

CS3 TARGETED SUPPORTS

2025

YEAR IN REVIEW

# Table of Contents

3	Greetings from the Director
4	Community Systems Statewide Supports
5	Early Childhood Collaborations that Received Targeted Supports in FY25
6	Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute (PPACI)
7	FY25 PPACI Collaboration Profiles
8	On-Demand Consultation <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On-Demand Consultation Collaboration Profiles</li></ul>
9	EduDream Research Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collaboration Highlights from the EduDream Support</li></ul>
11	Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI) Parent Leadership Pilot

# Greetings

Community systems development is a unique, powerful way of working. It requires that communities first come together and understand why the current ways of working do not meet the needs of many families and children. The existing early childhood 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 think up and implement solutions to the traditional system failures they face. It is truly a pleasure to walk alongside local early childhood collaborations as they work to use 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 that 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 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 and improving a seamless and coordinated system of early childhood community services. In fiscal year 2025, the CS3 targeted supports included:

- Coaching through the Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute
- On-Demand Consultation
- Data Analysis and Support through our partnership with EduDream
- Parent Leadership Pilot with Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI)

# Early Childhood Collaborations that Received Targeted Supports in FY25

## Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute

- **DuPage All Our Kids Early Childhood Collaboration**  
(DuPage County)
- **The Village Early Childhood Collaboration**  
(Henderson, Knox, Mercer, and Warren Counties)
- **Willowbrook Corner Coalition**  
(Willowbrook Community)

## On-Demand Consultation

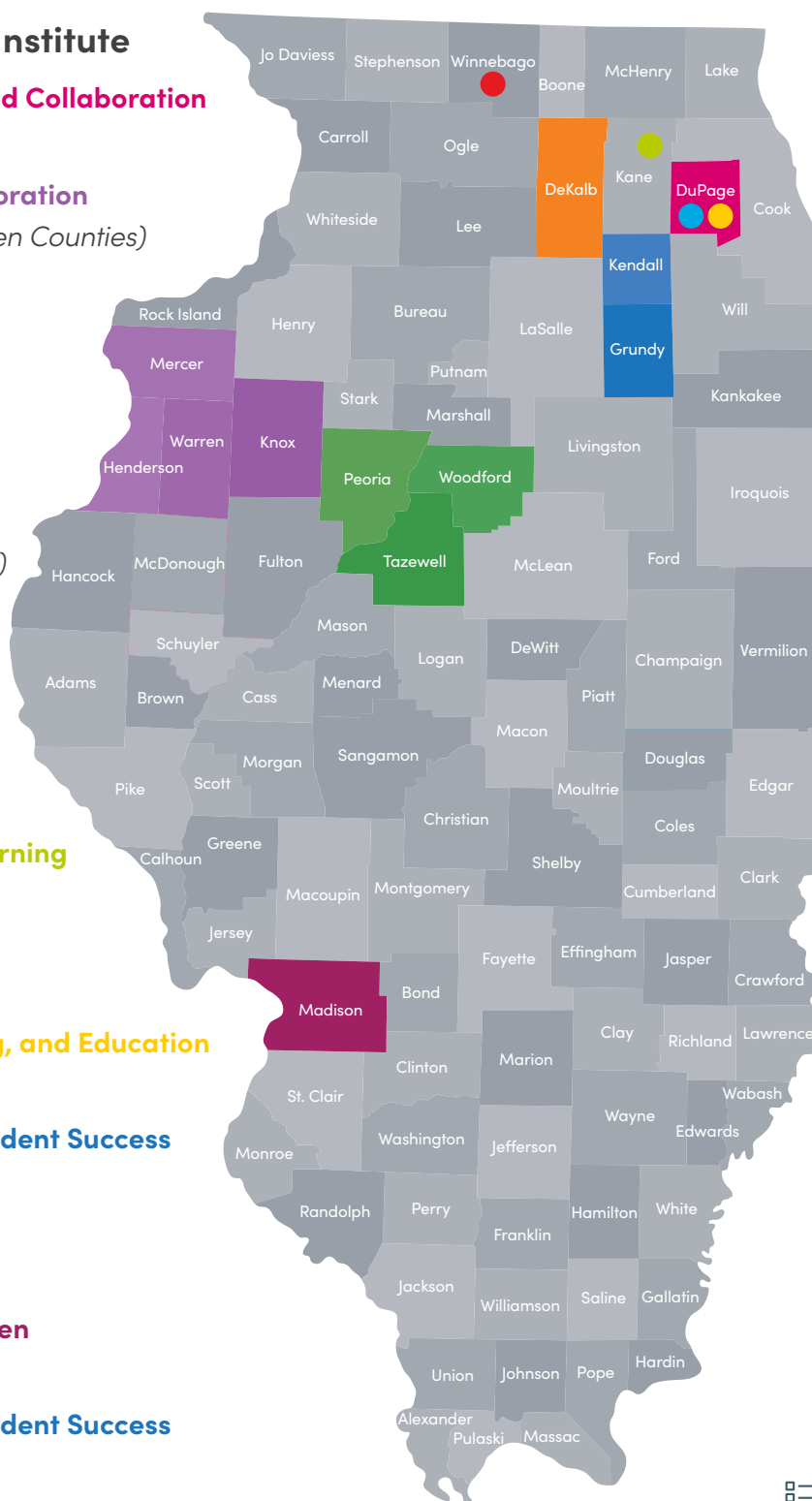
- **Early Childhood Collaboration of Central Illinois**  
(Tazewell, Woodford, Peoria Counties)
- **DeKalb County Collaborative for Young Children**  
(DeKalb County)
- **Alignment Rockford**  
(Rockford)
- **Enriching Partnership for Early Learning**  
(School district U-46)

## EduDream

- **Addison Partners for Play, Learning, and Education**  
(Addison)
- **Plano Area Alliance Supporting Student Success**  
(Grundy and Kendall Counties)

## COFI Parent Leadership Pilot

- **Madison County Alliance for Children**  
(Madison County)
- **Plano Area Alliance Supporting Student Success**  
(Grundy and Kendall Counties)



# Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute (PPACI)

The Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute (PPACI) is a yearlong project for local early childhood collaborations in Illinois. Led by the Community Systems Statewide Supports (CS3) team at Illinois Action for Children, the Collaboration Institute is designed to help collaborations increase reach and impact in their early childhood systems by using a community systems development approach.

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 of 24 hours of coaching and technical assistance in-person or virtually.
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 five core components:
  - a. Community Assessment & Targeted Problem Identification
  - b. Equity
  - c. Root Cause Analysis & System Scan
  - d. Strategy Design
  - e. 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.





### Willowbrook Corner Coalition

During their time in the Partner Plan Act Institute, the Willowbrook Corner Coalition made significant strides in strengthening their collaborative efforts in the Early Childhood space. They reported gaining valuable skills like incorporating community and partner voices into their coalition structure and bylaws. Doing so enhanced clarity and inclusivity in their decision-making processes.

Through intentional efforts, they developed and implemented surveys to better understand the diverse needs and perspectives of partners and caregivers. This feedback informed shifts in strategy and structure, allowing them to respond in real time based on what was and wasn't working in their community.

Through the Institute, they increased engagement and connection with Birth-to-Five caregivers using community-focused surveys. They maintained a clear focus on using shared goals to guide their collaborative work and deepen their impact. The Willowbrook Coalition extends heartfelt appreciation to their coach, whose thought partnership, encouragement, and support were instrumental to their success.

### DuPage All Our Kids Early Childhood Collaboration

DuPage AOK Early Childhood Collaboration joined the Partner Plan Act Institute with a goal to successfully plan and launch at least one Community of Practice (CoP) for Parent Leaders. They received key supports from their coaches, such as guidance on communicating their vision effectively to stakeholders, receiving constructive feedback, and breaking down their framework into actionable steps for their county. These tools helped the team move from concept to implementation with clarity and confidence.

The CoP is intended to serve as a dedicated space where Parent Leaders can come together and share best practices for their work. This marks a pivotal step toward solidifying their long-term vision for more inclusive and collaborative early childhood systems in DuPage County. The Collaboration worked intentionally with Parent Ambassadors, supporting their leadership development.

The collaboration team made strong progress and built momentum for continued impact. Their official CoP launch meeting took place in June 2025.

### The Village Early Childhood Collaboration

Returning for a third time, The Village Early Childhood Collaboration made family engagement the focus of their work. In partnership with their coach, they were able to explore and articulate their beliefs around family engagement and how to utilize it. The coach's feedback was integral in shaping their discussion, thanks to intentional questions and consistency. They achieved their goal of developing a better understanding of family engagement and identified potential barriers to incorporating it in their community. They began developing an official Family Engagement Statement and are in the process of finalizing it. Additionally, they plan to develop a community education plan to continue advancing their early childhood goals.

# On-Demand Consultation

Early childhood community collaborations can request 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 can 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 Consultation Collaboration Profiles

Collaboration	What they hoped to get out of the process	What they accomplished	What's next?
<b>Enriching Partnerships for Early Learning (EPEL)</b>	To bring the collaboration and school district early learners' family engagement teams together to develop a unified plan for engagement	Two coaching sessions	Participate in cohort 8 of the Partner Plan Act Collaboration Institute to create a unified engagement plan with goals, measures, and intended outcomes
<b>DeKalb County Collaborative for Young Children (DCCYC)</b>	To develop a strategic plan using a more accessible format the collaborative members	A completely reworked strategic plan with new goals and objectives that better serves the collaborative	Reorganizing partner committees and establishing workplans for each committee to support the collaborative's work
<b>Alignment Rockford</b>	Support early care and education providers to learn about fiscal sustainability and build relationships and trust amongst each other	Boosting ECE providers with helpful information and developing a network opportunity for the future	Developing early childhood councils across the county

Note: The Early Childhood Collaboration of Central Illinois received consultation on fiscal sustainability but the collaboration dissolved before completing the evaluation



# EduDream Research Support

The CS3 team partners 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, or qualitative research and analysis.

## Collaboration Highlights from the EduDream Support



### Addison Partners for Play, Learning, and Education (APPLE)

APPLE collaborated with EduDream to deepen their understanding of the early childhood landscape in their community. With EduDream's expertise and step-by-step guidance, the partnership successfully navigated research and data analysis process, with a focus on home visiting, developmental screenings, and kindergarten readiness.

EduDream was able to provide critical support collecting and analyzing key data to help identify key challenges. They found that many early childhood organizations in the area lacked capacity to provide accurate and confirmed data, most often due to limited staffing and infrastructure. The team gained valuable insights into the consistency of Addison's early childhood services in comparison to DuPage County and Illinois.

A major outcome of this work was a clearer picture of the number of children in Addison receiving home visiting and developmental screening services—information that is essential for planning future outreach and service expansion. Although the group faced obstacles in accessing kindergarten readiness data from the local school district, they are still committed to pursuing sharing data to better understand the connection between early childhood programming and later, educational outcomes. This research partnership not only built a stronger foundation of local data but also highlighted the ongoing need for data capacity building across early childhood organizations in the region.

Collaboration Highlights from the EduDream Support continued on next page

## Plano Area Alliance Supporting Student Success (PAASSS)

Through EduDream's research support, PAASSS made significant strides in understanding and addressing early childhood education (ECE) challenges across their region. EduDream provided valuable support by compiling and analyzing data to answer the collaboration's questions. Key research questions about their region inquired about service accessibility, family engagement, kindergarten readiness, and the quality of ECE programs in the area.

The team is anticipating presenting their findings to the full collaboration. The support helped craft a compelling data story and reveal important insights on readiness in the region. The data analysis revealed critical insights: Only 20% of children in the Plano region are ready for kindergarten across all measured areas and there is a large gap in high-quality ECE programming. The research process helped the group overcome their data challenges, enabling them to tell a compelling region-specific story. A key achievement was compiling their data into a one-page deliverable and learning session that will be provided to the community.

Looking ahead, PAASSS will update their strategic plan informed by their data and continue community conversations. These tools will help further their goal of increasing the number of children ready for kindergarten in their region.



# Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI) Parent Leadership Pilot

The goal of the COFI Parent Leadership Pilot was to assist local early childhood collaborations in using COFI's unique leadership development and organizing model to embed family leadership to embed family leadership in their work.

COFI's mission is to build the power and voice of parents, primarily mothers and grandmothers from Black and Brown communities, to shape the public decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their families. The COFI Way model is taught over three comprehensive phases, developing leaders and helping parents build organizations that make a real difference in the community. The pilot aims to support local collaboration members as they gain hands-on experience and work through Phase 1: Self, Family & Team + Team Building.



## Madison County Alliance for Children

The Madison County Alliance for Children was not sure how this opportunity would be received by the collaboration, but parents and families were eager to engage with the support. The collaboration established a group of seven parent leaders showing ownership in setting and pursuing goals for their group and community. Their proudest accomplishment is achieving their goal of having parent voices at the decision table. The parent leaders have successfully completed their training and demonstrated a strong commitment to their goals and improving early childhood in their community. They will continue getting involved in FY26 by attending collaboration meetings.

Looking ahead, they hope to either get their current COFI parents trained on Phase 1 or to be trained on Phase 2 for themselves to grow and develop their parent leaders. The parent leaders who participated in the FY25 Parent Leadership Pilot will begin attending collaboration meetings in FY26. Madison County Alliance for Children will continue to receive support from the CS3 team as part of the Collaboration Institute.

COFI Parent Leadership Pilot continued on next page

## Plano Area Alliance Supporting Student Success (PAASSS)

PAASSS entered the Parent Leadership Pilot with their goal of empowering families to become advocates for themselves, their children, and their community. PAASSS experienced an inspiring transformation crediting the support of skilled facilitators, praising their positivity and preparation.

The pilot led to the successful creation of a family council, formally named Plano Families with Vision. Additionally, they created collective commitments, a mission, vision, and values, met with the library and YMCA leadership for summer event planning, and are continuing to develop as a team. Every member has taken on a leadership role and is actively involved in shaping PAASSS's strategic goals and ensuring family voice is embedded in all efforts going forward. The team at PAASSS reported the emotional energy, initiative, and enthusiasm of both participants and facilitators made for an amazing experience.

Looking to the future, PAASSS hopes to provide COFI Phase 2 and 3 training to continuing strengthening this cohort of leaders.



Special thanks to



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