and shared agreements.

**Qualified workforce** includes teachers and caregivers that have education, experience and ongoing access to professional development and supports.

**Financial support** includes scholarships or participation in the Illinois Department of Human Services Child Care Assistance Program or Department of Child & Family Services Protective Service payments.

## Accreditation

National accreditation measures early childhood education and care program quality. Accreditation means that a program has met high standards determined by a national organization. Early childhood education and care programs voluntarily apply for accreditation. Accreditation standards advocate for child development practices that result in high-quality experiences for young children. When selecting an early childhood education and care program, ask if the program is accredited or engaged in self-study. Accredited programs typically post their accreditation and licensing certificates for families to view.

Some well-known accreditation programs include, but are not limited to:

- NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children)
- NAC (National Accreditation Commission)
- NECPA (National Early Childhood Program Accreditation)
- NAFCC (National Association of Family Early childhood care and education)
- COA (Council on Accreditation)

Programs that achieve accreditation and care for children receiving Illinois Department of Human Services Child Care Assistance Program payments, also receive a quality bonus to their standard Child Care Assistance Program reimbursement rate.





## ExceleRate Illinois

In Illinois, ExceleRate is a quality recognition and improvement system for early childhood education and care programs. The system is statewide, free, and voluntary. ExceleRate Illinois helps families understand program quality and helps providers identify opportunities for improvement while also increasing quality. ExceleRate Illinois recognizes early learning programs for their ongoing efforts to improve the quality of their care by awarding a Circle of Quality. Quality standards increase within each Circle of Quality. The higher the rating, the more the program has made meaningful improvements that better prepare children for school and life.



**Licensed Circle of Quality** means the program meets state Department of Children & Family Services licensing standards for quality.

**Bronze Circle of Quality** indicates the program completed ExceleRate Illinois trainings and exceeds minimum Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) staff qualifications.

**Silver Circle of Quality** indicates that a program meets or exceeds specific quality benchmarks on learning environment and instructional quality, along with selected program administrative standards, staff qualifications and professional development. Programs are consistently looking for ways to continuously improve their program.

**Gold Circle of Quality** recognizes programs that have met the highest quality standards in 15 areas. Gold Circle of Quality programs meet or exceed specific quality benchmarks on learning environment, instructional quality, and all program administrative standards, group size and teacher to child ratios, staff qualifications and professional development. Programs are actively looking for ways to continually improve their program.

Programs that achieve ExceleRate Illinois and care for children receiving Illinois Department of Human Services Child Care Assistance Program payments, also receive a quality bonus to their standard Child Care Assistance Program reimbursement rate.

## Gateways to Opportunity Training Tiers

Gateways to Opportunity Training Tiers assist license exempt family child care providers to enhance their knowledge and skills and their care to children and families. Participation in the training tiers indicates the provider has taken additional training to help ensure children in their care are receiving an enhanced learning and care experience. Gateways training tiers are categorized into three Tiers. Each Tier includes training modules from the Illinois Gateways to Opportunity ECE Credential Level 1. Once a license exempt family child care provider has completed a minimum of one Gateways Training Tier, an application can be submitted to the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. If the application is approved the child care provider can receive a higher reimbursement rate from the Child Care Assistance Program, this is considered as a quality add-on rate and ranges between 10% and up to 20%. Gateways to Opportunity Training Tiers information and applications can be found on the website at [www.ilgateways.com](http://www.ilgateways.com).

For more information about indicators of high-quality programs, national accreditation, ExceleRate Illinois, or Gateways Training Tiers, please call Brightpoint Child Care Resource & Referral program, 800-467-9200, Ext 390.

# Child Growth and Development

## Developmental Milestones

Skills such as taking a first step, smiling for the first time, and saying first words are called developmental milestones. Children reach milestones in how they play, learn, speak, act and move. Children develop at different rates but tend to follow a general timeline. If your child is not meeting developmental milestones for their age, talk to your pediatrician or early learning provider.

When you seek guidance and support early, your child can receive the necessary supports and services needed to make developmental gains. Make sure your child is evaluated regularly by your family doctor or pediatrician.

An annual developmental checkup is recommended for all children. Most families are familiar with physical development; however, you will also want to observe how your child's language and communication skills are developing, how your child adapts emotionally and how your child responds in social situations.

Generally, trust your instincts. If you have concerns about your baby or how your child is developing, ask about it. Families can complete the Learn the Signs Act Early Milestone Moments checklist CDC milestone checklist OR [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/LTSAE-Checklist\\_COMPLIANT\\_30MCorrection\\_508.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/LTSAE-Checklist_COMPLIANT_30MCorrection_508.pdf) and share with your child's healthcare provider.

## Developmental screening

A developmental screening is a brief developmental check-up completed by a parent, caregiver, or medical professional to identify a child's progress through the various developmental milestones. The screening

identifies your child's strengths and celebrates what your child can already do developmentally and social-emotionally. Development examples include how a child plays, speaks, and moves. Social emotional examples include how your child responds to situations and how they relate with others by cooing, sharing, and problem solving. A developmental screening identifies child strengths and can also help to identify any potential developmental concerns. The results of the screening can be used to provide information and referrals to family support services and programs that will help support your child's development and school readiness.

## Developmental screening results may predict three different paths.

- **No Concern:** continue to help your child play and grow, complete another developmental screening in 6 months.
- **Watch and Rescreen:** increase exposure to experiences and activities then complete another developmental screening in 3 months.
- **Refer and Follow Up:** increase exposure to experiences and activities and contact Early Intervention (birth to 36 months) or your local School District (three to five years of age) to share concerns and discuss further evaluation.

There are many places you can take your child to receive a developmental screening: doctor, Health Department, WIC, Head Start, local school district, or early childhood education and care program. Knowing ways to aid in your child's development is key to their continued growth.







### Care for Children with Special Needs.

All families want the best possible care for their children. When working with an early childhood education and care provider and if your child has special needs there are some additional considerations and questions to ask to ensure your child's needs are met and your child can learn, feel successful, and be happy.

- Does the program and staff value and support inclusion and are willing to provide reasonable accommodations?
- Does the program welcome and value input from parents and therapists to support your child?
- Will free transportation services be available if your child needs to attend special education services?
- Can the program and staff support your child's physical and developmental needs including sensory, health, or nutrition?

### Play

Play is the cornerstone for child growth and milestone achievement. Play and learning are inter-connected, not separate from each other. Children need time to play both at home and in early learning settings to grow, learn and develop. Ensure children have as much time as possible during the day to promote cognitive, language, physical, social and emotional development.

Play helps to reduce anxiety and stress by allowing children to express themselves, use their imagination or act out what they see. Play outdoors daily, weather permitting. Outdoor play can include basketball, jump rope, hopscotch, taking a walk, going for a run, sledding, swimming, building a snowman, or riding bikes. Active outdoor play helps to counteract obesity facing some children today.



Children practice and reinforce their learning in multiple ways during play. For example, in playing restaurant, children write and draw menus, hone language skills when communicating with peers by taking orders and use hand-eye coordination to serve food. Play provides rich learning opportunities, fosters self-esteem and leads to children's success.





### Play Helps Meet Developmental Milestones

Play is a child's work and improves cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being. Beginning at birth, play experiences build connections in the brain furthering child development. Through play children learn about the world and themselves. Below you will find some activities to do with your child to play and meet developmental milestones.



#### O-6 Months

- Show baby interesting objects such as a brightly colored mobile or toy
- Talk to baby often to familiarize baby with your voice, respond when they coo and babble
- Place baby in different positions so they can see the world from different angles
- Let baby bring objects to mouth to explore and experience new textures
- Vary facial expressions and gestures so your baby can imitate them
- Use a mirror or favorite toy to help your baby engage in and enjoy tummy time
- Read to your child every day



### 7-12 Months

- Play peek-a-boo
- Use an unbreakable mirror to show faces to baby
- Provide baby with a safe environment to crawl and explore
- Place baby in a variety of positions such as on tummy, side, etc.
- Give baby opportunities to learn actions have effects, for example when they drop a toy and it falls to the ground
- Provide moments for reading books
- Expose baby to a variety of age- appropriate toys, e.g. balls, shape sorters, music toys, or common household items like pots and spoons



### 1-3 Years

- Allow child to spend time with objects and toys they enjoy
- Give child crayons or markers so they can practice scribbling
- Encourage child to interact with peers
- Help child explore their body through different movements, for example walking, jumping, and standing on one leg
- Provide opportunities to create make- believe situations with objects, for example pretending to drink out of an empty cup
- Make time for reading books with your child
- Respond when child speaks, answer questions, and provide verbal encouragement



### 4-6 Years

- Provide opportunities for child to sing, dance, and try a variety of movements, e.g. hopping, swinging, climbing and doing somersaults
- Tell stories to child and ask them questions about what they remember
- Give child time and space to act out imaginary scenes, roles, and activities
- Allow child to move between make- believe games and reality like playing house and helping you with household chores
- Provide opportunities for reading or visiting the library
- Schedule time for children to interact with friends to practice socializing and building friendships



### 7-12 Years

- Provide opportunities for painting, drawing and self-expression
- Practice physical skills including hopscotch, swimming, yoga and running
- Go for a nature walk – identify birds, collect leaves, sticks or stones
- Have paper airplane races inside and outside
- Give time for writing and illustrating stories or telling stories
- Allow time for reading, visit the library
- Provide time for social interactions and to continue building friendships



# Family Fun Activities

Spend time together reading, playing games, and going outside. Family activities do not have to be expensive to create family fun and memories.

Below are a few ideas to add to your child's everyday play.

## Infants and Toddlers

**Tummy Time** Lay your baby on a blanket on the floor. Tummy time helps your baby develop their neck and head muscles which prepares them for rolling over and crawling.

**Make Music** Gather some pots and pans and give your baby or toddler a rubber or wooden spoon. Talk about the sounds they make when they hit the spoon on the pan. Is it loud or soft? High or low? Make up silly songs as you sing and play with your child.

**Shaker Bottles** Fill an empty plastic bottle with water and vegetable oil. Add color with a few drops of food coloring. Drop into the bottle various interesting items such as glitter, confetti, or paper clips. Then glue the lid on for extra security. Allow your child to shake and explore the shaker bottle. Help your child shake it, roll it, and talk about what's inside! To turn a plastic bottle into

musical instruments, don't add water instead pour in some rice, jingle bells, or beans.

**Sensory Bag Exploring** Fill a freezer Ziploc bag with shaving cream. Add different colors of food coloring: blue, red, and yellow. Do not mix the colors into the shaving cream just yet. Seal the Ziploc bag at the top. To ensure the bag will not open during play, seal the top of the bag with tape. Show your child how moving their finger across the bag can mix the food coloring into the shaving cream and create new colors.

**Box Car Fun** Children will play forever with an empty box, small, medium, or large. Let them sit in the box or let them crawl through the box. Add some creativity by letting children decorate the box with stickers, washable markers, or paint. If you don't have a box a laundry basket also works.

## Preschool

**Magic Goop** Mix 1 cup cornstarch and 1/2 cup water. Add enough water so that the mixture is like glue. Add Food coloring to give some color. This "goop" is not quite a liquid, but not quite a solid. Allow your child to explore the goop, moving it from one hand to another and running their fingers through it.

**Sorting Skills** A simple deck of playing cards is great for preschoolers. They can sort the cards by color, by suite (diamond, club, etc.) or by number. They can put the cards in number order from one to ten. You can use them as a memory game. Start with five matching pairs (10 cards) and gradually increase the number of pairs. Mix the cards up and place them face down on a table. Take turns turning over two cards at a time. If they don't match, turn them back over again.

**Someone Says** This is a favorite game that helps with listening and following directions. Name an action and see if your child can follow along, such as hands on your head, clap your hands, jump three times, close your eyes. You can begin with one step directions then add two or three such as, close your eyes and jump. This activity supports emotional and impulse control and learning to focus while following instructions and taking turns.

**Small to Big** Take your child outside and tell them to gather as many sticks as they can. Once they have a pile of sticks, ask them to sort the sticks by size by lining them up, shortest to longest. They may need your help to get started. Talk about each stick's length and how it compares to the other sticks. This activity builds math skills such as comparing and measuring.

**Silly Putty** Mix two parts white glue (Elmer's) and one part liquid starch, mix well. Store in an airtight container. If it needs to dry a bit before it is "workable," it may be necessary to add a touch more glue or starch. NOTE: when playing with Silly Putty only use on a smooth surface such as a tabletop.





## School-Age

**Tie-Dye Art** Coffee filters and baby wipes make small tie-dye projects. Twist and roll the baby wipe or coffee filter. Once it is rolled, wrap it tightly with rubber bands every inch or so, just as you would if you were tie-dying a t-shirt. Use markers or food coloring to color. Let it dry and remove the rubber bands. Frame the artwork when it is done.

**Scavenger Hunt** Give your school age children a list of items to find for a scavenger hunt. Create a list that includes many items around your home such as, flashlight, blue crayon, doll, teacher/grandparent signature, book, or stick. You can also make it topical, such as things you would find inside, outside or in a classroom. Make the list fun!

**Journaling** Give your school age child a blank notebook or paper and have them write and draw. They can write and draw about their day, their dreams or future. They can become an author and illustrator by using their imagination to create stories and draw pictures to go along with the story.

**Cooking** Have your child help you prepare a snack or meal. Begin with simple recipes like pudding, lemonade, or popcorn. Children can learn to use measuring cups and spoons and learn important kitchen safety tips as well.

**Write letters** Children can write letters to relatives, veterans, or nursing homes or even their favorite celebrity or sports figure. Everyone likes to receive mail and writing letters is a good way to practice their writing and language skills and to possibly get a reply in the mail.



### **Read to your child no matter their age**

Read together every day. Read to your child or have them read to you every day for 15 minutes. When you read you are building their imagination, helping to make connections between what is in print and in the real world, and building comprehension skills for later reading. Reading is a special time between you and your child so make reading a part of your daily routine.

Introduce new words to build vocabulary, name and point to things as you read and notice illustrations in the book, in your home and outside. Build your child's vocabulary by talking using new words and describing objects. For example, "Look at that airplane! Those are the wings of the plane. Why do you think they are called wings?"

Read with fun in your voice, read to your child with humor and expression and use different voices and tones. Being creative makes it more fun.

Be interactive, discuss what's happening in the book, point out things on the page, and ask questions. Put the book away for a while if your child loses interest or is having trouble paying attention.

Read it again and again, go ahead and read your child's favorite book for the 100th time! They learn from repetition. Encourage your school age children to practice their reading skills by reading to younger siblings. Source: [www.pbskids.org](http://www.pbskids.org).

Contact your local library for the latest children's books or to join a playgroup or story hour. Your library may offer many free activities or resources for you and your child.

### **Simple Strategies for Creating Strong Readers**

Reading with children promotes success for early literacy. Give your child access to books and magazines through the library or by participating in book exchanges. Putting a few simple strategies into action will make a significant difference in helping your child become a good reader and writer.

Through reading aloud, providing print materials, and promoting positive attitudes about reading and writing, you can have a powerful impact on children's literacy and learning. Invite your child to read with you every day.

- When reading a book, point out words as you read. This will help your child learn that reading goes from left to right and understand that the combined letter sounds make words.
- Read your child's favorite book over and over again.
- Read many stories with rhyming words and lines that repeat. Invite your child to join in on these parts.
- Discuss new words. For example, "This big house is called a palace. Who do you think lives in a palace?"
- Stop and ask about the pictures and about what is happening in the story.
- Read from a variety of children's books, including fairy tales, song books, poems, and information books.

Reading is the foundation for all learning. Set your child up for success early by reading often and providing exposure and experiences with books and print materials. Source: [www.scholastic.com/home](http://www.scholastic.com/home).

For more information on developmental milestones, play, age-appropriate developmental activities, and literacy resources, please call Brightpoint Child Care Resource and Referral 800-467-9200, Ext 390.



## Free Text Messaging Services and Phone Apps

There are many texting program and Apps related to child development available for both iPhone and Android phones. Look for apps that are educational, fun, and interesting.

When checking out a new App, make sure it clearly states if the App is free or if there are charges. There may

be download charges to use the App, charges to your data package or the minutes used. Before you use any App or text messaging service it is always best to check your phone service package.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children two to five years of age should only have

one hour of phone, tablet, or TV screen time a day, while children ages six and older should use screens only during designated, controlled times. Screen time should include both high-quality programming and engagement between a child and parent.

**Below are some FREE texts messaging services to subscribe to and Apps to download.**



### Babies on the Homefront

Is designed specifically for military and veteran families of young children. This App offers an array of written and video information for families, including behavior tips, parent- child activities,

and parental self-care strategies.  
[www.babiesonthehomefront.org](http://www.babiesonthehomefront.org)



### Beginning with Babble

This mobile App by LEAP (Language Empowers All People) for parents of children ages birth to 4 years of age that reminds caregivers to interact with their children in language-rich, back-and-forth verbal interactions.

[www.leapempowers.org/beginning-with-babble](http://www.leapempowers.org/beginning-with-babble)

### Bright by Text

Available in both English and Spanish this App provides free activities, games, and resources for parents and caregivers to help give each child a bright beginning. For children birth to 5 years of age with research-based content that addresses cognitive and social emotional development. Text BRIGHT to 274448.



### Brightpoint Child Care Resource & Referral

This TEXT messaging service is designed to keep early learning programs, early learning staff and families informed on changes in state policy, upcoming training events, resources, Child Care Assistance Program updates and available grant opportunities. To sign up for this text messaging service, please complete the information at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/textCCRR](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/textCCRR)



### CDC Milestone Tracker

This App tracks your child's developmental milestones for children ages 2 months to 5 years of age with easy-to-use illustrated checklists; get tips from the CDC for encouraging your child's

development; and steps to take if you are ever concerned about how your child is developing.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones-app.html>

### Háblame Bebé

This App helps to reduce the word gap and promote English/Spanish bilingualism by encouraging language-rich interactions through 20 daily routines. [www.hablamebebe.org](http://www.hablamebebe.org).



### PBS KIDS Scratch Jr

With PBS KIDS Scratch Jr APP, kids can create their own interactive stories and games featuring their favorite PBS KIDS characters. The storytelling possibilities are endless with this creative coding App for children

ages 5-8. [www.pbskids.org/learn/scratchjr](http://www.pbskids.org/learn/scratchjr).

### PBS Kids Video

This App will keep your child engaged. PBS is known for shows such as Daniel Tiger, Sesame Street. With this app, kids have access to clips on the go. This free version entertains your child while helping them learn.  
<https://pbskids.org>



### Ready4K

Ready4K is a FREE researched-based text messaging program for families and providers with kids ages 0 – 11. Families and providers can expect to receive 3 texts a week with fun facts and tips on ways to help their child learn and grow. Text IL4KIDS to 70138 to register

Ready4K

### Spanish School Bus for Kids

Offers 300 of the most used Spanish nouns, verbs, and adjectives, broken down by different themes, such as animals and colors.  
[www.spanishschoolbus.com](http://www.spanishschoolbus.com)



### Vroom Early Learning

Makes it easy to access fun activities any time, to make the most of precious years when the foundation for all learning is happening. Daily Vroom enhances the things you already do and helps spark new ideas! [www.vroom.org](http://www.vroom.org)



# Health and Safety

## Safe at Home

At some point parents begin to consider the possibility of having children care for themselves at home alone. Self-care can be a rewarding experience for children who are ready. When children care for themselves, they develop independence and responsibility and gain confidence in their own abilities. However, also consider the risk factors such as their comfort level and their ability to respond to challenges or emergencies when deciding if a child is ready to care for themselves.

In Illinois law, a minor is defined as children under 14 years of age who should not be left home alone.

Below are some questions to consider before leaving your child home alone:

- Does your child show a desire and willingness to stay home alone? Children who are easily frightened or who express an unwillingness to stay home alone are probably not ready.
- Is your child independent? Children who can get ready for school on time, solve problems on their own, complete homework or household chores with minimum supervision show signs of readiness.
- Does your child know how to tell time and remember to tell you where they are going and when they will be back? Does your child know how to use a cell phone and call for help?

Children can be enrolled in a child care program or a before and after school or youth programs through 12 years of age and older if your child has special needs. Some things to consider before leaving your child home alone. Can your child:

- Lock and unlock doors and show responsibility for house keys?
- Give their name, address, telephone number and directions to their home?
- Identify two escape routes in case of an emergency and know a safe place to seek shelter during a storm?
- Show you how to handle security issues such as strangers at the door or what they would do if they were approached by a stranger while outside?
- Find the first-aid supplies and explain how they would handle first aid for cuts and scrapes, burns, nosebleeds, or poisoning?
- Name two adults to contact in an emergency?

For more information about school age and youth programs, please call Brightpoint Child Care Resource & Referral at 800 467-9200, Ext 390



## Be Wise – Immunize

On-time immunizations or vaccines are essential throughout childhood to reduce the risk of being exposed to a potentially life-threatening disease. Vaccines help the body's immune system learn how to fight germs by building up the body's natural defenses. Some vaccines require booster doses later in life to maintain these defenses.

Below is a birth to adolescent (18 years of age) recommended immunization schedule. These are general guidelines based on recommendations by the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Always consult with your doctor or health clinic for full recommendations and guidance.

If you choose to delay, skip, or reject all or some vaccines entirely, there may be risks. You could leave your child vulnerable to a disease with serious complications. Whatever you decide, consider the responsibility to protect your child's life or the life of others in your family, community, and the children at the school your child attends, especially those with low immune systems. Please discuss your decision with your child's pediatrician and the early childhood education and care program your child attends.

For children who are behind on this schedule or start late on their immunizations, please contact your health care provider or local health department.

The table below can be found on [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/downloads/child/0-18yrs-child-combined-schedule.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/downloads/child/0-18yrs-child-combined-schedule.pdf).

### Recommended Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule for ages 18 years or younger, United States, 2023

These recommendations must be read with the notes that follow. For those who fall behind or start late, provide catch-up vaccination at the earliest opportunity as indicated by the green bars. To determine minimum intervals between doses, see the catch-up schedule (Table 2).

Vaccine	Birth	1 mo	2 mos	4 mos	6 mos	9 mos	12 mos	15 mos	18 mos	19–23 mos	2–3 yrs	4–6 yrs	7–10 yrs	11–12 yrs	13–15 yrs	16 yrs	17–18 yrs
Hepatitis B (HepB)	1 <sup>st</sup> dose	← 2 <sup>nd</sup> dose →			← 3 <sup>rd</sup> dose →												
Rotavirus (RV): RV1 (2-dose series), RV5 (3-dose series)			1 <sup>st</sup> dose	2 <sup>nd</sup> dose	See Notes												
Diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis (DTaP <7 yrs)			1 <sup>st</sup> dose	2 <sup>nd</sup> dose	3 <sup>rd</sup> dose			← 4 <sup>th</sup> dose →				5 <sup>th</sup> dose					
Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)			1 <sup>st</sup> dose	2 <sup>nd</sup> dose	See Notes		← 3 <sup>rd</sup> or 4 <sup>th</sup> dose, See Notes →										
Pneumococcal conjugate (PCV13, PCV15)			1 <sup>st</sup> dose	2 <sup>nd</sup> dose	3 <sup>rd</sup> dose		← 4 <sup>th</sup> dose →										
Inactivated poliovirus (IPV <18 yrs)			1 <sup>st</sup> dose	2 <sup>nd</sup> dose	← 3 <sup>rd</sup> dose →							4 <sup>th</sup> dose					See Notes
COVID-19 (1vCOV-mRNA, 2vCOV-mRNA, 1vCOV-aPS)					2- or 3- dose primary series and booster (See Notes)												
Influenza (IIV4)					Annual vaccination 1 or 2 doses								or	Annual vaccination 1 dose only			
Influenza (LAIV4)												Annual vaccination 1 or 2 doses		Annual vaccination 1 dose only			
Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)					See Notes		← 1 <sup>st</sup> dose →					2 <sup>nd</sup> dose					
Varicella (VAR)							← 1 <sup>st</sup> dose →					2 <sup>nd</sup> dose					
Hepatitis A (HepA)					See Notes		2-dose series, See Notes										
Tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (Tdap ≥7 yrs)															1 dose		
Human papillomavirus (HPV)															See Notes		
Meningococcal (MenACWY-D ≥9 mos, MenACWY-CRM ≥2 mos, MenACWY-TT ≥2 years)				See Notes										1 <sup>st</sup> dose		2 <sup>nd</sup> dose	
Meningococcal B (MenB-4C, MenB-FHbp)																	See Notes
Pneumococcal polysaccharide (PPSV23)													See Notes				
Dengue (DEN4CYD; 9–16 yrs)															Seropositive in endemic dengue areas (See Notes)		

Range of recommended ages for all children

Range of recommended ages for catch-up vaccination

Range of recommended ages for certain high-risk groups

Recommended vaccination can begin in this age group

Recommended vaccination based on shared clinical decision-making

No recommendation/not applicable



### **Dental and Vision Services**

Free or low-cost dental and vision services for children are available regionally. Contact providers to see if they will provide services to your children or come to your early childhood education and care program to provide services on-site.



**Dental Safari** Mobile dentistry for children at schools and some early childhood education and care programs. For more information, please call (618) 993-8333 or <http://www.dentalsafaricompany.com>

**SIUE Dental Clinics** Dental treatments for children, adults, and children with special needs in the following communities:

- **East Saint Louis** 601 James R. Thompson Blvd., Building D East St. Louis, IL 62201, 618-482-6980
- **Edwardsville** 195 University Park Dr Edwardsville, IL 62025, 618-650-5781
- **Alton** 1700 Annex St. Alton, IL 62002, 618-474-7000

For more information about the services provided by SIUE, please visit - [www.siu.edu/dental/patient-clinics/index.shtml](http://www.siu.edu/dental/patient-clinics/index.shtml).

### **Southern Illinois Health Foundation Healthcare**

Southern Illinois Health Foundation Healthcare offers an array of medical

services including behavioral health, HIV education, dental care, family medicine, OB/Gyn services, pediatrics, and vaccinations. To find out about care options and referrals, please call 618-332-0953 or visit [www.sihf.org/about-us](http://www.sihf.org/about-us).

### **Fetal & Infant Mortality Review Program**

The Fetal & Infant Mortality Review program is a service of Southern Illinois Health Foundation Healthcare that works to improve the health and well-being of mothers and infants and to reduce the number of infant deaths by interviewing families who have experienced infant loss. Fetal & Infant Mortality Review connects families to resources for the supports they need during this difficult time. Families experiencing pregnancy or infant loss, please contact Fetal Infant Mortality Review program for resources and to share your story at 618-332-0953 or visit <https://www.sihf.org/patient-care-services/community-programs-and-services/fetal-and-infant-mortality-program>.

### **Vision Services Delta Gamma Center for Children**

It doesn't occur to most of us that it is with our eyes that we take in most information. Therefore, it is unimaginable to navigate through life with a loss of sight, even in a familiar place, with familiar objects, people, and experiences. Delta Gamma offers Free children's vision screening. The check-up helps identify children with eye conditions that may lead to visual impairment. If your child is over six months of age, contact the Delta Gamma Center to set up an appointment. For more information, please call the Delta Gamma Center at 314-776-1300 or email at [info@dgckids.org](mailto:info@dgckids.org).



## Lead Screening and Health Risks

Children under the age of six are the most vulnerable to the devastating impacts of lead exposure. When lead is absorbed into the body, it is highly toxic. Lead can be found in paint, dust, soil, water, air, and food. Even at low levels, lead exposure can harm the brain development of young children resulting in learning and behavioral concerns for life. Lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust in older homes and buildings are the most common sources of lead poisoning in children. Illinois requires testing for lead in public schools and child care centers if they were built before the year 2000.

Be aware of the symptoms of chronic lead exposure which may include irritability and headaches, loss of energy and appetite, abdominal pain, vomiting, anemia, learning difficulty, short attention span and hyperactivity. Consult your doctor if you notice any symptoms or have any concerns. In addition, a home or building risk assessment will tell you where lead hazards are and what to do about them. Professional cleaning, proper paint stabilization techniques and repairs done by a certified contractor can reduce lead exposure in homes and buildings.

### To reduce lead exposure to children in your home or early learning environment:

- Keep the environment clean by wiping floors and surfaces.
- Keep children away from potentially contaminated areas (windows, old porches, or areas with peeling or chipping paint).
- Filter drinking water with an ion filter, run cold tap water for 15 -30 seconds before serving or buy bottled drinking water.
- Do not store food in open cans in the refrigerator.
- Children and adults should wash their hands and face after playing outside, before eating and after spending time with pets.

For more information on lead poisoning, please contact your local Health Department. Find your local Health Departments at this website, [www.dph.illinois.gov/about/lhd.html](http://www.dph.illinois.gov/about/lhd.html).



## Poison Control Center

The Illinois poison control center provides access to comprehensive and trusted information and treatment advice on the ingestion of potentially harmful substances via a free, confidential 24-hour helpline. The helpline is staffed by specially trained medical experts, including physicians, nurses, and pharmacists. Do not automatically treat a suspected poisoning without calling the poison control helpline or 911 first. Helpline experts will be able to give you advice on the most appropriate treatment. The Illinois Poison Center offers free educational materials to keep children and the community safe. If your child is unconscious or having difficulty breathing always call 911.

For more information on general poison safety, please call the Illinois Poison Center 800-222- 1222 or visit [www.illinoispoisoncenter.org](http://www.illinoispoisoncenter.org).



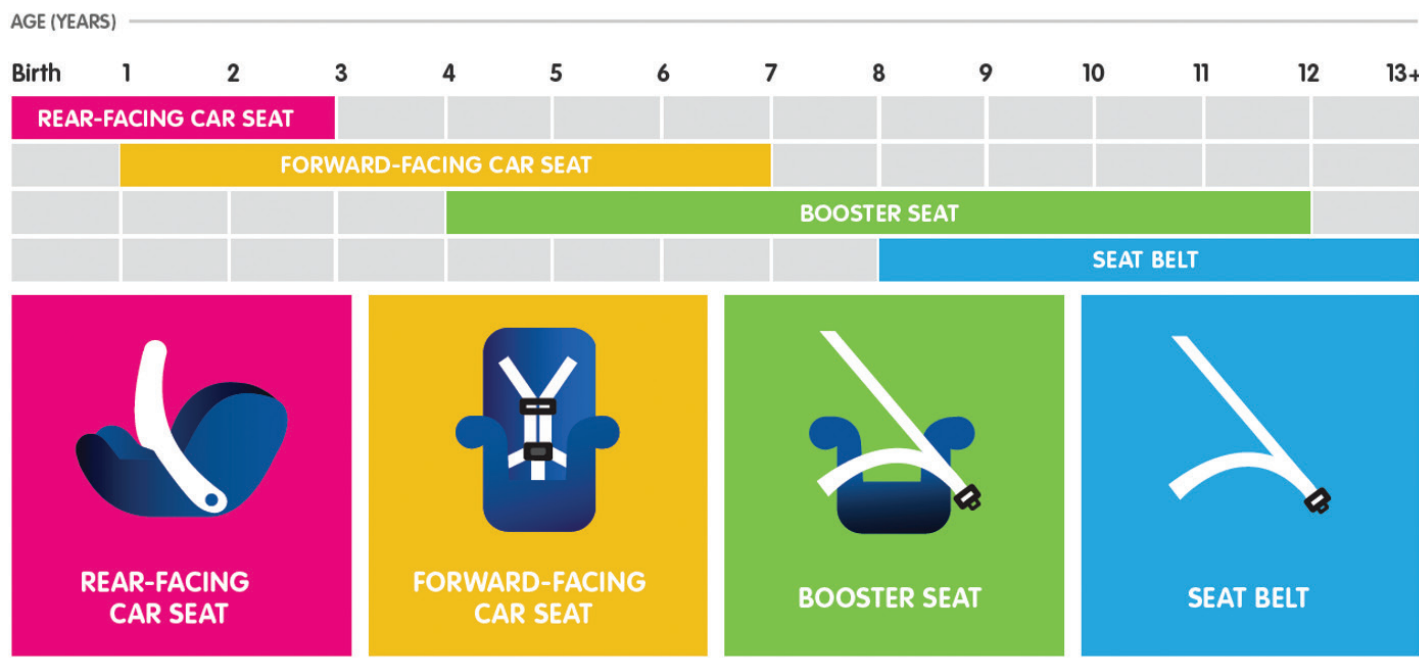


### Car Seat Safety

The best way to keep your child safe in the car is to use the right car seat in the right way. There are many car seat choices available to families. The information below can help you choose the type of car seat that best meets your child's needs.

- Select a car seat based on your child's age and size, choose a seat that fits in your vehicle and use it every time. Always refer to your specific car seat manufacturers instructions (check height and weight limits) and read the vehicle owner's manual on how to install the car seat using the seat belt or lower anchors and a tether, if available.
- Perform an inch test when the car seat is installed. Hold the car seat at the correct belt path for installation and move the car seat side to side and then forward and back. A properly installed car seat should not move more than one inch.
- Each time you buckle your child into their car seat confirm that all buckles are securely fastened, the straps are flat and not twisted, and that the chest clip is at arm pit level. To ensure that the straps are tightened appropriately perform a pinch test. Pinch the strap by your child's shoulder between your thumb and index finger. If your child is securely buckled into their car seat, you will not be able to pinch the fabric.
- Keep your child rear facing until at least two years of age. Illinois law requires that children travel in a rear facing car seat until a minimum age of 2. While it is legal to transition your child to a forward-facing car seat at age 2, The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children remain rear facing until they reach the height and weight limits for their car seat. These limits are found on the car seat and in the manual. Rear facing in an appropriately sized car seat is the safest way to travel.
- Illinois law requires all children under the age of 8 to be safely secured in a car seat or booster seat
- Keep your child in the back seat until they are 13 years of age.





- **Birth up to at least Age 2** - Buckle children in a rear facing seat until age 2 or when they reach the upper weight or height limit of that seat.
- **Age 2 up to at least age 5** - When children outgrow their rear facing seat, they should be buckled in a forward-facing car seat until at least age 5 or when they reach the upper weight or height limit of that seat.
- **Age 5 up until at least age 8** - Once children outgrow their forward-facing seat, they should be buckled in a booster seat until at least age 8.

- **Once seat belts fit properly without a booster seat** - Children no longer need to use a booster seat once seat belts fit them properly. Seat belts fit properly when the lap belt lays across the upper thighs (not the stomach) and the shoulder belt lays across the chest (not the neck). The recommended height for proper seat belt fit is 57 inches tall.

If you need help installing or choosing the best car seat for your child or to find a car seat technician who can assist you, please visit [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org).





### **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome - Sudden Unexpected Infant Death**

More than 3,500 infants in the United States die suddenly and unexpectedly every year while sleeping, often due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or accidental deaths from suffocation or strangulation, Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID). Sudden Infant Death Syndrome can occur any time up to 12 months of age. Putting a child on their back to sleep in their own crib will reduce risks. Make sure your infant always sleeps in their own bed to avoid accidental suffocation and strangulation.

Tips for creating a safe sleeping space for infants in your home or in an early childhood education and care program include:

- Place your baby on their back for all sleep times, for naps and at night.
- Use a firm, flat sleep surface, such as a mattress covered by a fitted sheet.
- Keep your infants sleep area (such as a crib, bassinet) in the same room where you sleep until your infant is at least 6 months old, or ideally, until your baby is one year old. In early childhood education and care programs infants should be seen and observed by sight and sound.
- Keep soft bedding such as blankets, pillows, bumper pads and soft toys out of your baby's sleep area.
- Never cover your infants head or allow a baby to get too hot. Signs your infant may be too hot include sweating or their chest feels hot.

For more information about safe sleep practices and SIDS prevention, please call the Brightpoint Child Care Resource & Referral Infant Toddler Child Care Specialist, 800-467-9200, Ext. 390 or visit <https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/safe-sleep/>, or [www.cdc.gov/sids/Parents-Caregivers.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/sids/Parents-Caregivers.htm)



### **Shaken Baby Syndrome**

Shaken Baby Syndrome or Abusive Head Trauma is a term used to describe the many signs and symptoms resulting from violently shaking and impacting the head of an infant or small child. Violently shaking for just a few seconds has the potential to cause severe brain and head injuries. While shaking may cause injury at any age, children are most likely to become injured during their first year of life.

#### **Prevention Tips:**

- Try calming a crying baby by rocking gently, offering a pacifier, singing, or talking softly, taking a walk with a stroller, or going for a drive in a vehicle. Don't be afraid to ask for help
- If the baby won't stop crying, check for signs of illness and call your doctor
- If you find yourself getting upset, focus on calming yourself down. Put your baby in a safe place and walk away to calm down, checking on the baby every 5 to 10 minutes
- Call a friend, relative, neighbor or colleague for help or relief
- Never leave your baby with a person who is easily irritated, has a temper or a history of violence

Please visit the CDC website for more information [www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/Abusive-Head-Trauma.html](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/Abusive-Head-Trauma.html).

### **Crisis Nursery**

The Crisis Nursery St. Louis offers trauma informed short-term care for children birth through 12 years of age whose families face an emergency caused by illness, homelessness, domestic violence, or overwhelming parental stress. All services are completely FREE and voluntary. The Services and Helpline is staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by highly trained professionals.

You can find supports at the following locations.

- Crisis Nursery Centene Center | 1928 Gravois Avenue St. Louis, MO | 24-Hour Helpline, 314-768-3201
- Crisis Nursery North | 11037 Breezy Point Lane St. Louis, MO | 24-Hour Helpline, 314-953-8030
- Crisis Nursery Saint Charles | 315 First Capitol Drive St. Charles, MO | 24-Hour Helpline, 636-947-0600
- Crisis Nursery West | 328 S. Fourth Street St. Charles, MO | 24-Hour Helpline, 636-940-2504
- Crisis Nursery Wentzville | 700 Medical Drive Wentzville, MO | 24-Hour Helpline, 636-887-3070

For more information about program services and locations, please visit [www.crisisnurserykids.org/locations](http://www.crisisnurserykids.org/locations).

### **Division of Specialized Care for Children**

Partnering with Illinois families and communities to offer free care coordination for eligible children, regardless of a family's income level. We help families make the most of their insurance, work with you to develop a personalized care coordination plan and point you in the direction of helpful resources.

Children who have eligible chronic health issues are enrolled in the Core Program. This program supports needs such as therapy, specialized equipment and transportation related to medical appointments and treatment.

Families with children who are medically fragile, and technology-dependent may be eligible for the Home Care Program that partners with families to help care for children who need shift nursing at home. The program helps these children live at home with community supports, rather than in a hospital or skilled nursing facility.

For more information, please call 800-322-3722 or visit <https://dscc.uic.edu>.

### **Safe Families for Children**

Safe Families for children of Central and Southern Illinois is a network of partner agencies, churches, and volunteers. The purpose of the network is to bring awareness to potential child abuse and neglect and ways churches can assist in family strengthening efforts.

Safe Families volunteers provide a safe home for children and a supportive community for parents while they get back on their feet. Parents are provided with the space and support they need to address the issues impacting their ability to provide the best environment for their children. This network of supports and relationships keep children from entering the foster care system, and ultimately, helps keeps families together. The goal is always family reunification.

There are many ways to get involved with the Safe Families for Children movement as a host family, a family coach, or as a resource friend. Additional faith communities are also welcomed to start a Safe Families Church.

For more information, please call 618-353-4335, email [metroeaststl@safefamilies.net](mailto:metroeaststl@safefamilies.net) or visit [www.safefamilies.org/safe-families-sunday](http://www.safefamilies.org/safe-families-sunday).





## Child Safety Tips

Child safety is a priority for families and those who care for children. Creating safe environments, talking about situations that could happen, and developing emergency plans are important prevention strategies. Below are just a few ideas to keep children safe and to be prepared if something would happen.

- Never leave your child or any children alone in a car or unattended. The heat inside a car is unsafe for children, also someone with experience can break into your car.
- Children should always be supervised by an adult or their caregiver. It is important to keep children within sight and sound, knowing where they are and where they are going.
- Keep any weapons and guns at home unloaded and locked in a child proof case or cabinet and out of the reach of children.
- Listen when your child tells you they do not want to be with someone. Ask Why? Your questioning may reveal something you should know. Acknowledge and support your child when they express fears or concerns about people or places.
- Be involved in your child's activities. Know your child's friends and any adults that play a role in their life.
- Be prepared to describe your children accurately, including visible identifying marks and descriptive characteristics.
- Develop a procedure if you and your child become separated while away from home. For example, come up with a code word to use if ever separated. Practice this procedure with your child.
- Do not buy items, which visibly display your child's name. It could give a stranger the advantage of seeming to know your child. For example, "Hey Billy, your mom's been in an accident. Get in the car."
- Keep an updated photograph of your child on hand in case your child becomes missing.
- Provide a list of individuals allowed to pick up your child to your child's school or early learning provider. Individuals should be asked for ID when picking up your child.



## Sex Offender Registry

Any person convicted of a felony sex crime or an attempt to commit a felony sex crime is required to register as a sex offender regardless of the victim's age.

In Illinois, police offices are required to notify schools and early childhood education and care facilities of sex offenders residing within their respective communities. To view a listing of registered sex offenders or to find information on registered sex offenders, you can log onto the Illinois State Police website and click sex offender mapping.

Use the search feature to search by city, county, zip code, name, etc. If you would like additional information on this law refer to, Sex Offender Registry FAQ available at [www.isp.illinois.gov/Sor/faqs](http://www.isp.illinois.gov/Sor/faqs) or <https://isp.illinois.gov/Sor/Disclaimer>.

For more information about health and safety resources for your family or early childhood education and care program, please call Brightpoint Child Care Resource & Referral Program at 800-467-9200, Ext 390.

# Family Supports

## United Way of Greater St. Louis 2-1-1

United Way 2-1-1 is your 24 hour, 7 days a week connection to agencies and resources near you. Serving 99 counties in Missouri and 9 counties in Illinois, United Way 2-1-1 connects people to services that help them live their best possible lives, from basic needs to child care to disaster relief to counseling. This service is free to everyone!

There are multiple ways to access services:

**Call 2-1-1 or 800-427-4626** to get connected to a trained resource specialist 24/7

**Chat** with a navigation specialist online. Available Monday through Friday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

**Text 800-427-4626** to chat with a navigation specialist. Available Monday through Friday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

**Search** the online directory to find resources near you:  
[helpingpeople.org/united-way-2-1-1](http://helpingpeople.org/united-way-2-1-1)

United Way 2-1-1 resources may include:

- Supporting basic needs including food pantries, clothing, shelters, transportation and utility assistance
- Referrals to child care and parenting resources
- Physical and mental health resources including crisis intervention, support groups, counseling, prenatal care
- Assistance with job programs including educational and vocational training, English as a Second Language or GED classes, job training
- Support for seniors and individuals with disabilities including centers for independent living
- Legal advice and representation such as general legal, child and family law, immigration and citizenship, and tenant-landlord



**Women Infants & Children** Women Infants & Children (WIC) is a nutrition-based program for pregnant women, infants, and children up to five years of age. Eligibility is based on household size, income, age, and/or medical determination. Your household is everyone who lives in your home including your own children and shares income and household expenses such as bills, food, etc.

The program provides breastfeeding support, nutritious foods and iron fortified formula for proper growth and development, as well as referrals to other services. Participants have access to several resources, including health care screenings, nutrition education, breastfeeding promotion and support, immunization screening, substance abuse referral, and more.

The best way to locate the nearest Women Infants & Children location is to call your local health department:

### Bond County

[www.bchd.us](http://www.bchd.us)

- Greenville 618-664-1442

### Clinton County

[www.clintoncountyhealth.com](http://www.clintoncountyhealth.com)

- Carlyle 618-594-2723

### Madison County

[www.madisoncountyl.gov/departments/health/index.php](http://www.madisoncountyl.gov/departments/health/index.php)

- Granite City 877-842-5028
- Alton 877-842-9292
- Wood River 618-692-8954

### Monroe County

[www.monroecountyl.gov/departments/health-department](http://www.monroecountyl.gov/departments/health-department)

- Waterloo 618-939-3871

### Randolph County

[www.am.randolphco.org/index.php/welcome](http://www.am.randolphco.org/index.php/welcome)

- Chester 618-826-5007
- Sparta 618-443-2995

### St. Clair County

[www.scchealthdept.com/health-promotion-wellness/wic](http://www.scchealthdept.com/health-promotion-wellness/wic)

- Belleville 618-233-6170
- East Side Health District -East St. Louis 618-271-8722 | Cahokia 618-337-4178

### Washington County

[www.washingtonco.illinois.gov](http://www.washingtonco.illinois.gov)

- Nashville 618-327-3644



### **Family & Community Resource Centers**

The Illinois Department of Human Services offers Family & Community Resource Centers located throughout the State. The Family & Community Resource Centers are designed to be one stop community centers for state assistance programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Family Care, All Kids and Medicaid, job services and more.

### **IDHS Temporary Assistance for Needy Families**

This time limited program can help pay for food, shelter, utilities, and expenses other than medical costs. To qualify for TANF you must:

- Be pregnant or have a child under age 19 living with you, or experiencing homelessness
- Live in Illinois
- Be a U.S. citizen or meet certain immigration requirements (ask your caseworker what they are). If your children qualify as citizens or immigrants but you do not, you may receive TANF for your children
- Develop a Responsibility and Services Plan

### **Illinois Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps low-income people and families buy the food they need for good health. If you qualify for the program, you will receive an Illinois Link card. Each month, the amount of your SNAP benefits will be added to your Illinois Link Card, and you can use it like a debit card to pay for food at most grocery stores. SNAP benefits can be used to buy any food or food product for human consumption as well as, seeds and plants for use in home gardens to produce food.

Most households with low-income are eligible for SNAP benefits this includes families, disabled and or elderly persons. The most important factors which determine the amount of, and eligibility for, SNAP benefits are household income, expenses and the number of persons who live and eat together.





### **Family Care, All Kids and Medicaid**

These programs offer health care for low-income people of all ages in Illinois through the Illinois Department of Health Care and Family Services (HFS). Access to health care is provided through HFS Medical Programs that pay for a wide range of health services including doctor visits, hospital stays, prescription drugs, vision care, dental care and medical devices like eyeglasses and asthma inhalers. Care is provided by a variety of medical providers located throughout Illinois.

To apply, please call or visit the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Family Community Resource Center (FCRC) 800-843-6154, apply online at [www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=33698](http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=33698), or call Brightpoint Child Care Resource & Referral, 800-467-9200, Ext 390.

### **Illinois Child Support Services**

Federal law requires that states offer and provide child support services to all families, not just those who receive public assistance. In Illinois, child support services are administered by the Department of Healthcare and Family Services. The Child Support Services Division can help parents:

- Locate the parent who does not live with the child or children
- Legally establish paternity if the parents are not married or in a civil union

- Establish or enforce an order for child support including medical support or health insurance needs
- Collect payments on an already established child support order, modify or change the amount of a child support order, and collect past due child support payments

The Department cannot provide legal counsel or help families get a divorce, property settlement, modify a custody or visitation order or an order to provide college expenses.

For more information about your rights as a parent, please call the Child Support Customer Service Call Center 800-447-4278 or visit <https://hfs.illinois.gov>.

### **Grandparents Raising Grandchildren**

Many Grandparents find themselves in the challenging situation of raising their grandchildren for a variety of reasons. AgeSmart Community Resources helps grandparents and relatives who are struggling to meet the basic needs of their grandchildren. By providing necessities such as groceries, clothing, and other essential items, AgeSmart helps to ensure that these families can remain together and receive the support they need. If you know of a grandparent needing help or support, contact AgeSmart Community Resources.

For more information, please call AgeSmart Community Resources 618-222-2561 or visit [www.ilaging.illinois.gov/programs/caregiver/grg.html](http://www.ilaging.illinois.gov/programs/caregiver/grg.html).



## Register and Vote

Brightpoint, encourages all families to participate in the electoral process by registering to vote and voting. You must register to vote at least 30 days before an Election. You may register to vote online, by mail or in-person at the Office of the County Clerk in the county and precinct where you maintain your permanent residency.

### To Register to Vote in Illinois:

- Must be a United States Citizen
- Must be 17 years old on or before the date of the Primary Election and turn 18 on or before the date of the General or Consolidated Election
- Must have been a resident of Illinois at least 30 days prior to Election Day
- Must present two forms of identification

### High School Equivalency – General Educational Development

The High School Equivalency or GED is for those who do not attend high school, did not complete their formal high school education and are at least 18 years of age. There are four modules in a GED program: language arts, math, science, and social studies. Many GED programs are free or low cost. A GED test consists of four separate tests: Social Studies, Science, Mathematical Reasoning, and Reasoning Through Language Arts. A GED may help you get a job, increase your wages or help you get into a college program. GED tests are administered in English and Spanish.

There are many GED programs in the Metro East. Please contact the program nearest to you for additional help and information.

- Kaskaskia College, you can call or text 618-545-3115 or visit [www.kaskaskia.edu/academics/adult-education--literacy/high-school-equivalency-ged-registration](http://www.kaskaskia.edu/academics/adult-education--literacy/high-school-equivalency-ged-registration)
- Lewis & Clark Community College 618-468-4141 or visit [www.lc.edu/GED/](http://www.lc.edu/GED/)
- Southwestern Illinois College [www.swic.edu/community/adult-education/high-school-equivalency-test-prep](http://www.swic.edu/community/adult-education/high-school-equivalency-test-prep)
  - Belleville and Red Bud Campus 618-222-5346
  - East St. Louis Higher Education Center 618-874-6277
  - Sam Wolf Granite City Campus 618-797-7358



### The following is a listing of local County Clerk Offices and their phone numbers:

Bond: 618-664-0449

Clinton: 618-594-6600

Madison: 618-692-6290

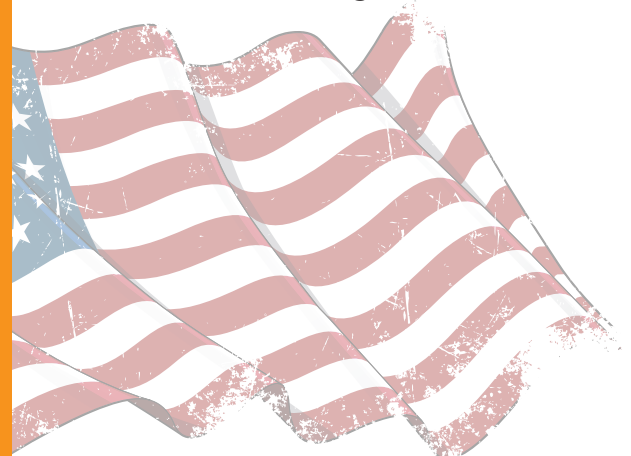
Monroe: 618-939-8681

Randolph: 618-826-5000

St. Clair: 618-825-2334

Washington: 618-327-4800

Every vote counts and your vote is very important. Register now so you can participate in all local, state, and federal elections. At Brightpoint we advocate, innovate, and lead the call for better practices and policies for children, youth, and families in Illinois. An individual may register to vote or update their existing voter registration through the Illinois State Board of Elections, 217-782-5959 or at [www.elections.il.gov](http://www.elections.il.gov).



## Tax Credits and Deductions for Families

Raising children can be expensive. At the end of the year, families may be eligible for some tax relief through tax credits and deductions. A tax credit reduces the taxes you owe. Tax deduction reduces your taxable income based upon qualifying expenses.

### Child Tax Credit

You can receive credit of up to \$2000 per child. You and your children must meet all the criteria below:

- Child must be under 17 years of age.
- Child must be your own child (biological or adopted), a stepchild or a foster child placed with you by a qualified agency.
- The child must be a U.S. citizen, national, or resident alien.
- The child must have lived with you for more than half of the tax year.
- You must have provided at least half of the child's financial support over the course of the tax year.
- You must claim the child as a dependent on your taxes.
- Your family must meet family income criteria whether filing single or jointly.

### Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit

A big tax saver for many families is the child and dependent care tax credit (CDCC). If you paid someone to take care of your child or another eligible dependent while you worked or looked for work, you may qualify for this credit. Qualifying expenses for this tax credit include child care, day/summer camp fees, and nursery, pre-school, or Pre-K fees for children under 13 years of age. Also, in-home care costs for children with disabilities over 13 years of age. The Child and Dependent Care Credit

ranges between \$3,000 and \$6,000 depending on the number of children in your household and your gross income. Many employers offer a dependent care flexible spending account, which allows you to contribute pre-tax money and use it to pay for child care expenses.

### Earned Income Tax Credit

The earned income tax credit helps moderate to lower income working families. The credit amount varies based on family income, filing status and number of children. Sometimes the credit can result in a tax refund.

### Adoption Credit

Adoption Credit is for qualifying expenses you paid to adopt a child. The credit refunds qualified adoption expenses such as court costs, attorney and agency fees, and travel costs. are all deductible expenses for this credit.

### American Opportunity Credit

The American opportunity credit is an education tax credit for adults and children in the household pursuing an undergraduate degree. The credit is for qualifying education expenses such as tuition, fees, books and equipment while pursuing a degree and enrolled at least part-time. The American Opportunity Credit is only available for up to four tax years for the same student's expenses. If you don't qualify for the American Opportunity Tax Credit, you may be eligible for the **Lifetime Learning Credit** instead.

Tax credits and deductions can vary from year to year. For the most current tax information, please contact your tax prepare or the IRS at <https://www.irs.gov>.







## **Brightpoint Programs and Services**

### **Child Care Resource & Referral Program**

The Brightpoint Child Care Resource & Referral Program is a trust-worthy system of support for families, early childhood education and care programs and communities.

### **Early Childhood Education and Care Programs**

- Support for business start-up for child care homes or centers
- Coaching for early learning programs to provide high-quality care for children
- Training opportunities to meet State of Illinois and high-quality standards
- Information on grants and scholarships for programs and educators
- Support with participation in the Child Care Assistance Program

### **Families**

- Information on available early childhood education and care program options
- Guidance on selecting an early learning program to meet your family's needs
- Assistance paying for child care for eligible families while they look for a job or school, work, attend school or training. In addition, families experiencing homelessness or exiting Intact Family Services do not have to meet work or school requirements for a period of time.
- Referral support services for families experiencing homelessness, receiving TANF, or who have a child with special needs
- Connections to community resources

### **Communities**

- Partnerships with community groups and other agencies to better serve families and communities
- Advocacy for policies, practices and investments that support children, families and early childhood education and care programs
- Providing data to help decision-makers
- Presentations to employers and community groups
- Supporting the current and future workforce





# Child Care Assistance Program

Brightpoint Child Care Assistance Program makes it possible for families and guardians who qualify to receive financial help paying for child care while they look for a job or school, work, attend school or training. In addition, families experiencing homelessness or exiting Intact Family Services do not have to meet work or school requirements for a period of time. Families must meet the State of Illinois Child Care Assistance Program guidelines.

## Three Simple Steps to Get Help Paying for Child Care.

**1. Inquire About Your Eligibility**, program eligibility is based on gross household income, family size and other factors.



**2. Identify a Child Care Provider**, you select the child care option that works best for your family. The provider must be willing to accept payments from the Illinois Department of Human Services. When you participate in the Child Care Assistance Program you can change your child care provider at any time and for any reason. You must notify your child care provider, the Child Care Assistance Program office, and complete a change of provider form. If you need help finding a child care provider in Bond, Clinton, Madison, Monroe, Randolph, St. Clair, or Washington counties, please call the Brightpoint Child Care Resource & Referral 800-467-9200, Ext 390 or email [crrr@brightpoint.org](mailto:crrr@brightpoint.org).

**3. Complete the Child Care Assistance Program Application**, please read all instructions and provide all required documentation. If you need an application, Child Care Assistance Program forms, or help, please call 800-847-6700, Ext 360 or email [ccap@brightpoint.org](mailto:ccap@brightpoint.org).

For an application and assistance, please call the Brightpoint Child Care Assistance Program 800-847-6700, Ext. 360 or visit [www.brightpoint.org/thriving-children/early-childhood-care-education/child-care-resource-referral/for-families](http://www.brightpoint.org/thriving-children/early-childhood-care-education/child-care-resource-referral/for-families).

## Stronger Beginnings for Families

Brightpoint Stronger Beginnings for Families is a home visiting program that partners with expectant parents and families with young children under 36 months of age. The purpose of the program is to support families in providing a strong foundation for their children during the critical early years. Program supports are FREE and voluntary. Brightpoint Home Visiting services are provided in four counties: Madison, Monroe, Randolph, and St. Clair.

## Who can participate?

- Expectant parents
- Families with children birth to 36 months of age





**Benefits of Participating in Home Visiting:**

- Support and guidance during and after pregnancy
- Information about your child's development
- Receive parent-child activity ideas
- Develop personal and family goals
- Opportunities for socialization during groups and family experiences
- Receive children's books to promote early literacy and school readiness
- Connections to resources in the community
- Receive additional support beyond friends and family

For more information  
about Brightpoint  
Stronger Beginnings  
for Families,  
please call 800-467-9200,  
Ext 118,  
email  
[sbff@brightpoint.org](mailto:sbff@brightpoint.org)  
or visit our webpage  
[www.brightpoint.org](http://www.brightpoint.org)

**Become a Foster Family**

Foster families across Illinois provide a temporary placement for children and youth until they can return home. If you are interested in becoming a foster family contact our agency. We will share information about the licensing process and invite you to an orientation meeting to describe what fostering involves and answer any questions you may have. Foster families must be 21 years of age, complete a home study and several trainings provided by the agency. Training topics include child development, safety, guidance and discipline techniques, and the impact of trauma.

Foster caregivers provide safe, secure, and nurturing homes for children who have been separated from their families. We work to find suitable homes for children and youth with caregivers who can provide the appropriate care based on the children's individual needs.

We welcome all prospective foster families that have varied backgrounds and family structures including single parents, child care providers, caregivers with medical backgrounds, empty nesters, teachers, LGBTQA+, families with experience parenting teenagers and caregivers with disabilities.

To learn more about becoming a foster family, please contact [fosterinquiry@brightpoint.org](mailto:fosterinquiry@brightpoint.org).

**Fatherhood**

Our fatherhood initiative brings awareness to the importance of father involvement in the family and to promote community awareness about the importance of fatherhood. Our initiative sparked the agency's commitment to incorporate father engagement as an integral part of our family strengthening efforts. We work with community coalitions and program staff to help fathers increase their parenting skills and build and nurture connections with each other, with the mothers of their children, and with their children. We offer virtual workshops and support groups throughout Illinois. Involving fathers or father figures in early childhood education and care programs leads to child success. When fathers are involved at school, children are more likely to exhibit healthier behavior, participate in extracurricular activities, and have fewer discipline challenges.

For more information about involving fathers or father figures in your early learning program, please call Brightpoint at 800-467-9200, Ext 390.



Strong Families • Thriving Children

### **Mission**

We advance the well-being of children by investing in families to disrupt the multi-generational cycle of racial, social, and economic inequity

### **Vision**

We envision an equitable world where all children and families thrive in strong communities

### **Core Beliefs**

- We believe the most important asset for a child and youth wellbeing is family
- We believe racial and social equity is foundational
- We believe discrimination in all forms influences perceptions of families' strengths and abilities which can lead to actions and interventions ultimately harmful to child and youth wellbeing
- We will replace what we currently think of as child welfare services with what we know to be child, family, and community well-being solutions
- We believe human potential is evenly distributed but opportunity is not
- We believe that social capital, economic mobility and other outcomes vital for children and youth to thrive should not be predicted by race or zip code

### **Where We Serve**

We are in the places where it's proven to be the most effective, at home, in the classroom, and in the community. You will find us across Illinois, serving more than 30,000 children and families each year in 67 counties.

### **Southern Region Brightpoint Programs and Contact Information**

Brightpoint Southern Region has provided services and programs to children and families in the Metro East for over 100 years. The region serves approximately 2,400 families and 6,400 children and adults. The Southern Region of Brightpoint is based in Granite City, and operates additional offices in Alton, Belleville, East St. Louis, and Herrin, Illinois.

#### **Southern Region office and program locations:**

##### **Alton**

#6 Crossroads Ct  
Alton, IL 62002  
618-462-2714

Programs: Intact Family Services, Youth Services, Homeless Youth Services

##### **Belleville**

120 East A St  
Belleville, IL 62220  
618-235-5335

Programs: Adoption Support and Preservation, Extended Family Support Services, Foster Care, Intact Family Services, Redeploy Illinois, Safe & Thriving Families, Youth Services, Homeless Youth Services

##### **East St. Louis**

601 James R Thompson Blvd  
East St. Louis, IL 62001  
618-874-0216

Programs: Adoption Support and Preservation, Adoptions/Licensing, Child Care Assistance Program, Fatherhood, Foster Care, Intact Family Services, Redeploy Illinois, Stronger Beginnings for Families, Youth Services, Homeless Youth Services

##### **Granite City (Regional Office Location)**

2133 Johnson Road  
Granite City, IL 62040  
618-452-8900

Programs: Adoption Support & Preservation, Child Care Assistance Program, Child Care Resource & Referral, Redeploy Illinois, Stronger Beginnings for Families, Youth Services, Homeless Youth Services

##### **Herrin**

109 Lou Ann Dr  
Herrin, IL 62948  
618-988-1330

Programs: Adoption Support and Preservation





### **Child Care Resource & Referral**

A trust-worthy system of support for families, early childhood education and care programs and communities.

**Phone: 800-467-9200, Ext 390**  
**Email: [ccrr@brightpoint.org](mailto:ccrr@brightpoint.org)**

2133 Johnson Road  
Granite City, IL 62040

### **Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)**

Help paying for child care while families look for a job, work or attend school or training. Also for families experiencing homelessness or exiting Intact Family Services.

**Phone: 800-847-6770, Ext 360**  
**Email: [ccap@brightpoint.org](mailto:ccap@brightpoint.org)**

601 James R Thompson Blvd, Bldg. E  
East St Louis, IL 62201  
and  
2133 Johnson Road  
Granite City, IL 62040

**[www.brightpoint.org](http://www.brightpoint.org)**

For additional copies of the Early Childhood Community Resource Guide, please call 800-467-9200, Ext 390

