

ILLINOIS JOINT COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES, ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES REGION V

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES, BUREAU OF CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT, HEAD START COLLABORATION & PROGRAMS UNIT

ILLINOIS HEAD START ASSOCIATION

I. PURPOSE AND TARGET POPULATION

The Purpose of this Agreement is to enhance working relationships and foster collaborative strategies that promote program performance and outcomes for and support children, families and communities in the State of Illinois.

The Parties participating in this Agreement reaffirm their support for comprehensive coordinated planning and implementation of culturally and linguistically appropriate services to the Target Population – Illinois children, families and communities, particularly families who are involved with the child welfare services system, especially those families whose children are either at risk of or involved in child abuse or neglect or are in foster care. This Agreement is intended to not only build upon the collaborative linkages among the Parties, but also to establish strategies that promote cooperative agreements at the local level.

This Agreement specifies Goals, Objectives, and Tasks of the Parties and their local offices/programs related to coordinated efforts and services. This Agreement is not intended to supercede or delegate any of the legal requirements or responsibilities of the Parties or of their local offices/programs, but rather to enhance their collaborations in performing their respective roles and responsibilities.

II. PARTIES

This is a joint cooperative agreement among the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families Region V (ACF), the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (IDCFS), the Illinois Department of Human Services Bureau of Child Care & Development's Head Start Collaboration & Programs Unit (IDHS), and the Illinois Head Start Association (IHSA). The provisions of the Agreement extend to the staff of these Parties as well as to Early and Head Start grantees and delegate agencies, to the extent that the Parties have control over, or may direct, such staff and local programs' actions.

III. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANT ENACTMENTS

The ACF administers many programs, including child welfare and Early/Head Start. Child welfare funding in Illinois is granted to the IDCFS, the state child welfare agency charged with child protection and family preservation. The IDCFS mission for protecting children includes providing for the well-being of IDCFS children, providing appropriate permanent families, supporting early intervention and child abuse prevention, and working in partnership with communities.

Early Head Start and Head Start funding is granted from ACF to local Illinois agencies, including community action agencies, city and county governments, school districts, single and multi-purpose non-profit organizations, a university, a child welfare agency, local mental health/human service agencies and a local health department. Early/Head Start is a comprehensive child development program serving low income pregnant women and families with children birth through age five (5). Early/Head Start is a child focused and family centered program.

The IDHS Bureau of Child Care and Development Head Start Collaboration and Programs Unit is partly funded by an ACF Head Start State Collaboration project grant. The purpose of this project is to enhance the capacity of Early/Head Start and other early childhood programs to improve outcomes and opportunities for young children through programs and systems building initiatives in several priority areas, including health, welfare and community service activities.

The IHSA is the statewide membership organization of Early/Head Start service providers committed to enhancing the development of children, empowering families and strengthening communities. The IHSA is organized to be a unified voice around Early/Head Start issues.

The responsibilities and roles of the Parties delineated in this Agreement are set forth in the following federal and state statutes, rules and regulations.

- A. 42 USC 9801 & 9831, et. seq., Head Start Act; 45CFR Parts 1304, 1305, & 1308
- B. The Act Creating the Department of Children and Family Services
- C. The Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act and related Acts
- D. The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003, related Federal Acts and the implementing regulations
- E. Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Federal Social Security Act, related portions of the Federal Social Security Act, related Federal Acts and the implementing regulations
- F. The Indian Child Welfare Act, P.L. 95-608, 25 U.S.C. Chapter 21

IV. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All Parties understand they have a role in and a responsibility to child welfare in Illinois and that the stated Purposes, Goals and Objectives of this Agreement can best be

achieved through coordinated federal, state, and local level efforts. Given this, the Parties agree to cooperate by initiating and enhancing: collaborative planning, communication, information collection and sharing, local level service implementation and priorities, and training and technical assistance.

V. SCOPE OF THE AGREEMENT; GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A. Scope of the Agreement

The Parties understand that all activities and information sharing resulting from implementation of this Agreement will be used to assist Early/Head Start programs and IDCFS local/field offices to more capably carry out their missions and meet their goals. The Parties will encourage local Early/Head Start program and IDCFS field office partnerships to develop collaborative strategies involving the community in order to improve program performance and outcomes for children, families and communities.

B. Goals and Objectives of the Agreement

1. Planning and Communication

a. Goal

To maintain regular lines of communication, plan, and share relevant information at the state and local levels in order to positively impact the quality of services for the Target Population.

b. Objectives and Tasks

- i. The Parties will meet at least twice annually to share information regarding their respective programs including, but not limited to: funding levels and processes, changes in law or regulation, service/enrollment numbers and expansion plans. The purpose of this communication will be to coordinate and minimize duplication of activities and functions.
- ii. The Parties will develop an annual work plan at one of these meetings to include expected specific results, accomplishment, timeframes and targets for goals and objectives within this Agreement. The Parties will address progress on this plan and the effectiveness of this Agreement at these meetings.
- iii. The Parties will add one another to their mailing and email lists and distribute informational mailings and newsletters to each other, as appropriate.
- iv. The Parties will disseminate this Agreement to all local programs and offices and will provide collaborative training on this Agreement and on establishing local level Agreements.
- v. The Parties will encourage their local programs and offices to establish local level Agreements and to develop and implement regular communication and planning strategies.

2. Information Collection and Dissemination

a. Goal

To collect information from local providers and offices about the Target Population and disseminate it to appropriate funding sources and administrators in order to enhance the Parties' collaboration and service levels.

b. Objectives and Tasks

- i. The Parties will use the first annual meeting to determine what types of information are needed and useful. This information may include, but not necessarily be limited to: numbers of IDCFS children being served in Early/Head Start programs, numbers of Early/Head Start programs with active representation on the IDCFS Local Area Networks (LANs), numbers of Early/Head Start programs that prioritize IDCFS children in their selection criteria, numbers and types of mandated reporter and other training provided annually by IDCFS to Early/Head Start programs, etc.
- ii. In addition to determining what information will be collected, the Parties will determine who will collect the information and how it will be stored.
- iii. The Parties will develop an information dissemination strategy based on the types of information collected and its use.
- iv. The information collection and dissemination strategies will be part of the Parties' annual plan.
- v. All information collection and dissemination will follow all applicable confidentiality laws and regulations.

3. Local Service Provision

a. Goal

To encourage and enhance collaboration among the local level agencies of the Parties in order to improve service delivery to target families.

b. Objectives and Tasks

- i. The local offices/agencies of the Parties will meet and plan together regularly, at least twice annually, to ensure achievement of all legislative and regulatory responsibilities related to the target population. Planning should include, but does not need to be limited to, ensuring appropriate policies and procedures regarding mandated reporter status, training on prevention and identification of child abuse and neglect, services offered by participating agencies, casework coordination, and collaborative opportunities between the DCFS local offices and the Early/Head Start programs.
- ii. Early and Head Start programs will include DCFS involved children as a priority in their enrollment selection criteria.

- iii. The local offices/agencies of the Parties will coordinate their professional development activities, as possible and appropriate, including sharing training calendars.
- iv. The local offices/agencies of the Parties will identify local collaborative successes and outcomes and provide this information to the IDHS Head Start Collaboration & Programs Unit for use and dissemination by the Parties.
- v. Local Early/Head Start programs will involve the local DCFS offices in their Community Assessment process.

4. Training and Technical Assistance

a. Goal

To collaborate on training and technical assistance activities in order to improve and avoid duplication of services to the target population of this Agreement.

b. Objectives and Tasks

- i. The Parties will identify mutual professional development needs by sharing them at the regular meetings and will facilitate training and technical assistance activities to meet the needs.
- ii. The Parties will provide joint training in a variety of ways, via tele- and video-net, conferences, and written materials to local offices/agencies on the implementation of this Agreement and other topics as identified and included in the annual plan.
- iii. The Parties will keep one another informed of efforts and outcomes related to training and technical assistance provided to local offices/agencies as well as to the entire network.

VI. EVALUATION

The Parties will develop evaluation criteria, including outcomes, and an evaluation process for this Agreement and evaluate its implementation. The Parties will complete a Summary Report of the implementation of the Agreement and use it to guide completion of Objectives and Tasks.

VII. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

A. Effective Date

This Agreement will become effective upon the signatures of the persons holding the positions of ACF Regional Administrator, Region V; Director, IDCFS; Secretary, IDHS; and, President, IHSA. These signatures make the Agreement binding, even in the case of a change in the persons in the signatory positions.

B. Term of the Agreement and Amendments

This Agreement will be reviewed annually. The Agreement may be amended through the following procedures. Any proposed amendment or modification will be

submitted to the other Parties at least thirty (30) days prior to formal discussion or negotiation on the issue. All signatories or their duly authorized representatives must concur on any amendments.

C. Confidentiality

Each Party will protect the rights of children and families with respect to records and reports as created, maintained, and used by public institutions within the state. It is the intent of this Agreement to ensure that all Parties and their staff will adhere to all applicable privacy and confidentiality laws, statutes, rules and regulations.

VIII. NOTICE

Any notices made pursuant to this Agreement shall be sent to the persons holding the titles as set forth on the signature lines below at their office locations.

IX. SIGNATURES

It is our belief that the Illinois child welfare and Early/Head Start communities can forge effective partnerships to achieve the Goals and implement this Agreement. We will inform our respective partners about this Cooperative Agreement and agree to distribute it.

In witness whereof, the Parties hereto have duly executed this Agreement as of the date and year signed.

Bryan Samuels, Director
Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

Date

Carol L. Adams, Ph.D., Secretary
Illinois Department of Human Services

Date

Terri K. Lawrence, President
Illinois Head Start Association

Date

Joyce A. Thomas, Regional Administrator
Region V
Administration for Children and Families

Date