




Erwin McEwen, Director

The Future of IL DCFS: Supporting & Strengthening Families

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Reform to Innovation in Illinois

- Build on the Strengths of Previous Administrations
 - Child Welfare Advisory Council (Gordon Johnson)
 - Performance contracting (Jess McDonald)
 - Trauma informed practice (Bryan Samuels)
- Current Focus:
Problem/Resolution Approach 
Strengthening Families Approach (Building Family Capacity)

System Integration in Illinois

- Strengthening Families Illinois established in 2003 with the overarching framework to build:
 1. Parental Resilience
 2. Social Connections
 3. Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
 4. Concrete Support in Times of Need
 5. Social and Emotional Competence of Children
 6. Healthy Parent-Child Relationships
- Trauma Informed Practice Program infused throughout rules, assessments, services plans and case work practice



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Strengthening Families Illinois Convened by IDCFS Since 2003

- Early Childhood
- Child Welfare
- Cross System Change: Embedding Protective Factors
- Parent Leadership



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SFI: Early Childhood

- 8 Early Childhood Learning Networks (Each DCFS Region) / Approx 107 Programs Participating Statewide
- 11,849 Children / 9536 Families Currently Served
- Learning Network Priorities:
 - Embedding practice (Self-assessment, action plan, training, monthly peer to peer support)
 - Collaboration with child welfare
 - Increase / strengthen parent engagement and leadership within programs



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Early Learning and Family Support Workgroup (ELFS)

Internal DCFS Workgroup Since 2004:

- 3 to 5 Years Old – Revenue neutral policy change
- Birth to 3 - EI CAPTA Implementation



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Early Childhood / Child Welfare Collaboration

- SFI Learning Networks
- Head Start Collaborative Agreements
- School Readiness Team
 - All DCFS wards 3 and above in quality early learning programs (Increased number of children of wards and intact families enrolled)
 - Liaisons with early childhood professionals in communities



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Cross System Change: Contributions of Partners to Embedding Protective Factors

- ISBE includes Strengthening Families Illinois as a supplemental service in Preschool for All Prevention Initiative RFP
- DHS / All Our Kids (AOK) Early Childhood Networks add 2 new goals to their strategic plan around parent engagement
- IL Violence Prevention Authority develops new strategic plan with goal of creating peaceful families and raising children to resist violence
- IL Children's Mental Health Partnership FACES workgroup is rolling out an ambitious plan to promote parent leadership regionally.
- Early Childhood Family Engagement Committee developed and working to link collective efforts around family engagement focused on families with young children.
- Ounce of Prevention Fund added the protective factors framework and Strengthening Families Illinois training to support their implementation of a strength-based approach with CPS Prevention Initiative grantee providers.
- Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) has added family as a priority within strategic plan.
- C-4 Parenting Program has included the protective factors in its evidence-based parenting curriculum



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Long Term Vision

- Child welfare – continuously define and refine child welfare so that it becomes more closely aligned to child well-being (Don't always achieve child well-being using best child welfare tools.)
- Broad-based community impact around:
 - school performance
 - school misconduct
 - youth violence
 - community violence
 - family well-being
- Requires all of us!

Leading Change

- Establish a sense of urgency
- Form a powerful guiding coalition
- Create a vision
- Communicate the vision
- Empower others to act on the vision
- Plan for and create short-term wins
- Consolidate improvements
- Institutionalize new approaches

*Kotter, Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail
Harvard Business Review on The Tests of a Leader (2007)*