

# ADDRESS ILLINOIS' EARLY INTERVENTION (EI) CRISIS IN THE FY26 STATE BUDGET

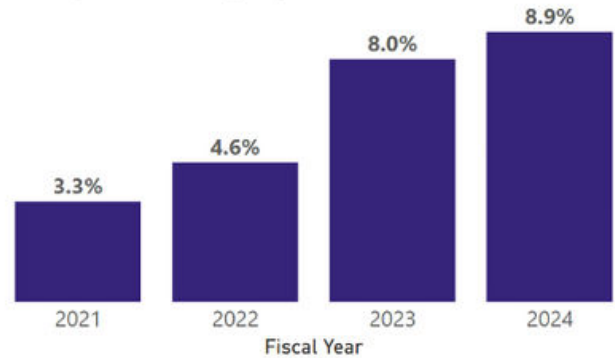
## Increase funding by \$60 million to help eliminate unprecedented waitlists

The Early Intervention (EI) program provides a range of family-centered developmental and social-emotional services to infants and toddlers who have or are at risk for significant developmental delays and disabilities. These critical services improve developmental outcomes for young children, support families to better meet their child's needs, and reduce future educational and health costs to our communities and the state by minimizing the need for special education services. **EI is an entitlement for families** and serves children from all income levels and in every county across the state.

### SERVICE DELAYS ARE HISTORICALLY HIGH AND HAVE NEARLY DOUBLED SINCE FY22

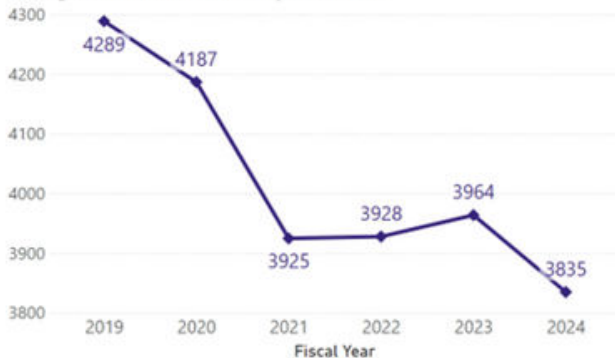
While the EI program's caseload continues to increase, the loss of EI therapists and service coordinators is having a substantial impact on the provision of timely services. **Thousands of families across the state are currently on waiting lists for the EI services they are legally entitled to receive, and the service delay percentage has nearly doubled to historically high levels.**

Average Service Delays by Fiscal Year



### THE EI WORKFORCE IS IN CRISIS

Average Number of Providers by Fiscal Year



Recognizing the urgent need to reduce long waitlists for families and address the continued decline in EI providers, IDHS-DEC commissioned a **cost model study** to understand the cost of delivering EI services. **IDHS-DEC recently released its report, which shows that Illinois must invest \$168M more annually to pay for the full cost of delivering all EI services.** This includes an increase to provider rates by an average of 95% (estimated cost of \$150M annually) to fully cover providers' costs and time, and an increase to Child and Family Connections (CFC) grants by \$18M to account for adequate staffing and minimum salaries for service coordinators. **The cost model report underscores the immense need for investment and massive funding gap in pay for the workforce.**

## BABIES CANNOT WAIT – INCREASE FUNDING AND RAISE PROVIDER REIMBURSEMENT RATES

The Illinois General Assembly has an opportunity to address the EI program's stubbornly high service delays and workforce crisis. **We urge the legislature to increase funding for the EI program by \$60 million in the FY26 budget, allowing IDHS to authorize a substantial rate increase for providers** and get closer to the investment needed to stabilize the program. More therapists will leave Early Intervention entirely without immediate action, causing further harm to infants, toddlers, and their families. **The time to act is now.**



**For more information, please contact:**

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*Data provided by the Illinois Department of Human Services  
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## SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

AARTS Center at Rush University Health System  
Access Living  
Advance Illinois  
American Heart Association  
BCDI Chi-Metro  
Beyond Play LLC  
Carole Robertson Center for Learning  
Chamber of Mothers Chicago  
Child and Family Connections  
Child's Voice  
Clearbrook  
COFI / POWER PAC IL  
Collaboration for Early Childhood, Oak Park, IL  
CU Early  
Early Childhood Consulting  
Early Intervention Research Group at Northwestern University  
Early Intervention Services, Inc.  
Educare  
Erikson Institute  
Esperanza Health Centers  
EverThrive Illinois  
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Illinois  
From U University  
Illinois Action for Children  
Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Illinois Developmental Therapy Association  
Illinois Head Start Association  
Jewish United Fund  
Kids Above All  
Kids Out Loud Pediatric Therapy  
Kids Place Therapy Services  
Latino Policy Forum  
Lawndale Christian Health Center  
Legal Council for Health Justice  
LIFT, Inc.  
Little Sprouts OT for EI  
Metropolitan Family Services  
Mission: Readiness Illinois  
National Louis University  
Pediaprogress  
Peoria County Bright Futures  
Prevent Child Abuse Illinois  
PrimeCare Community Health Center  
ReadyNation Illinois  
Rush University Children's Hospital  
Teach Plus  
The Day Nursery  
The Goddard School North Aurora  
The National Service Office for Nurse-Family Partnership and Child First  
University of Illinois Chicago