



2026 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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Each number in this report represents a family working toward a better future, a child discovering new opportunities, a provider building a stronger program, and a community investing in its future. That is what inspires our team every day. Across our nine-county region, we have the responsibility of serving more than 550,000 residents, including nearly 100,000 children under the age of 14. Every phone call, visit, application, and conversation gives us an opportunity to make a meaningful difference.

This year, our team helped thousands of families find and afford child care so parents could work, attend school, and pursue new opportunities for a bright future. We processed nearly 2,000 Child Care Assistance Program applications, completed more than 1,800 redeterminations, and provided hundreds of families with personalized child care referrals.

Strong child care providers are the foundation of strong families and thriving communities, and we are proud to invest in their success. Through grants, training, coaching, quality consultations, workforce guidance, and practical resources, we help programs grow and children thrive. This year, more than \$7.5 million in provider funding, 91 training opportunities, and over 4,000 consultations supported early childhood programs across Central Illinois.

As you read this report, I hope you see hope, opportunity, and the incredible dedication of our staff, providers, families, partners, and communities. I am proud of our team and grateful to the families, providers, partners, and community members who make this work possible. We have accomplished a great deal together, and I look forward to continuing that work in the year ahead.

In partnership,

A stylized, handwritten signature in blue 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.



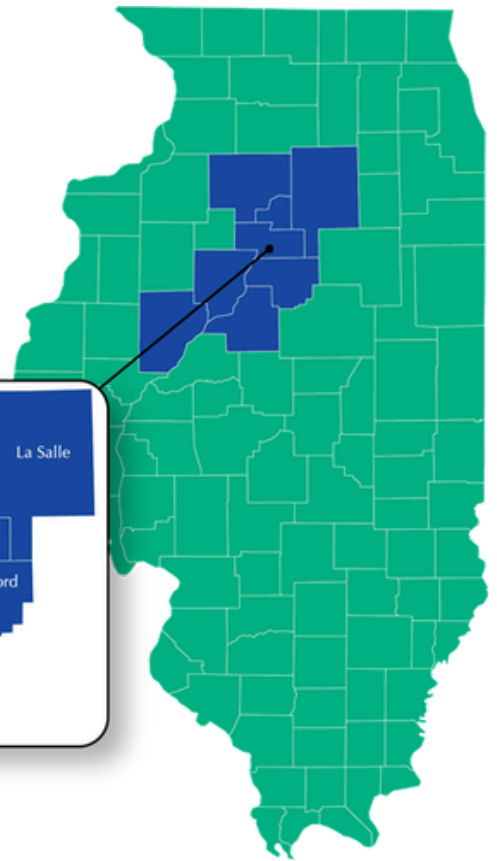
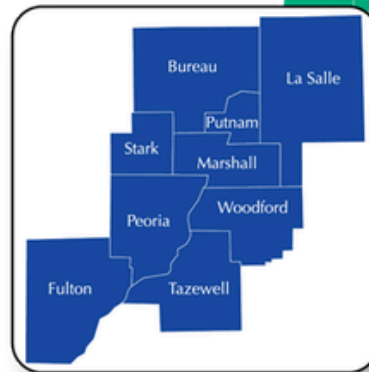
*Connecting families,
providers and communities
to early childhood care
and education referrals,
information and data.*

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



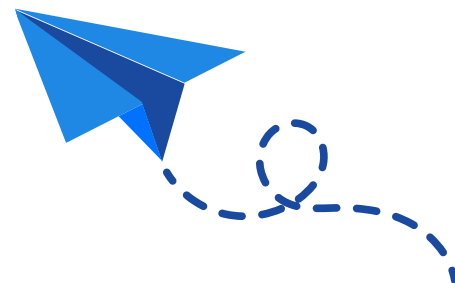
Data gathered comes from the U.S. Census Bureau and Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map's Regional Reports



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	\$3,966	\$4,847
3	\$4,997	\$6,107
4	\$6,028	\$7,368
5	\$7,059	\$8,628
6	\$8,091	\$9,889
7	\$9,122	\$11,149

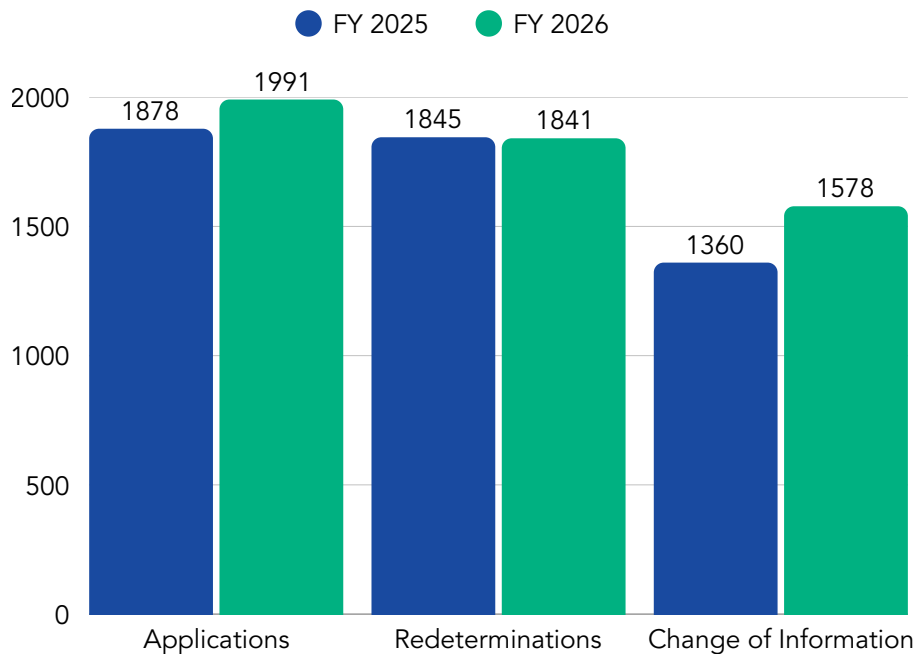
Income guidelines shown reflect eligibility for the CCAP from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026.

1,322 families received financial assistance to pay for child care through CCAP.

5,440 children supported through stable, quality early learning programming/services.

The CCAP department received and processed

- **1,991** applications
- **1,841** redeterminations
- **1,578** change of information/change of provider forms



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CCAP has been such a blessing for my family. Knowing that my father is able to watch my children and make a little money is wonderful. I love knowing that a trusted family member is helping to “raise” my children while I am at work providing for my family.

CCAP Client in Fulton County

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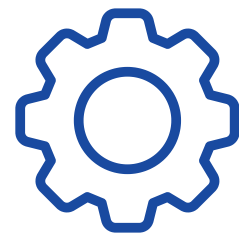
Why Our Families Need Child Care



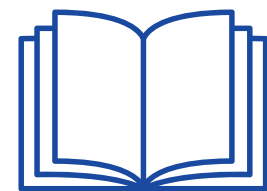
Work
95%



Education/Training
3%



Employment & Education/Training
3%



Non TANF Education/Training
<1%

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 **\$30,245,842.03**.

Provider Type	Total Payout FY 25	Total Payout FY 26
Licensed Center	\$21,589,591.77	\$22,312,184.00
License-Exempt Center	\$543,791.00	\$816,418.00
Licensed Home Provider	\$1,666,007.22	\$1,589,470.68
Licensed Group Home	\$167,950.35	\$190,634.26
License-Exempt Home Provider	\$323,600.84	\$417,205.75
License-Exempt Relative (in Relative Home)	\$2,088,970.58	\$2,651,787.18
License-Exempt Non-Relative (in Child's Home)	\$230,790.68	\$300,007.06
License-Exempt Relative (in Child's Home)	\$1,502,159.00	\$1,968,675.10
All Providers	\$28,112,890.44	\$30,245,842.03



Child Care Referrals

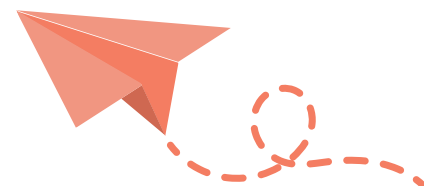
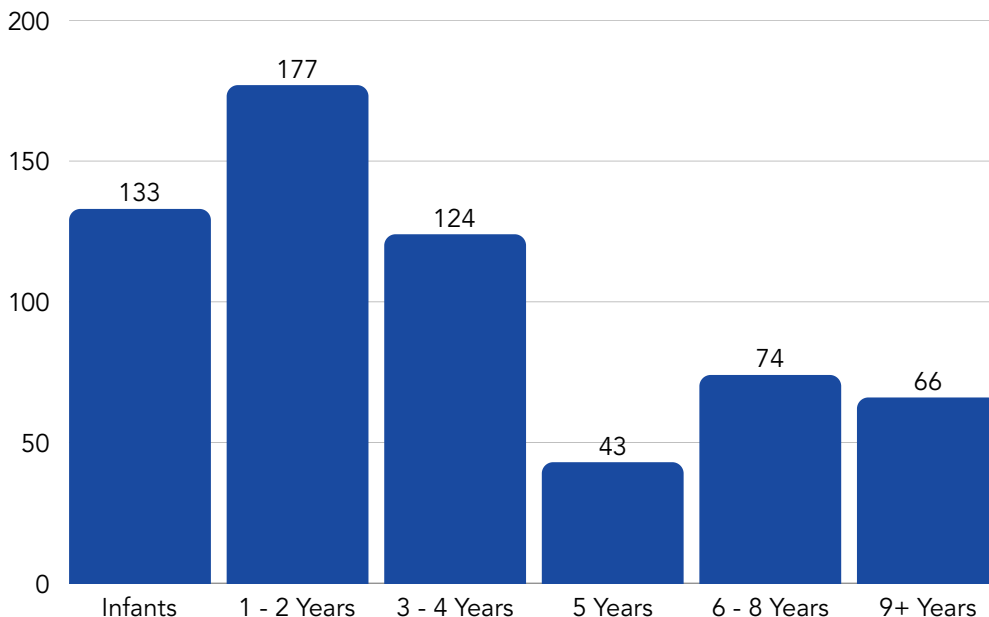
The referral department works with families to find child care providers that best meet their needs.

- **344** families called for a referral.
- **617** children were served through referral services.
- **66%** of families requesting referrals were from Peoria County.
- **70%** of referrals were for children under the age of five.

“[The Child Care Referral Service] is a wonderful program that you provide to parents/families in communities! I appreciate everything you did for me.

Referral Client in Woodford County

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 **\$7,525,388.56** in funding to child care programs.

Child Care Start-Up Grants assist child care home and center providers who are in the process of becoming licensed with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services by offsetting start-up costs.

- **\$2,387.46** was awarded to **4** new child care programs.
- **3** of the applications were for home providers; **1** was for a center.

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

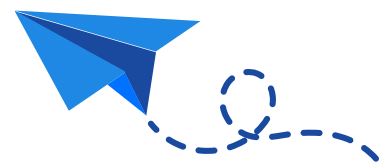
- **\$28,091.10** was invested in CPR/First Aid trainings.
- **7** reimbursements were issued to child care providers.

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

- **\$2,380.50** was granted to **10** child care practitioners.
- **2** applications were approved for workshop/conference reimbursement for **\$288.00**.
- **8** applications were approved for the credentialing program for **\$2,092.50**.

License-Exempt Health & Safety Improvement Funds assist license-exempt providers in meeting health and safety requirements by funding materials and equipment needed to address those needs.

- **\$1,159.63** was awarded to **4** license-exempt providers.



Funding Opportunities

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.

- **22** applications were approved for a total of **\$119,369.87**

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

- **360** applications were approved over the four rounds of the SSWG.
- **\$7,372,000.00** was distributed to approved applicants.

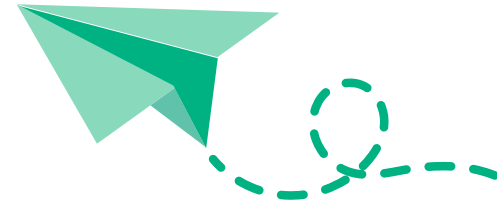
Grant	Total Funded
Child Care Start-Up Grants	\$2,387.46
CPR/First Aid Reimbursements	\$28,091.10
Individual Professional Development Funds	\$2,380.50
License-Exempt Health & Safety Improvement Funds	\$1,159.63
Quality Improvement Funds	\$119,369.87
Smart Start Workforce Grants	\$7,372,000.00
All Grants	\$7,525,388.56



Training

91 trainings were offered.

660 total participants.



Quality Consultations

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

3,539 consultations were conducted, **324** 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.

111 consultations were conducted, **43** 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.

72 visits were completed.

10 corrective action/return visits were completed.



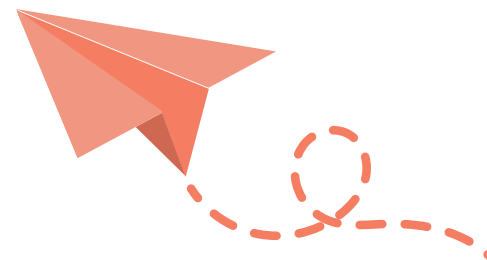
Type of Consultation	FY 25	FY 26
Quality Consultations	1,544	3,539
Quality On-Site Visits	191	324
Higher Education Consultations	95	111
Higher Education On-Site Visits	37	43
Health & Safety Visits	66	72
Health & Safety Corrective Action/Return Visits	17	10
Total Consultations	1,950	4,099

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Working with the quality team at SAL Child Care Connection has been an invaluable experience. Their guidance and support have helped strengthen our program in many ways. They provided thoughtful recommendations on classroom setup and organization, creating learning environments that are more engaging, developmentally appropriate, and supportive of children’s growth.

Child Care Provider in Peoria County

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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.



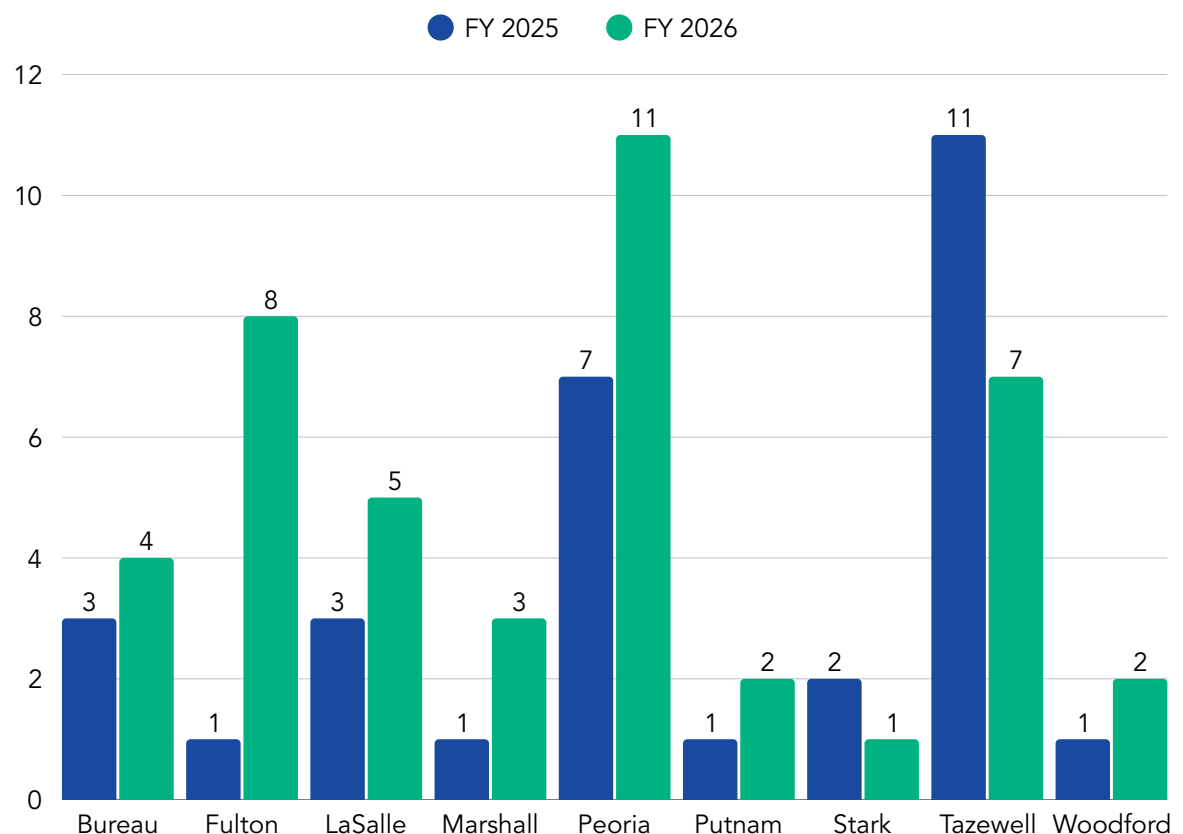
Community Events

- **43** events attended.
- **27,122** community members were engaged across these events.
- **53%** of events attended were outside of the tri-county area (Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford).
- **43** community partners collaborated across these events.

Advocating for Our Communities

Our staff served on **27** committees to uplift and support our counties and statewide system. Of those 27 committees,

- **7** were local and served one or two counties.
- **14** 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 5, 2025 - El Paso's National Night Out (Woodford County)



October 8, 2025 - Together We Grow Family Festival (Fulton County)



September 20, 2025 - Autumn Fest (Tazewell County)



October 18, 2025 - Family Fall Festival (Putnam County)



December 6, 2025 - Santa's Workshop (Bureau County)

Photos from Events This Fiscal Year



March 20, 2026 - Community Baby Shower (Peoria County)



March 24, 2026 - Oglesby Health & Safety Fair (LaSalle County)



April 10, 2026 - Lewistown Child Abuse Prevention Month Pinwheel Planting (Fulton County)



June 13, 2026 - Ottawa Family Pride Festival (LaSalle County)



June 14, 2026 - Henry Rotary Club's 6th Annual Slice of Summer (Marshall County)



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