



2025 Impact Report

S·A·L COMMUNITY
SERVICES

Child Care Connection of Central Illinois

Strengthening Families, Providers, and Communities

CCR&R

Representing 16 Local Agencies Across Illinois

Child Care Resource and Referral System

A Message from Our Director

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At Child Care Connection, we are proud to serve as a trusted resource across Central Illinois, working to ensure that families have access to affordable, high-quality early care and education. Each year brings new opportunities to deepen our impact, and we are honored to share the ways we have worked to support children, families, and providers across our nine-county region.

This fiscal year, July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, we enhanced our core services to better meet the needs of families and providers. Our Child Care Referral program now offers enhanced referrals using current vacancy data, helping caretakers connect more efficiently to available care that meets their needs. For early educators, we expanded professional development with Quality Cohort Grants, CPR/First Aid support, and CDA Consultations. We continue to offer training opportunities in-person, virtually, and in hybrid to meet providers where they are and make professional growth more accessible. Additionally, we have supported new providers in understanding health and safety standards, pursuing licensing, and navigating higher education and workforce development opportunities.

This year has also brought its share of challenges. Level federal funding paired with rising operations costs, increased expenses, and staff turnover tested our resilience. Like many in the early childhood field, we felt the weight of doing more with limited resources. Yet, through it all, we remained steady. We are now moving from survival into a season of rebuilding and thriving, welcoming new team members, reenergizing our workplace culture, and reaffirming our commitment to innovation and service excellence. With continued collaboration and support, we look forward to what is ahead.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda Lee Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Brenda Lee Smith, M.Ed.





The Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) system in Illinois is made up of sixteen community-based organizations funded to provide services and supports to families, providers, and communities across all 102 counties.

As one of these sixteen centers, SAL Child Care Connection of Central Illinois focuses on providing these critical services to nine counties in Central Illinois - Bureau, Fulton, LaSalle, Marshall, Peoria, Putnam, Stark, Tazewell, and Woodford.

Mission

SAL Child Care Connection of Central Illinois is committed to strengthening and supporting the child care system so that families have access to affordable, quality care and education.



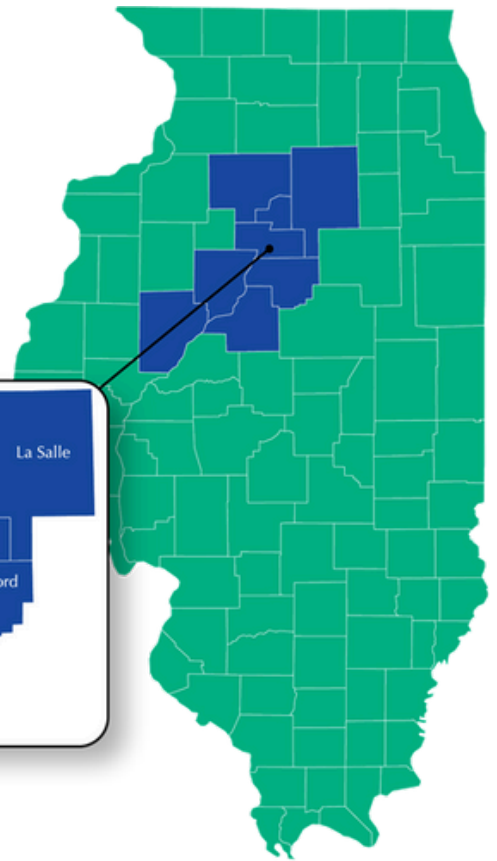
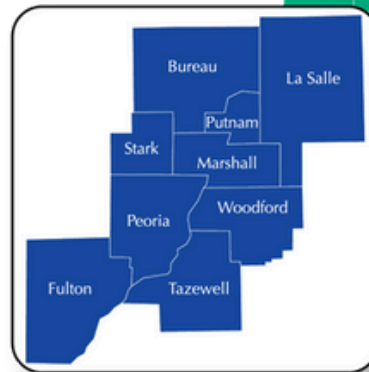
Connecting families, providers and communities to early childhood care and education referrals, information and data.

Our Counties

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Total Population: **550,028**
Children aged 14 and under: **98,522**
Children aged 5 and under: **38,096**
Children aged 2 and under: **18,535**
Children aged 3 to 5: **19,561**
Total Households: **230,518**
Total Households with Children: **63,960**

County	Total Population
Bureau	33,203
Fulton	33,691
LaSalle	109,495
Marshall	11,740
Peoria	181,186
Putnam	5,628
Stark	5,395
Tazewell	131,276
Woodford	38,414



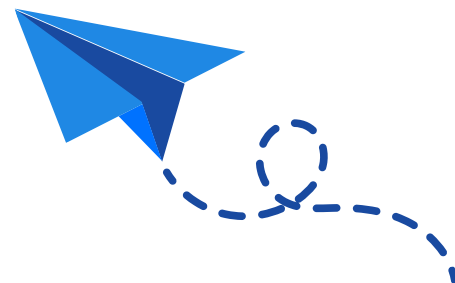
Data gathered comes from the U.S. Census Bureau and Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map's Regional Reports



Our office offers two primary services for families: the Child Care Assistance Program and Child Care Referrals.

Through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), families that qualify can receive assistance with paying for child care. This program can lower a family's out-of-pocket cost for child care to as little as \$1 per month! Our office has helped thousands of families navigate the system and receive the support they need.

By contacting the Child Care Referrals department, families can receive assistance finding an early care and education program that meets their needs. Our Referral Specialist works with families to provide personalized referrals based on program, location, rates, operating hours, and more. Additionally, our Referral Specialist can provide materials to help families learn about what questions to ask to ensure their child learns and grows in a quality care setting.



Child Care Assistance Program

The CCAP is funded through the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) to assist families in paying for child care. Child Care Connection administers this program to our nine-county region.

Eligibility is based on:

- Illinois resident
- Be employed and/or in a TANF or education activity
 - Families who are unhoused may qualify with or without employment and/or education activity
- Children needing care are under the age of 13
 - Children with documented special needs may be eligible up to the age of 19
- Household income meets the income eligibility guidelines by family size (see below).

Family Size	Applications (225% FPL) Per Month	Redeterminations (275% FPL) Per Month
2	\$3,833	\$4,684
3	\$4,841	\$5,917
4	\$5,850	\$7,150
5	\$6,859	\$8,383
6	\$7,868	\$9,616
7	\$8,876	\$10,775

Income guidelines shown reflect eligibility for the CCAP from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025.

The CCAP department received and processed

- **1,878** applications
- **1,845** redeterminations
- **1,360** change of information/change of provider forms

CCAP Provider Payouts

Providers who accept the CCAP are reimbursed at a rate that is dependent on the number of children, where they reside, and the type of program. This fiscal year, the CCAP paid providers **\$28,112,890.44**.

Provider Type	Total Payout
Licensed Center	\$21,589,591.77
License-Exempt Center	\$543,791.00
Licensed Home Provider	\$1,666,007.22
Licensed Group Home	\$167,950.35
License-Exempt Home Provider	\$323,600.84
License-Exempt Relative (in Relative Home)	\$2,088,970.58
License-Exempt Non-Relative (in Child's Home)	\$230,790.68
License-Exempt Relative (in Child's Home)	\$1,502,159.00

Why Our Families Need Child Care



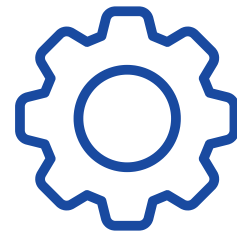
Work

95%



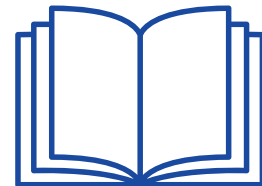
Education/Training

4%



Employment & Education/Training

1%



Non TANF Education/Training

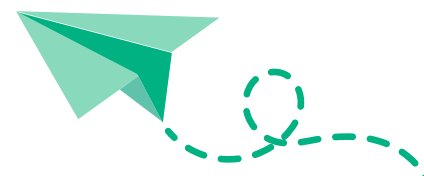
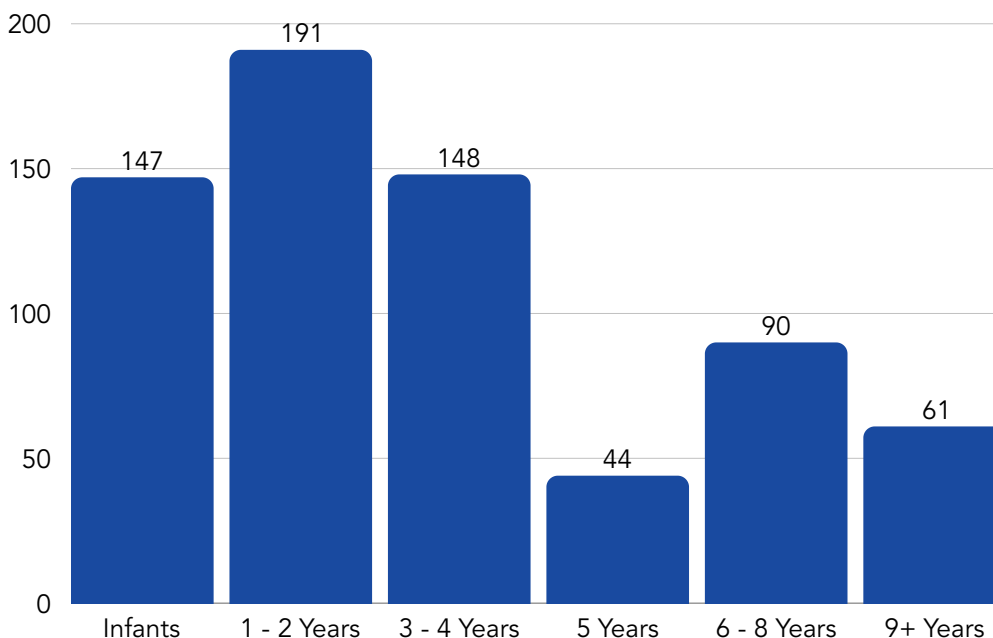
<1%

Child Care Referrals

The referral department works with families to find child care providers that best meet their needs.

- **388** families called for a referral.
- **681** children were served through referral services.
- **63%** of families requesting referrals were from Peoria County.
- **71%** of referrals were for children under the age of five.

County	Families Received Referrals
Bureau	8
Fulton	9
LaSalle	20
Marshall	6
Peoria	245
Putnam	1
Stark	0
Tazewell	112
Woodford	17
Other	2





Licensed and license-exempt child care centers and family child care providers can access a variety of free and low-cost resources through our office for support. Our provider services team can be thought of in five divisions.

- Funding Opportunities
- Professional Development and Training
- Quality Consultations
- Higher Education & Workforce Navigation
- Health & Safety Coaching
- Child Care Start-Up Consultations



We offer free support from our quality team, year-round training sessions and workshops, technical assistance, start-up information for providers looking to provide child care, and on-site resources that will help them offer the best care possible to the families they serve.

Funding Opportunities

Several grants are available to assist child care providers with the quality of their program. Through these funding opportunities, we were able to provide **\$5,634,952.24** in funding to child care programs.

CPR/First Aid Reimbursement provides funds to assist child care practitioners in achieving First Aid/CPR certification.

- **\$24,689.38** was invested in CPR/First Aid trainings.
- **4** reimbursements were issued to child care providers.

Individual Professional Development Funds (IPDF) provide up to 80% reimbursement to child care providers for training, conferences, and/or fees associated with earning credentials.

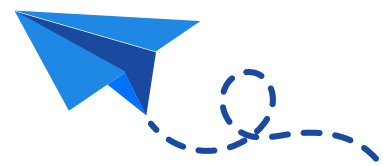
- **\$5,640** was granted to **24** child care practitioners.
- **14** applications were approved for workshop/conference reimbursement for **\$2,320**.
- **10** applications were approved for the credentialing program for **\$3,320**.

Quality Improvement Funds (QIF) are designed to assist child care providers in developing the quality of their programs including their efforts to receive or maintain an ExceleRate Illinois rating. QIF are distributed through Cohort grants, Accreditation, and Training stipends.

- **37** applications were approved for a total of **\$104,622.86**

Smart Start Workforce Grants (SSWG) offer child care programs stable, ongoing funds to cover the cost of higher wages and operating a classroom.

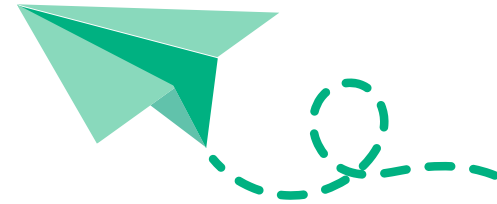
- **291** applications were approved over the three rounds of the SSWG.
- **\$5,500,000** was distributed to approved applicants.



Training

113 trainings were offered.

980 total participants.



Quality Consultations

Quality and Infant-Toddler Specialists work directly with child care providers to improve their programs' quality.

1,544 consultations were conducted, **191** of which were on-site visits.

Higher Education & Workforce Navigation

Higher Education & Workforce Navigators assists individuals currently working or previously worked in the early childhood field in identifying educational goals and programs available, accessing scholarships and other financial assistance opportunities, and obtaining a credential or degree in early childhood.

95 consultations were conducted, **37** of which were face-to-face.

Health & Safety Coaching

As part of CCAP Health & Safety requirements, all license-exempt child care providers are required to be visited by our Health & Safety Coach. During these visits, our Health & Safety coach checks a variety of health and safety items.

66 visits were completed

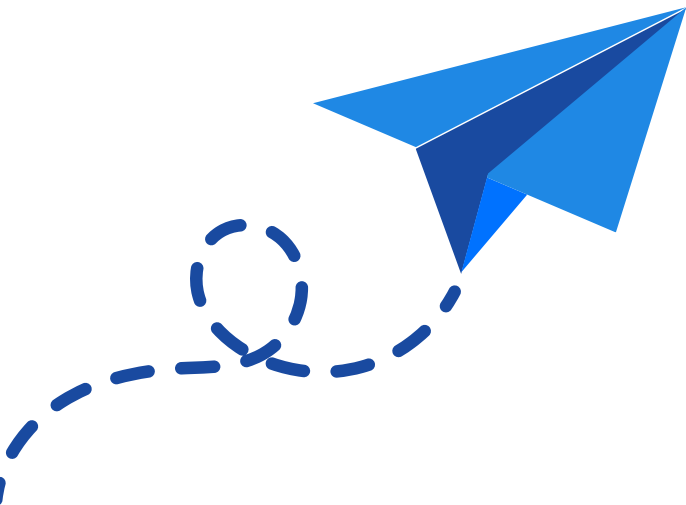
17 corrective action/return visits were completed





Community outreach has remained a cornerstone of our work, reaching families and providers in all nine counties with vital information and personalized support. As a leading expert in the child care field, we pride ourselves on collaborating with early childhood stakeholders and community partners.

Our Outreach Department aims to ensure our nine counties are aware of the resources available to them. By attending and hosting community events and serving on important early childhood committees, we can advocate for families and the early childhood field.



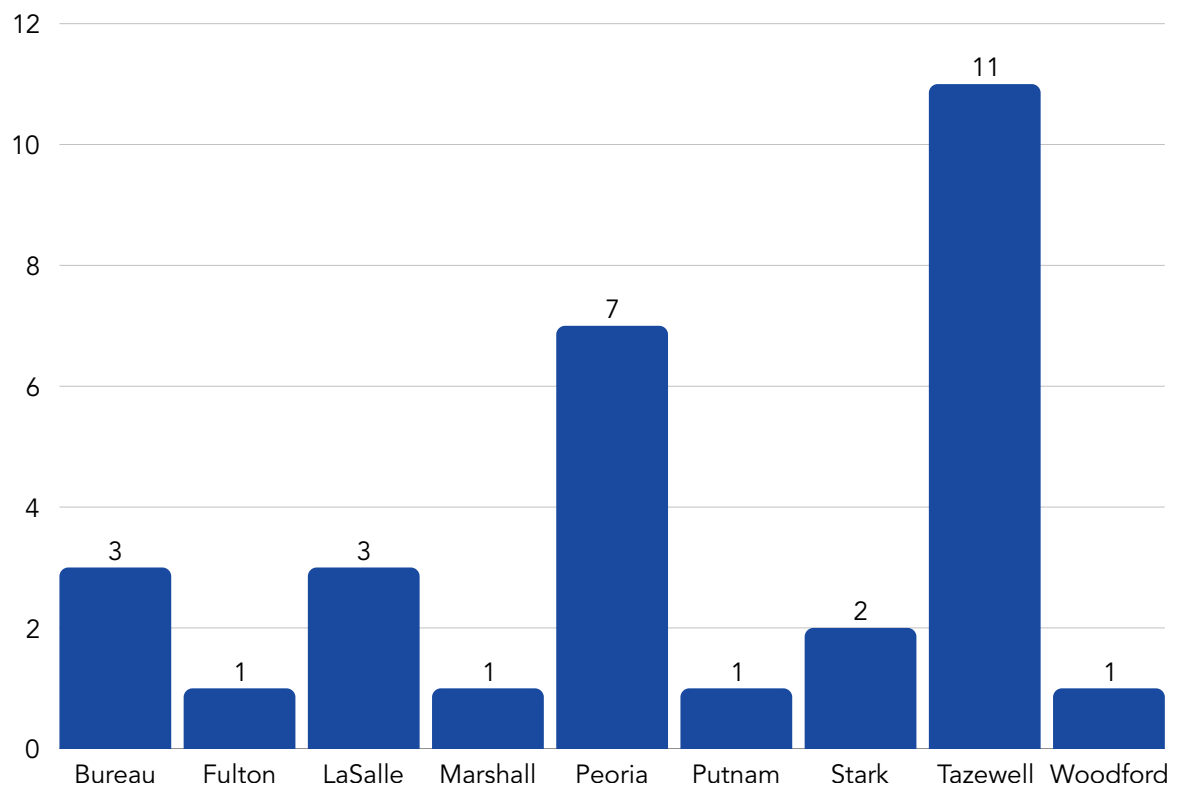
Community Events

- **30** events attended.
- **18,949** community members were engaged across these events.
- **37%** of events attended were in **Tazewell County**.
- **36** community partners collaborated across these events.

Advocating for Our Communities

Our staff served on **18** committees to uplift and support our counties and statewide system. Of those 18 committees,

- **9** were local and served one or two counties.
- **3** were regional and served a particular area of Illinois.
- **6** were statewide and dedicated to strengthening the CCR&R system.



Photos from Events This Fiscal Year



August 24, 2024 – Five Points Fridays in Washington (Tazewell County)



October 5, 2024 – Walnut Fest on Main in Walnut (Bureau County)



October 13, 2024 – Burgoo Festival in Utica (LaSalle County)



October 19, 2024 – Grace United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat in Pekin (Tazewell County)



October 24, 2024 – All Treats, No Tricks Community Fair in East Peoria (Tazewell County)

Photos from Events This Fiscal Year



March 15, 2025 – Spring Fever Kid's Craft Day in Toulon (Stark County)



March 18, 2025 – Health & Safety Fair in Oglesby (LaSalle County)



May 10, 2025 – PNC Worldwide Day of Play in Peoria (Peoria County)



June 8, 2025 – 5th Annual Slice of Summer in Henry (Marshall County)



June 27, 2025 – Summer Reading Party in Wyoming (Stark County)



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