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Collaboration Institute
2021: YEAR IN REVIEW

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What is the Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute?

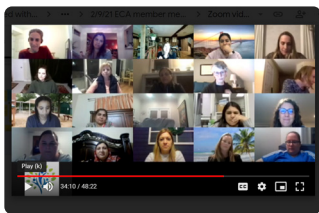
The Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute (PPACI) is a yearlong program of Illinois Action for Children's Community Systems Statewide Supports (CS3) project that provides in-depth support for early childhood collaborations to strengthen their early childhood systems. Launched in January 2019, the project is funded by the Illinois State Board of Education, in partnership with the Governor's Office of Early Childhood.

The Collaboration Institute ensures that communities are working to help children aged birth-through-five—especially those from low-income families or families with multiple needs—enter kindergarten healthy, safe, ready to succeed, and eager to learn. Depending on a collaboration's capacity and readiness to engage in systems-change work, two tracks of targeted supports are offered—Coach-Guided and Process-Guided.

There are two tracks of supports available to collaborations in the Institute:

1. **Coach-Guided Track:** Collaborations will receive 24 hours of coaching and technical assistance in-person or over the phone.
2. **Process-Guided Track:** Collaborations will receive 4 in-person trainings (24 hours) based on the Collaboration Institute framework along with monthly coaching, with 24 hours of coaching for the year. The Collaboration Institute structure and supports are built upon the Community Systems Statewide Supports Framework which includes four core components.
 - a. Community Assessment & Targeted Problem Identification
 - b. Systems Scan & Root Cause Analysis
 - c. Strategy Design
 - d. Implementation & Action Learning

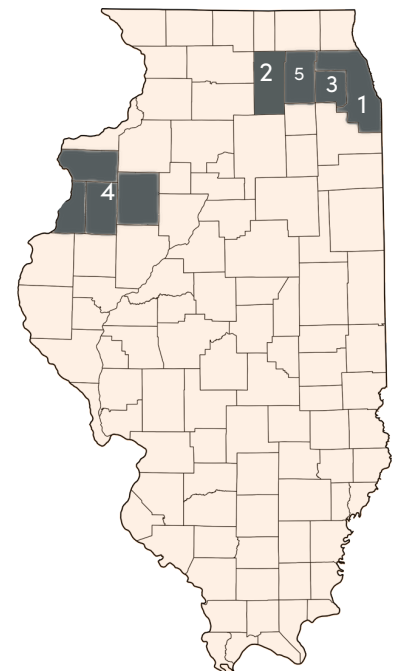
These components draw upon our experience with previous community systems development initiatives such as the Innovation Zones and the ABL Change Framework developed by Drs. Pennie Foster-Fishman and Erin Watson at Michigan State University. Community systems work will be approached with the goal of equitable outcomes for all children and authentic engagement of families and community members in the process.



Let's Talk About Home Visiting



1. Niles Township Early Childhood Alliance
2. DeKalb County Coordinated Intake Collaborative
3. Glenbard Early Childhood Collaborative
4. The Village Early Childhood Collaboration
5. St. Charles Early Learning Partnership



9 July 2021

It has been said that systems change is about shifting the conditions that are holding a problem in place. As a state, as organizations, and as individuals, it is essential that we recognize the persistent problems that result in particular children—most often children of color—getting left behind. Acknowledging how systems were created, and continue to perpetuate inequities, is the first step in creating real and lasting systems change.

Only once we understand the issues we are facing are we then able to act. If we really want to improve outcomes for children and families, particularly those most marginalized, we must partner together across systems, plan strategically alongside those most impacted, and act with urgency and resolve. Systems change work is not for the faint of heart. It is difficult work that requires fierce commitment and significant collaboration. It also requires individuals and organizations to prioritize the community's needs above their own. The Community Systems Statewide Supports team recognized this and intentionally created a framework that engages a diverse collaboration leadership team, rather than a single person. In addition, we were intentional about creating a program that empowers communities to continue this work long after the Collaboration Institute is over.

It has been a profound pleasure watching collaborations and their leadership teams rise to the occasion and tackle tough community issues in innovative ways. I am thankful to everyone who committed themselves so fully to the third cohort of the Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute. Thank you for your time, your tenacity, and your unwavering support for strengthening the Illinois early childhood system. Together, we can change outcomes for children and families.

In Gratitude,

Grace Araya
Director, Community Systems Statewide Supports



Collaboration Strategy

Collaboration / Level of Support	Goal(s) for Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute
<p>DeKalb County Coordinated Intake Collaborative Support Level: Coach-Guided</p>	<p>Initiate a comprehensive partnership and referral initiative to increase the number of families served by HV in DeKalb County.</p> <p>Establish basic norms, roles, decision-making processes, and more to be identified, resulting in a trusting, equitable, accountable, collaborative Leadership Team and full Collaboration, and a written charter used by all.</p>
<p>Niles Township Early Childhood Alliance Support Level: Process-Guided</p>	<p>To conduct a community needs assessment.</p> <p>To identify and secure sustainable funding.</p> <p>To establish a parent council.</p> <p>To improve coordination of existing resources and minimize duplication of services.</p>
<p>Glenbard Early Childhood Collaborative Support Level: Coach-Guided</p>	<p>To develop a cross-sector governance structure, including parent voice, to build the capacity of the group for greater systems change and future impact.</p>
<p>St. Charles Early Learning Partnership Support Level: Coach-Guided</p>	<p>To launch a broad-based listening campaign.</p> <p>To begin developing governance structures.</p>
<p>The Village Early Childhood Collaboration Support Level: Coach-Guided</p>	<p>To gain understanding of how to go about starting a collaboration, including how to conduct meetings, types of topics to discuss in meetings, who to invite to the meetings, and general functioning of an early childhood collaboration.</p>

Community Systems Strategies and Approaches	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilized subcommittees Structured meeting time and agendas strategically Conducted parent focus groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised vision and created mission statement Rotated roles during meetings Started to engage parent voice Strengthened decision-making and full collaboration interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified a target problem by conducting a system scan and root cause analysis Learned strategies for bringing together a group focused on enrollment and intake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched a subcommittee across all programs that hold fully funded seats represented in the meetings Started conversations around strategies and approaches to address under-enrollment in our community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided supports for parents, such as interpreters, to support non-English speaking parents Developed charter to include supports for parents such as transportation and childcare for in-person meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reworked Mission and Vision Identified key Values and Principles that guide the work and build the foundation of GECC's charter Established Parent Advisory Council to help guide all collaboration work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examined current government practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-developed mission and vision statement Developed collaboration Charter and Operating Procedures Developed an agreement with the St Charles CUSD 303 school board for fiscal sponsorship Secured Fox Valley United Way funding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chose stakeholders to establish a core team Used systems thinking and CROAR's Introduction to Systemic Racism as frameworks to approach the work Set agendas for meetings Learned basic structure for starting a collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established structure for collaboration with county chapter meetings Conducted listening campaign Proposed vision and mission statements Built core team and worked to break silos

Niles Township Early Childhood Alliance



The Early Childhood Alliance serves Niles Township, which boasts one of the most diverse populations in Illinois, serving families with linguistic, cultural, economic, and other challenges that have been shown to put children at risk of academic failure. Currently, the Township's population exhibits rates of poverty, foreign-born residents, Limited English Proficiency, unemployment, truancy, and teen births that exceed the state average. The Township prides itself on the economic, linguistic, racial, cultural, and religious diversity of the community.

VISION: All young children and their caregivers have healthy relationships, safe environments, and high-quality learning experiences in order to reach their full potential.

MISSION: To advocate for and coordinate comprehensive community-based supports for young children and their caregivers that promote equity and honor strengths and diversity.

APPROACH

Through training and coaching, the Niles ECA team worked with the Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute to increase their members' understanding and skills in conducting a community needs assessment, writing surveys (including translation), engaging in a systems scan, and data analysis to identify salient community and early childhood system needs. They then learned methods for using their new knowledge and skills to identify a goal, define a target problem, and to develop and implement strategies to redress the problem of under-enrollment in publicly funded programs.

With the support of their coach, the Niles ECA Team worked throughout the spring to develop engagement and facilitation skills to establish trust and a commitment to collaborate amongst the leaders of Early/Head Start and Preschool for All, who lacked a history of working together.



Carolyn Newberry Schwartz, Coach:

"The Niles Early Childhood Alliance team's commitment to early childhood community systems building permeates everything they undertake -- whether it's a needs assessment and data analysis, or convening a new workgroup. They carefully consider ways to foster trust and to honor everyone's perspectives. This team is poised to address systemic barriers to programs confronted by children and families. I enjoyed working with this energizing team!"



RESULTS

As a result of their involvement with the Collaboration Institute, the Niles Township Early Childhood Alliance team engaged in a process that involved conducting a community needs assessment, community scan and engaging in data analysis and identification of root causes. Each one of these activities represents an accomplishment resulting in new skills and knowledge that they have begun to transfer to their full collaboration, and are using to develop their strategies and outcomes.

The ECA team developed and honed their engagement and facilitation skills in order to successfully launch a new workgroup composed of all the leaders of Early/Head Start and Preschool programs in Niles Township. They worked throughout the spring to develop a purpose statement and group agreements to foster and sustain trust amongst the leaders and a commitment to a shared agenda to collaborate on outreach and enrollment strategies. They are now poised to identify & define strategies, related outcomes, and implementation activities.

DeKalb County Coordinated Intake Collaborative



The DeKalb Coordinated Intake Collaborative was created in 2017 to engage families of young children 0-5 in intensive, long-term home visiting services and to do this through a single point of entry to avoid duplication of services and to encourage quick enrollment in services. The collaborative is currently composed of individuals from the Doula program (CH&A), HFI HV program (CH&A), Baby Talk HV program (4-C), DeKalb County Health Department, DCFS, and 4C's-- Community Coordinated Childcare's Child Care Assistance Program.

DeKalb County is in north-central Illinois. According to the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map, 7,202 people out of their total population of about 104,473 were children birth-through-five in 2017.

APPROACH

The DeKalb CI Collaborative applied to be in the PPACI Cohort Three to expand upon their work in Cohort Two. Their goals focused on governance and the development of a comprehensive home visiting referral campaign.

To develop systems change leadership and capacity, Leadership Team members attended the PPACI Governance Workshop Series, which equipped collaborations to develop key components for their own charter documents. Team members regularly examined their own meeting processes to determine what was working (or not) to identify new, creative ways to be thorough, inclusive, and effective.

A comprehensive referral campaign was identified as the centerpiece of the Collaborative's work for the year. This included examining existing ways that referral partners were equipped and learning from families to identify opportunities for stronger messaging and engagement. COVID-19 challenged the team to think strategically and to engage more stakeholders to ensure a consistent pipeline of referrals.



Kim Zalent, Coach:

“The DeKalb Coordinated Intake Collaborative’s Leadership Team is willing to think differently!!! Whether reexamining their vision and mission, engaging with parents, considering how to equip referral partners, or bringing issues to the full collaborative, they are ready to ask hard, generative questions that point to new actions. I’m thrilled to work with them again in Cohort 4 as they implement their comprehensive home visiting referral campaign.”



RESULTS

Given their goals, the Leadership Team and full Collaborative aimed to function at the highest level. Deliberative practice has resulted in stronger processes and comfort in decision-making. Work is now distributed by rotating roles and through short-term, task-oriented work groups. The team is more skilled at identifying critical agenda items for the full Collaboration. A new vision and revamped mission statement are being vetted with parents/stakeholders. The team anticipates the completion of their Charter this year, drawing upon the Governance Workshops.

The ultimate measure of a collaborative's effectiveness is its ability to serve more families. To that end, the Collaborative is poised to initiate its comprehensive home visiting referral campaign in early Fall 2021. The team is most proud of holding three inspiring parent focus groups as preparation for the campaign. Social media, new materials, and a kick-off event are in the works to inspire and equip referral partners.

Going forward, parent engagement efforts will be expanded, and an action learning component, informed by data and an equity lens, will be created to ensure that the campaign reaches the most vulnerable families.

Glenbard Early Childhood Collaborative



The Glenbard Early Childhood Collaborative (GECC) serves families with children age 0-5 within the school district areas of Marquardt D15, Queen Bee 16, Glen Ellyn D41, CCSD 89, Lombard SD 44 located in Glen Ellyn, Lombard, Glendale Heights, and Carol Stream. GECC was created in 2015 when the Cooperative Association for Special Education (CASE) observed need for local home visiting services. No single school district in the area had the capability to apply for and manage a Prevention Initiative grant, so CASE brought together five school districts and applied jointly on their behalf. Currently, their primary efforts revolve around increasing enrollment of children in early learning programs, serving priority populations, and implement collaborative screenings. Their mission is: The Glenbard Early Childhood Collaborative in partnership with the community, works to increase access and awareness to quality learning experiences for all children birth to five and their families; their vision is: Empowering Glenbard children and families to reach their greatest potential.

APPROACH

GECC returned for a second year of the PPACI seeking support to develop a formal governance structure/charter. Although they had been operating successfully without either, they felt that a strong governance structure clearly delineated in a charter would increase the collaborative's future impact. They also believed that including parent voice in the process of creating a charter was extremely important and received supports to that end.



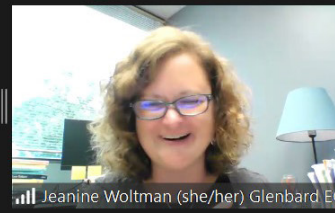
Ruby Flores , Coach:

“GECC undertook some very heavy work in Cohort 3. Creating a governance structure, charter, and Parent Advisory Council is no easy feat, but they believed in the importance of their goals. We appreciated their desire to jump into the work and willingness to persevere during a challenging year. We are happy we had the opportunity to learn and grow together this year!”

Glenbard ECC
 PPA CS3 Cohort 3

Coaches:
 Ruby Flores
 Carolyn Newberry
 Schwartz

- Katy Almendinger, Early Literacy Librarian, Glen Ellyn Public Library
- Mary Furbush, Ed.D., Executive Director, CASE
- Katie McCluskey, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent of Teaching, Learning and Accountability, Glen Ellyn D41
- Nancy Salvador, M.A., M.Ed., Family Engagement Manager, Metropolitan Family Services
- Jeanine Woltman, Glenbard Early Childhood Collaborative Coordinator, CASE



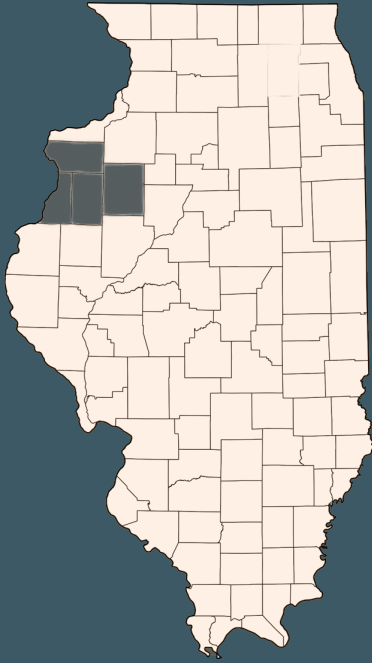
Meeting controls: Mute, Stop Video, Security, Participants (23), Polls, Chat, Share Screen, Pause/Stop Recording, Live Transcript, Reactions, Apps, More. System tray: Search, Taskbar (Edge, File Explorer, Word, Teams, Chrome, Zoom), System icons (Network, Battery, Volume), Time: 11:21 AM 8/11/2021.

RESULTS

GECC is very proud of the work it has done to create a welcoming and culturally responsive space where parents can share their expertise and grow into leaders. They were able to increase parent voice and participation by creating a Parent Advisory Council. The Council, in turn, played an important role in the development of the collaborative's charter, guiding the mission, and vision work.

GECC is in the process of finalizing its charter and will present it to the greater collaborative at its quarterly meeting in September.

The Village Early Childhood Collaboration



The Village Early Childhood Collaboration, formally known as the West Central Early Childhood Collaboration, serves the **Henderson, Knox, Mercer, and Warren Counties**. The Regional Office of Education (ROE) #33 hired staff in 2019 to resume their goal of establishing an early childhood collaboration. The collaboration began holding monthly chapter meetings in each of the counties it serves in 2021. Their working vision is “to create a No Wrong Door system of support and care for children and their families.” Their working purpose is “to bring together community partners to provide support for healthy development of children and their families.”

APPROACH

The Village Early Childhood Collaboration participated in the 2020–21 PPACI to receive support with establishing their relatively young collaboration. Being new to running an early childhood collaboration, its core team members hoped to gain clarity on how to start a new collaboration, in addition to better understanding the general function of an early childhood collaboration. The goal was to start meeting as a collaboration.

On one hand, the Institute’s trainings and learning experiences offered the core team members the opportunity to learn more about systems change and collaboration governance through a racial equity lens. On the other hand, the coaching helped them process and operationalize these lessons to begin making decisions about how to structure their governance.



Janet Vargas, Coach:

It was a pleasure supporting the hardworking members of The Village Early Childhood Collaboration! Their collective passion for supporting early childhood children and their families drives their high work ethic and dedication. They dove head-first into launching the collaboration and steadily continue to foster its growth and impact. I look forward to working with you in the 2021–22 Partner Plan Act Institute (PPACI).



Rhonda Hillyer
Regional Office of Education # 33
Early Childhood Community Services
Coordinator/Prenatal to Age 3
Behavioral Health Consultant

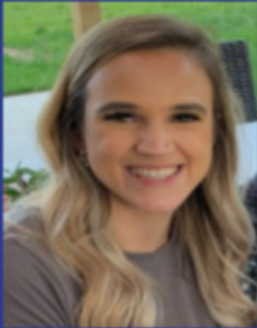


Tara Case
Regional Office of Education #33
Director of Family Services
Prenatal -Age 3/Family Literacy



Mary Reed
West Central Community Services, Inc.
(WCCS) Head Start & Early Head Start
Executive/Head Start Director

Malia Owens
Director Home Child Care Network,
Skip-A-Long Family and Community
Services



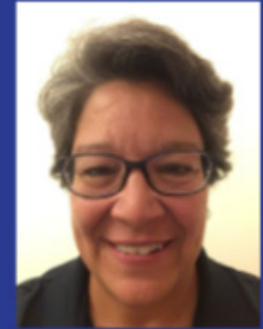
Emily
Regional Office of Education
Assistant Director of Early
Childhood/Preschool Family
Education



Amy Gipe
Regional Office of Education
Prenatal to Age 3 Supervisor
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Warren counties



Amy Fullerton
Regional Office of Education #33
Director of Early Childhood
Serving Henderson, Knox, Mercer and
Warren counties



Lisa Foshay
Family Services Director West Central
Community Services
Head Start/Early Head Start

RESULTS

As with anything worth doing, the collaboration faced some obstacles to getting started. The biggest challenge for the young collaboration was figuring out how to support four counties where school district boundaries and ROE boundaries do not always align. The COVID-19 pandemic also caused potential partners to have a limited bandwidth for beginning new initiatives, including joining the collaboration; recruitment has been slow but gradual.

However, the collaboration overcame these barriers to reach their goals for the Institute and launch their Early Childhood Collaboration. The Village Early Childhood Collaboration began meeting virtually and conducted a listening campaign in all four of the counties that they serve. The core team presented a working draft of their vision and mission statements to the full membership for feedback and are close to approving them. Additionally, the collaboration now has four separate agencies represented on the core team, compared to the two it had at the beginning of the PPACI.

Although the collaboration’s work is just gaining momentum, they already see an impact on the community. Before the collaboration began meeting, organizations and the people who work with early childhood families were working in “silos.” Now, they are coming together to learn about each other and their work.

St. Charles Early Learning Partnership



The St. Charles Early Learning Partnership is a new collaboration that strives to engage community stakeholders to work together as one to assure that all children (prenatal to age 8) and their families – regardless of race, ethnicity, language or income – have access to the resources, services, and education they need so they are healthy and ready to learn. Service area: St. Charles Community Unit School District #303 (City of St. Charles and portions of the surrounding communities).

St Charles SD 303 is located in DuPage and Kane Counties (North-Central Illinois). 2017 Census data indicates: 4,102 total children ages 5 years and under with 380 limited English-speaking households (238 of these Spanish-speaking); 492 children ages 5 and under living at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Only 25% of CUSD 303's kindergartners are judged as ready (KIDS).

APPROACH

The St. Charles Early Learning Partnership began the year with a robust collaboration-building plan that had been developed while in Cohort One, and with the good news that they had received a grant from the Fox Valley United Way.

Their priority was to develop a listening campaign to capture the perspectives of parents and community stakeholders. For the parent survey, the team wanted to learn what parents thought about raising children in the St. Charles area and what might be actionable opportunities for systems change. A well-designed survey, in their view, would be inviting to fill out, able to collect location data to differentiate between city and rural dwellers, and cast a wide—but not too general—net to identify interests, needs, barriers, and perceptions about raising children aged birth-8. This was NOT an easy assignment!

Another collaboration-building priority was governance, and two team members were designated to participate in the CS3 Governance Workshop Series. Further, the team identified systems change leadership and team-building priorities.



Kim Zalent, Coach:

“Go big or go home” continues to be an apt theme for the St. Charles Early Learning Partnership. Just read the results section in this profile. But their commitment to family engagement is what is most striking about this Leadership Team (one member is a parent). Whether designing a parent survey, distributing it across the St. Charles area, or envisioning their upcoming Community Assembly, families come first. Go Team!



RESULTS

The Partnership's Leadership Team was astonished when 800 Parent/Guardian surveys were completed! This response rate was facilitated by hands-on support from the CUSD 303, the St. Charles Public Library, and Family Focus-DuPage. Leadership Team members wrote personal emails and distributed flyers. This outstanding response generated momentum and endorsed the validity of the Partnership's effort.

Next, a community stakeholder survey will be distributed. Later this fall, parents and community stakeholders will be invited to a Community Assembly. This Assembly will feature a data walk, where participants will consider the survey results, share their insights, and identify issue areas for further investigation and action. This will launch the Partnership into the next stage of coalition-building.

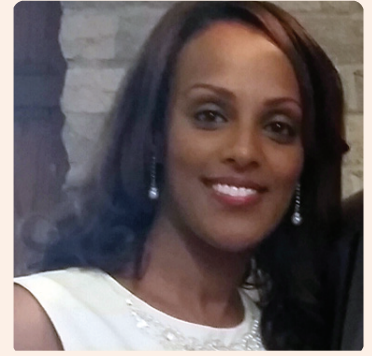
The Partnership also adopted a Leadership Team Charter, a Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement, and updated their vision and mission statements. The team notes that re-visiting the vision and mission helped the group refocus at a critical time last fall. Already an effective team, they have raised their game. With a big year on the horizon, they are poised to make a difference for St. Charles Area families.

Meet The Team

From all of us at CS3, we thank you for your passion and commitment to improving outcomes for children and families in Illinois!



Choua Vue
Vice President of Community Impact
Illinois Action for Children



Grace Araya
Director of Community Systems
Statewide Supports
Illinois Action for Children



Kristina Rogers
Program Manager
Illinois Action for Children



Vanessa Lee
Community Impact Data & Knowledge Manager
Illinois Action for Children



Ruby Flores
Lead Trainer/Coach
Illinois Action for Children



Janet Vargas
Trainer/Coach
Illinois Action for Children



Kristen Garcia
Program Coordinator



Carolyn Newberry Schwartz
Consultant



Chris Foster
Consultant



Trish Rooney
Consultant



Kim Zalent
Consultant
Illinois Action for Children

Congratulations on completing the year!

As you continue on your community systems development journey with your early childhood community collaboration, please remember that Partner Plan Act still has supports to offer you.

On-Demand Consultation

Take advantage of this support when your early childhood community collaboration needs to tackle a specific, short-term issue. A consultant will be matched with your community based on the topic area requested. Up to 24 hours of consultation will be provided over the course of the fiscal year.

On-Demand Consultation topics include:

- Collaboration Skills
- Governance
- Data
- Equity
- Systems Thinking
- Family Engagement
- Quality
- Enrollment
- Coordinated Intake
- Priority Populations
- Collaborative Developmental Screenings
- Birth-3rd Grade/PreK-Kindergarten Transitions
- Chronic Absenteeism.

On-Demand Learning

Take your community systems development learning into your own hands. Through 2022, there will be at least 15 on-demand learning modules, covering various topics including data, systems-thinking, equity, and community engagement strategies.

Currently, there are four courses available that are accessible through your WeConnect account.

1. Early Childhood Collaboration Data Course
2. Shared Intake for Early Childhood Collaborations Course
3. Shared Intake for Early Childhood Collaborations Course
4. Collaborative Developmental Screenings for Early Childhood Collaborations Course
5. Early Childhood Collaboration Parent Engagement Course

learn.actforchildren.org

To learn more about these opportunities and to stay abreast of current trainings offered near you, check out www.PartnerPlanAct.org and make sure you sign up to receive our monthly e-newsletter.



Take Your Collaboration to the Next Level.

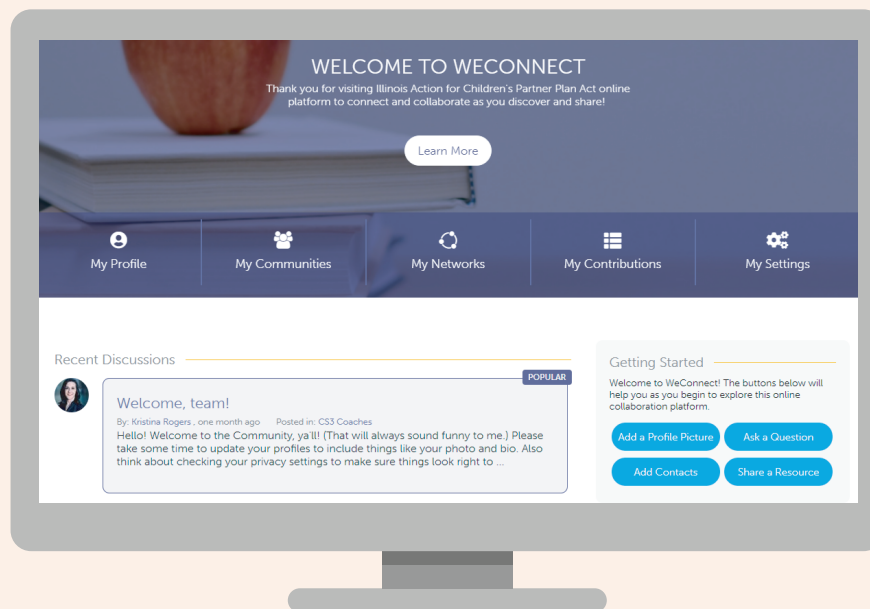
Connect with your members online!

Illinois Action for Children is thrilled to support collaborations through our online collaboration platform, WeConnect! Get ready to take your community systems development work to a whole new level. Once you sign in, you'll have instant access to:

- **Online Communities:** Connect with members of your collaboration and others online.
- **Discussions:** Ask questions and share your knowledge and ideas.
- **Resource Libraries:** Share your documents and find resources you need.
- **Member Directory:** Connect with other collaboration members.

There is strength in numbers. Connect with other collaborations on WeConnect, today!

weconnect.actforchildren.org



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