



# Illinois Early Childhood Inclusion Vision Statement

## VISION

Illinois commits to the inclusion\* of each and every child with special needs with typically developing peers in all early childhood environments.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**Increase Equitable Opportunity:** Inclusion of children with special needs will be a priority in decision making about program design and resource allocation in order to ensure equitable access and full participation in all early childhood environments.

**Partner with Families:** We ensure the meaningful and supported engagement of families in policy/guidance decisions, planning, and evaluation of programs, as well as in IFSP, IEP, transition and other family/professional meetings.

**Share Benefits of Inclusion:** We recognize and intentionally raise public awareness of the well-researched benefits (for all children) of high-quality inclusion of children with special needs in all early childhood settings.

**Build and Support a Competent Workforce:** All professionals who work with children should have the knowledge, competencies and supports to implement evidence-based practices. We will deliberately shift policy to ensure the appropriate professional standards, embedded professional development, and dedicated system of supports that promote culturally and linguistically responsive practice, positive attitudes and beliefs about inclusion, and knowledge of disability that are so critical to this effort.

**Unified Purpose:** We will intentionally and strategically engage in formal collaboration across agencies to make significant progress toward high quality inclusion across early childhood settings.

**Set Goals and Track Data:** Across agencies we will set concrete goals for expanding access to inclusive and high quality early learning opportunities, including a base line number of children with and without disabilities in all early childhood settings, and benchmarks that track progress toward the goal.

\*We adhere to the definition of Early Childhood Inclusion from the DEC and NAEYC Joint Position Statement on Inclusion.

Vision statement developed from the recommendations of the Policy Statement on the Inclusion for Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs, Sept 2015, U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

## KEY DEFINITIONS AND RESOURCES

Supporting the development of the Illinois Inclusion Vision Statement

### *National Association for Education of Young Children/Division for Early Childhood Joint Position Statement on Inclusion*

The joint position statement provides a definition for early childhood inclusion that was used as the common definition of inclusion in the development of this vision statement.

### *Joint Policy Statement on the Inclusion for Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs*

The Illinois Early Childhood Inclusion Summit and Illinois Early Childhood Inclusion Vision Statement were developed based on the recommendations of the Joint Policy Statement, developed by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2015)

### *Illinois Early Childhood Inclusion Summit*

For more information regarding the development of a cross-agency vision for early childhood inclusion in Illinois, please download the Executive Summary. The Summit was funded by the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities.

### *Early Childhood Least Restrictive Environment Stakeholders Consortium*

The EC LRE Stakeholder Consortium promotes inclusion of children with special needs with typically developing peers in all environments where they learn, grow and have appropriate supports to succeed. Members of the Consortium are representatives of agencies and entities across the early childhood field in Illinois and contributed to the preparatory work for the Illinois Early Childhood Summit, including drafting of this vision statement.

### *Illinois Inclusion Brochure*

Developed with the Illinois State Board of Education, the brochure outlines the key aspects of inclusion: access, participation and supports, benefits of inclusion, key definitions, as well as the legal foundations for inclusion.

