

# ISBE Early Childhood Department

## Monitoring Process and Compliance Checklist

### FAQ

#### Important Links

- [FY 2026 PFA-PFAE Compliance Checklist](#)
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#### Monitoring Process

When are notifications sent out?

- **Monitoring notices were sent out from the ISBE Early Childhood Development Department at the end of August. Email notices went to the program contact and authorized official. If you did not receive a notice at the end of August, your program will not be monitored this school year.**

Should class lists be submitted to National Louis University (NLU) at the beginning of the year or when the three-week window is assigned?

- **The site and classroom information form should be completed and returned to NLU when the three-week window is assigned. The Google doc that was sent by NLU should be submitted as soon as possible.**

On the class lists that we need to turn in for our visit, it asks for a funding source. If we are Preschool for All (PFA) but also use local funds or IDEA funds (for Individualized Education Program [IEP] students), do we list that as well or just PFA funds?

- **Indicate all funding. Children with IEP's are counted as PFA students.**

When are ExceleRate ratings sent?

- **ExceleRate ratings are sent in late summer/early fall. FY 2025 ratings were emailed on Sept. 13, 2025.**

Is every classroom assessed?

- **All physical classrooms will be assessed. (Half-day a.m./p.m. sessions held in the same classroom will have one session assessed.)**

Will NLU evaluate the health component on ECERS-3?

- **Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-3 (ECERS-3) Items 8-11 (Health & Safety) will not be assessed.**

Will the assessors be looking documents in the child's folders? What if we keep them in another office?

- **Review the checklist carefully to ensure that all documentation is prepared and available prior to the assessor's site visit. Please advise the assessor where district records are located if not kept onsite or in the child's individual file.**

Will the assessors look at any documentation or files from last year?

- **Assessors will be looking at this year's documentation only.**

When will monitoring reports be received?

- **ISBE Early Childhood Development Department will send monitoring reports approximately 6-8 weeks after the visit.**

When is the Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP) due?

- **The CQIP is due 30 days following the receipt of the initial monitoring reports. CQIP updates are due May 31, 2026, for programs not monitored in FY 2026.**

## Class Size/Enrollment

What happens if your program is not full by the November fall housing deadline in the Student Information System?

- **Programs should strive to meet the capacity for which they are funded. Please contact your ISBE consultant for any program-specific questions.**

Can we have more than 15 students and still serve children with IEPs?

- **Blended classrooms have a minimum of 15 students. Students with IEPs are included in the PFA student count.**

Do children with IEPs receive priority enrollment?

- **IEP children should be considered a priority population on your weighted eligibility criteria checklist.**

Do we need to update all file requirements each year even if students are carrying over from last year?

- **All documentation is collected when a child is initially enrolled into the program (Prevention Initiative [PI], PFA, or Preschool for All Expansion [PFAE]). If/when the child moves into a new program (e.g., PI to PFA, PFA to PFAE) documentation needs to be collected again.**

Is there a percentage of students we can have that do not meet income or are at risk?

- **PFA programs must enroll at a minimum 80% high priority/at-risk children. For PFAE programs, 80% of enrolled children must have at least two risk factors or one highest-priority selection factor according to the state created weighted eligibility form.**

## Income

Do we refuse service to families that don't provide income?

- **Income verification is required prior to enrolling the student. If income verification is not complete, the program will be out of compliance. If the family does not want to provide verification documents, the child cannot be enrolled in the program. The Early Childhood Block Grant program should provide information on other area programs parents can look to for services.**

Can programs charge tuition or registration fees?

- **Tuition or registration fees cannot be charged for students enrolled in a PFA/PFAE program.**

Are there any exceptions to the income requirement?

- **Income is not required for students with IEPs, youth in care, families experiencing homelessness, or undocumented immigrants. A weighted eligibility form should still be completed. However, the lack of income verification should be noted on the eligibility form and the financial status of that family cannot be counted as an at-risk factor.**

Does direct certification count as income verification?

- **The direct certification list for food and nutrition programs at ISBE can be used as verification of income if it indicates a public benefit. A copy of the list with the student's name highlighted should be placed in the student's PFA folder.**

Can we use Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) approval letters for PFA income?

- **CCAP is an acceptable form of income verification.**

If a child has two risk factors, but the family's income is over 200% FPL, do they qualify for services?

- **PFA/PFAE programs should use a weighted eligibility checklist that includes local risk factors and a scoring system to identify each child's risk factors, creating a prioritized list for enrollment. PFA programs can use a district-made weighted eligibility form; however, PFAE programs must use the weighted eligibility form provided by ISBE. Income can be a factor used for enrollment, but there is not a specific income requirement.**

## Days/Hours per Week

Do remote learning days count as attendance days?

- **Programs must have at least 165 scheduled days of student attendance. Remote learning opportunities can be used for early dismissals, not in place of an attendance day.**

When can we use remote learning?

- **Classes that have an early dismissal and therefore fall under the required number of 12.5 hours per week must use remote learning activities to make up the difference in hours.**

What type of remote learning is required?

- **The type of remote learning opportunities provided are up to the program's discretion but should be reflected in the lesson plans by date of distribution that correlates with the calendar and lesson plans.**

Must we use remote learning for weather/other school cancellations?

- **Weather and other emergency closings do not affect the 165 day or 12.5-hour weekly requirements. No remote learning opportunities or makeup days are needed.**

## Lesson Plans/Assessment/Portfolios

Can the objectives from the curriculum be used on lesson plans instead of the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS)?

- **Keywords or phrases from curriculum objectives (aligned with the IELDS) or from IELDS benchmarks may be used.**

What is the completed research-based assessment tool that is required to be in the portfolio?

- **The completed research-based assessment tool is the rating for each objective for each reporting period.**

Please explain the requirement that portfolios reflect, at a minimum, two benchmarks from language arts, math, social-emotional, science, social studies, etc., domains per reporting period.

- **Teachers should start with the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards or indicators from the research-based assessment tool. Then choose two benchmarks from each domain/content area.**
- **Individualized collections reflect, at a minimum, two benchmarks from each of the seven IELDS domains (eight for English learners) per reporting period.**

- **Each benchmark must have at least one piece of documentation per reporting period to track progress over time.**

Can portfolios be digital?

- **Yes. Someone must be available to provide access to the NLU assessor.**

Can we use the same goals for individualizations on lesson plans that we use for our students with IEPs?

- **It is most beneficial for individualization plans to document the skill, context, and strategy used to support the individual child, as it guides adults in how to support the child. Objectives from IEPs should be embedded within the daily routines and activities of the classroom, when possible. The same system for documenting individualization can be used for children with and without IEPs.**

At what point in the year should the narrative report be completed? Is this different from the Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) report card?

- **Best practice recommends completing a narrative summary for each reporting period. The narrative summary provides key developmental information for the family about their child. This is called the “Family Conference Report” In TSG.**

## Licensing

What license does a paraprofessional need?

- **PFA/PFAE classrooms require a paraprofessional with a current ISBE paraprofessional license (ELS-PARA). A short-term paraprofessional license is not compliant for PFA/PFAE.**

Do we need to show licensing documentation for all aides in the room?

- **The assessors will check qualifications for the PFA/PFAE teacher and the paraprofessional.**

What qualifications are needed for a substitute teacher?

- **A substitute teacher must have a Professional Educator License (PEL) and/or ISBE substitute license. If a substitute is serving in the role of a vacant position, the job must be posted. A short-term substitute license is not compliant for PFA/PFAE. Please refer to the ISBE Educator Licensure handout on substitute licenses for the specifics.**

If a paraprofessional has a substitute teacher license, do they also need the paraprofessional educator license as well?

- **A paraprofessional that holds an Illinois Substitute License and a bachelor’s degree, is qualified to serve as a Paraprofessional without holding a separate ELS-Paraprofessional credential.**

Do we need to show the actual hard copy of ISBE licenses?

- **NLU assessors will look up credentials of all necessary staff in ELIS. Credentials do not need to be printed out if a staff member has an ISBE-issued license or approval.**

What are the qualifications for a PFA/PFAE teacher?

- **PFA/PFAE classrooms require that the teacher has a current PEL with an ECE endorsement or Gateways ECE Credential Level 5. See the ISBE Licensure Requirements document for more information.**

Is the PFA/PFAE teacher required to have the special education or bilingual/ESL endorsement?

- **If the teacher is not providing these services, the specific endorsements are not required. See the ISBE Licensure Requirements document for more information.**

If you are a new PFA program not aligned to a school district, are you responsible for providing a child's IEP services?

- **Local Education Agencies are responsible for providing services outlined in an IEP. Community-based organizations should work collaboratively with the school district to ensure student needs are being met.**

## Family Involvement

Can families bring in items for the classroom?

- **No family should be required to provide or be charged for child supplies, materials, field trips, or registration.**

Can we include the “Family Engagement Days” that take place offsite toward the minimum of 165 days required?

- **A minimum of 165 student attendance days are required. Family events offsite are not counted as student attendance days.**

If we are taking a field trip, can we require parents to drive their children to the field trip? Can we ask parents serving as chaperones to pay admission?

- **All children should be able to participate in field trips without transportation being a barrier. Parents should be encouraged to attend. The program can pay for chaperone admission with grant funds.**

Does a PFA program need a Parent Advisory Council?

- **PFAE programs require a Parent Advisory Council; it is best practice for PFA, but not required.**

Do we need to do the family interview if a child is already enrolled in a two-year-old classroom and are moving to PFA/PFAE? If they are returning students, do we need a new parent interview form?

- **Parent interviews should be completed upon a child's initial enrollment into the PFA/PFAE program. It is not required of returning students unless they are moving to a new program (e.g., PI to PFA, PFA to PFAE).**

## Screenings/Home Language Survey

Do we need to complete a screening, like the pre-IPT on every child? Does the screening need to be completed each year or only immediately following enrollment?

- **A screening is required if one or both questions on the Home Language Survey are answered with "Yes." The screening is only completed one time during preschool enrollment. Refer to Serving English Learners in Preschool Programs in Illinois Public School Districts FAQ for information and procedures for serving English learners in preschool programs**

Can we use a district-created Home Language Survey?

- **The ISBE Home Language Survey should be used. It is available in many languages.**

How often do developmental screenings have to be conducted?

- **The initial screening process includes the research-based tool that either identifies children for a particular program or those needing further assessment. This may include ASQ, DIAL, or ESI (among others). Parent permission, vision/hearing, and evidence of exit interview also is included. This screening process should be completed within six months of a child's enrollment in a PFA/PFAE program.**

Do hearing/vision and dental screenings need to be completed every year? Is there a time frame needed for hearing and vision to be screened within each year?

- **Hearing and vision screenings should be completed annually. If not completed at the beginning of the year, the program should have an estimated time frame. Dental screening is required only once during a child's enrollment in the PFAE program. Dental screening is not required for PFA.**

## Behavior/Expulsion

Where can the behavior plan and transition plans be located?

- **The Behavior Support Plan and the Program Transition Plan are located on the ISBE Early Childhood webpage. Refer to the ISBE FAQ document on Behavior Support and Program Transition Plans for more information.**

## Serving children with IEPs

What is the maximum number of students with an IEP that can be in a PFA/PFAE class?

- **There cannot be more than 30% of students with IEPs enrolled in a PFA/PFAE class.**

Can any children receive their services out of the classroom?

- **The majority of services for the majority of students (more than 50%) should occur within the PFA classroom to be compliant.**

## Collaborations

What memorandums of understanding (MOUs) are required for PFA?

- **The only MOU required for PFA is one with the closest Head Start.**

If the PFA grantee is also a Head Start program, do we still need a MOU?

- **Grantees that are also Head Start programs just need to show they receive Head Start funding.**

For PFAE, what would be sufficient evidence of mental health consultation support?

- **Programs should show documentation that they contract or collaborate with a qualified mental health provider or consultant.**

What is needed for the community collaboration plan?

- **The collaboration plan is a one- to two-page document identifying community patterns with a brief description of the collaboration.**