



DFSS Chicago Early Learning RFP Frequently Asked Questions

The Context

What is happening in the early childhood landscape?

Chicago is expanding services to children birth through age five. Research has demonstrated the importance of high-quality early learning experiences in long term education outcomes for children. Early learning services for children in Chicago are funded through the combination of a variety of funding streams that include federal Head Start funding, state pre-K funding, state Child Care Assistance funding for working parents, local funding, and private pay providers.

The City is rolling out Universal Pre-K (UPK4) for four-year-olds in communities across the city. In addition, through an RFP process, DFSS is growing 0-3 programs in the City of Chicago in community-based programs.

The RFP Policy Goals

What was DFSS trying to achieve by releasing this RFP?

The two recent RFPs released by DFSS help align best preschool practices within this evolving system. Through the RFP process, DFSS policy priorities included:

1. Advancing Kindergarten readiness.
2. Providing City-wide Coverage: As part of slot allocation, DFSS seeks to provide access to high-quality Chicago Early Learning programs in neighborhoods across the city.
3. Improving Quality Standards: Lower child-to-adult ratios, support move toward raising staff qualifications, increasing teacher salary minimums, prioritizing education/appropriate early learning services, etc.
4. Maximizing Funding Streams: Blending of federal and state dollars in order to fund early learning at the level necessary to deliver quality education.

To support agencies in meeting these goals, the City increased per slot reimbursement rates to providers. DFSS has been able to increase the per slot rate, increase the full-day opportunities for working families and over the life of the contract, we will increase teacher salary minimums.

The RFP Competitive Process

How many agencies submitted proposals for the two RFPs?

DFSS received close to 250 proposals from over 150 different agencies. Under the new contracts, which will go in to effect on December 1, 2019.

How many agencies were funded?

101 agencies will receive funding and will partner with DFSS to provide high-quality early learning to communities around Chicago.

How many providers are getting a significant decrease in funding over last year? Why is that?

There is movement up and down across our agency partners, and we look forward to sitting with each of them to discuss their award before sharing details externally.

The Increased Investment in Early Learning

Did the City increase funding for early learning programs in CBOs?

Yes. The city allocated more funding to community-based agencies than it did in the past. During Fiscal Year 2019, DFSS allocated a total of \$144 million to community-based organizations. During FY 2020, it will allocate \$193 million. This increase is the result of an increase in state funds (\$7.4M to CBOs) and the redistribution of \$35m in Head Start funds to CBOs that had previously been allocated to Chicago Public Schools.

The Funding

How much total funding will be distributed via the combined RFP's?

Through this year's RFPs, DFSS will distribute to community-based agencies \$193,147,500 in funding to support early learning services for children birth to five. In federal funding, this includes \$80,884,000 in Head Start, \$25,587,000 in Early Head Start, \$12,281,500 in Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership, and in state funding this include \$32,049,000 in Preschool for All, and \$42,346,000 in Prevention Initiative.

I heard the State of Illinois was committing \$100M in new funding for early learning – is that true?

The City of Chicago did ask the State of Illinois to increase funding for early learning by \$100M *statewide* earlier this year. In fact, the state increased the Early Childhood Block Grant that funds Pre-school for All by \$50 million *statewide*.

Of the \$50M statewide increase, a formula determines how much of that amount is earmarked for Chicago. According to that formula, 37% (\$18.5 million) of any statewide increase is earmarked for Chicago Public Schools for pre-school. In turn, through an inter-governmental agreement between CPS and DFSS, CPS gives 40% of the amount they receive, or in this case \$7.4 million, to DFSS to support Pre-school for All and Prevention Initiative in community-based settings. In other words, DFSS gets 40% of CPS's 37%. The increase in state funds was half of the amount DFSS had originally hoped to receive.

Is it true that CPS withheld funding that was supposed to go to DFSS and be distributed via these RFP's?

In prior years, DFSS funded Head Start services in Chicago Public Schools as part of its federal Head Start grant. That \$35 million will no longer go to CPS and will be re-distributed among DFSS community-based delegate agencies through the RFP process.

Additionally, CPS will be allocating 40% of the Early Childhood Block Grant increase, \$7.4M, to DFSS to be distributed to community-based providers via the RFP process.

Did DFSS purposely hold slots back from RFP1 in order to award them as part of the second RFP?

No, through RFP 1 DFSS allocated as many slots as were available to high scoring agencies providing

services in high need communities. Slots distributed in RFP 2 were the result of insufficient demand for those particular slots in RFP 1.

The Effective Date

When does the new funding through the RFP go into effect?

All currently funded agencies will continue to be funded through November 30, 2019. Contracts with the 101 agencies funded through this RFP process will begin December 1, 2019. The City will work closely with all agencies (newly funded, continued, and de-funded) to establish a transition plan for both families and agencies as the City moves to this new way of funding.

What will happen with agencies that are not funded through this RFP?

All currently funded agencies will continue to be funded through November 30, 2019. These independent non-profit and for-profit organizations and businesses have revenue streams outside of DFSS contracts, either through the state Child Care Assistance Program, as a partner sites to federal Head Start delegate agencies, or through private pay customers. How the results of the RFP impact agencies depend on their business model and the other revenue sources they have.

DFSS is partnering with Illinois Action for Children (IAFC) to provide support for agencies and families through this transition. Outreach is planned to agencies that have been defunded or received significantly less funding so that customized plans can be developed that focus on each unique agency and the families and children that attend that particular program. Those individual meetings began occurring on August 19, and DFSS and IAFC will continue to schedule, meet and work with each agency.

Those families who wish to move to another placement, either in the public schools or community-based settings, can call the Chicago Early Learning Hotline at 312-229-1690 to find a placement that is convenient for them.

Updated August 30, 2019