

CS3 TARGETED SUPPORTS

# 2024

**YEAR IN REVIEW**

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# Greetings

Community systems development is a unique, powerful way of working. It requires that communities first come together and see that current ways of working do not meet the needs of many families and children. The current system is largely inaccessible to children and families who have long been left out—Black and Brown children, children who are immigrants, children living in rural communities, and children whose first language is not English. When caring service providers, parents, child care providers, and community partners come together to recognize that the existing systems do not meet the needs of all families and children, and new ways of working and serving children are required, it creates possibilities for wildly innovative solutions. Community collaborations are doing this reimagining and rebuilding across Illinois.

The CS3 Team has the privilege to support collaborations across the state to envision and implement solutions for the traditional system failures they face. It is truly a pleasure to walk alongside local early childhood collaborations as they apply data to understand and address problems, better engage and center families, and build new ways of working. We strongly believe that collaborations and parents know what the early childhood system should look like in their own communities, and we are thrilled to play a role in making this a reality.

We are grateful to the collaboration members, leaders, and partners who invest their time, resources, expertise, and passion to improve the early childhood system across Illinois.

With care,

**Brittain Ayres**

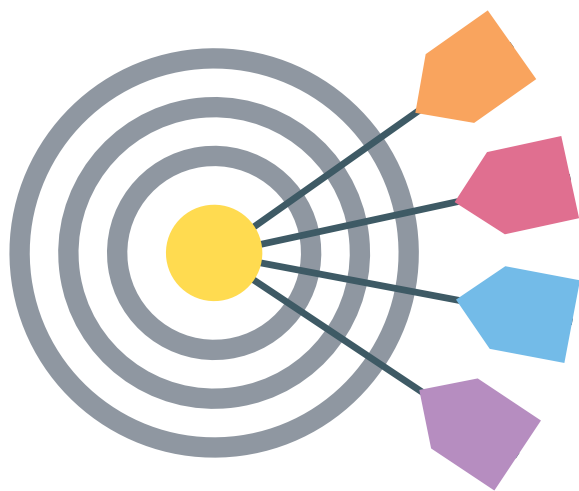
*Director*

*Community Systems Statewide Supports*



# Community Systems Statewide Supports

The CS3 team's goal is to develop a statewide training and technical assistance system that builds the capacity of community collaborations to improve early childhood education systems. We have four goals in doing this work:



**1. Provide Foundational Supports**

**2. Provide Targeted Supports**

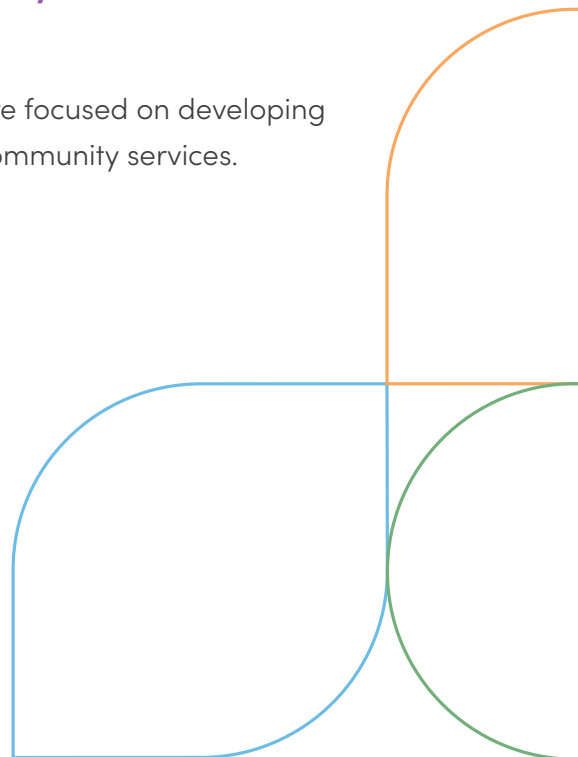
**3. Collaborate & Coordinate with existing statewide providers to align training opportunities across systems**

**4. Implement a data & evaluation process to support continued system improvement at the community and state level**

Our targeted supports are available to a subset of communities that are focused on developing or improving a seamless and coordinated system of early childhood community services.

In 2024, the CS3 targeted supports included:

- Coaching as part of the Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute
- Consultation through On-Demand Consultation
- Data Analysis and Support through a partnership with EduDream
- Implementation support for the Integrated Referral and Intake System (IRIS)



# Early Childhood Collaborations Receiving Targeted Supports in FY24

## Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute

- **ROE26 IRIS Community Collaboration\***  
(Fulton, Hancock, McDonough, Schuyler counties)
- **Northwest Illinois Consortium\***  
(Jo Daviess, Stephenson, Carroll counties)

## On-Demand Consultation

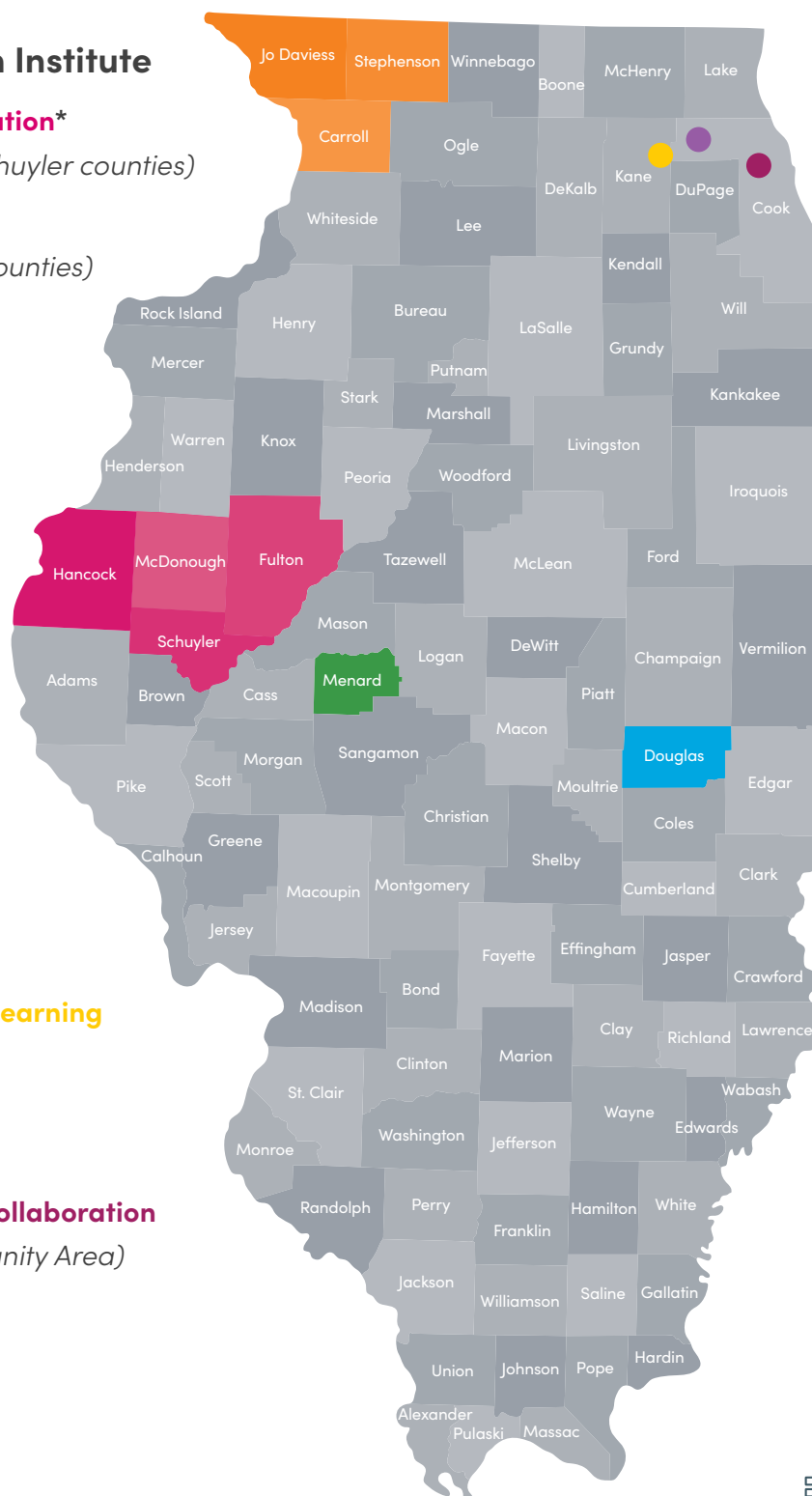
- **Arcola Community and Economic Development\***  
(Douglas County)
- **Menard County Family Collaborative\***  
(Menard County)
- **West40 Cook**  
(West Cook County)

## EduDream

- **West40 Cook**  
(West Cook County)
- **Enriching Partnerships for Early Learning**  
(School district U-46)

## IRIS Implementation Support

- **North Lawndale Early Learning Collaboration**  
(North Lawndale Chicago Community Area)



\*Coaching support

# Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute (PPACI)

The Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute (PPACI) is a yearlong cohort of Illinois Action for Children's (IAFC) Community Systems Statewide Supports (CS3) project that provides in-depth support for early childhood collaborations to strengthen their early childhood systems.

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 available.

1. **Coach-Guided** Collaborations receive a minimum 24 hours of coaching and technical assistance in-person or over the phone.
2. **Process-Guided** Collaborations receive four trainings based on the Collaboration Institute framework along with monthly coaching, with a minimum of 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 with Targeted Problem
  - 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 ABLe Change Framework developed by Drs. Pennie Foster-Fishman and Erin Watson at Michigan State University. Community systems work is approached with the goal of equitable outcomes for all children and authentic engagement of families and community members in the process.





### ROE26 IRIS Community Collaboration (coaching support)

#### Community Overview

McDonough, Fulton, Schuyler, and Hancock Counties. ROE26 IRIS Community Collaboration began in January 2023. The region comprises mostly rural communities experiencing several issues, such as poverty, hunger, and unemployment. Geographically, the counties are dispersed with a high need for family resources.

#### Mission and Values

Their current mission is to provide the ROE26 region with a streamlined referral and intake process supporting social service agencies to connect community members to resources while increasing enrollment and retention. Their vision is that everyone benefits from a healthy thriving, well-connected community valuing all citizens. A centralized and coordinated referral system like IRIS can help eliminate barriers preventing families from engaging with the services available to them.

#### Approach

ROE26 IRIS Community Collaboration participated in the coach-guided track of the Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute (PPACI) to streamline their intake and referral process for programs and social services serving their community. Additionally, as a new collaboration they wanted guidance on fostering community collaboration and utilizing community data to create SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) goals their collaboration can use to address areas of concern.

### Northwest Illinois Consortium (coaching support)

#### Community Overview

The Northwest Illinois Early Childhood Consortium collaboration covers three counties of Northwest Illinois: Carroll, Jo Daviess and Stephenson. The counties are composed of mostly rural communities who have a lack of access to childcare providers and available slots.

#### Mission and Values

We have brought together people from early childhood education in all three counties to discuss ways to improve early childhood education and set goals for long-term and short-term wins.

#### Approach

A newer collaboration, the Consortium participated in the coach-guided track, looking to build a group of stakeholders as they go. The goal for their work with the Institute was twofold: to identify community needs through learning about about gaps in services, and to receive support in creating a successful collaboration dedicated to learning.



# On-Demand Consultation

Early childhood community collaborations can request short-term support on a specific issue and receive up to 20 hours of consultation to address it. Consultants bring their technical expertise to offer advice and solutions. On-demand consultation is available year-round.



## 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

## Collaboration Profiles

### Arcola Community and Economic Development

#### *Topic Area: Governance*

Arcola Community and Economic Development reached out for assistance with strengthening their organization. They received 20 hours of direct support from a CS3 consultant.

### Menard County Family Collaborative

#### *Topic Area: Family Engagement*

The Menard County Family Collaborative applied for assistance with best practices for family engagement for their collaboration. They received five hours of support from Janet Vargas, CS3 Family Engagement Strategy Coach.

### West40 Cook

#### *Topic Area: Data*

The West40 area of Cook County requested assistance with performing a qualitative assessment of community needs. They received one hour of support from Hannah Miro, Data and Knowledge Manager, and were referred to our EduDream support for further assistance.



# EduDream Research Support

CS3 collaborated with EduDream to provide research and data analysis support to early childhood community collaborations. EduDream is a Latina-founded, woman-owned, research consulting firm inspiring transformation within education by bringing community voice and rigorous research together. The research and analysis support may include conducting landscape analyses of early childhood services, collecting secondary data, conducting trend analysis, developing data insights, and qualitative research and analysis.

## FY24 Collaboration Profiles

### West Cook County

#### Background

West40 serves students and families in West Cook County, Illinois through in-school advocacy programs and Safe Schools, providing children with the resources and attention they need to thrive. West40 was created by Illinois statute. Its core services are funded both by the State of Illinois and by the school districts served. West40 works with 38 school districts helping to make early childhood education more equitable and high-quality.

#### Project Goals

EduDream provided data analysis support to West40 with a focus on the disaggregated community data.

1. Identify, gather, and analyze publicly available and disaggregated data on a range of demographic and socioeconomic indicators for priority community/school districts in West Cook County
2. Develop a slide deck of key data insights for West40 to make the case for investment in early childhood education in West Cook County

### Elgin Partnerships for Early Learning (EPEL)

#### Background

EPEL engages families, organizations, early childhood workforce, and health-care providers dedicated to creating a collaborative community wide system of support for every young child to succeed in school and life.

Their long-term vision is for young children and their families in the Greater Elgin Area have equitable opportunities to thrive.

#### Project Goals

1. Develop a data strategy to help EPEL gain clarity on the collaborative's intended outcomes
2. Develop a measurement framework to document indicators and enable impact measurement over time, with a focus on equity

# IRIS Implementation Support

The University of Kansas Center for Research, Inc. (KUCR) provided leadership team development and implementation and technical assistance to communities to implement the Integrated Referral & Intake System (IRIS), a collaboration tool that supports community referrals.

## North Lawndale Early Learning Collaboration

The North Lawndale Early Learning Collaboration (NLELC) aims to have an integrated referral system across the community to better serve families and have a “no wrong door” approach to connect families to the appropriate resource. The hope is that North Lawndale will have a robust referral and recruitment network so that organizations can truly collaborate and partner with each other. NLELC worked to build community partnerships and technical skills to implement IRIS. This included bringing in new referral partners and providing training so that communication between community service providers improved. This resulted in community resources becoming more accessible and families and children having the power to choose the services they receive; having warm handoffs between providers; and simplifying eligibility and intake procedures.



Special thanks to



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