



# 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 is 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 Individualized Family Service Plan, Individualized Education Program, 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 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 deliberately shift policy to support elements critical to this effort: appropriate professional standards, embedded professional development, culturally and linguistically responsive practices, positive attitudes and beliefs about inclusion, and knowledge of disabilities.

**Unified Purpose:** We 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 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.