



Priority Areas in Illinois General Assembly and United States Congress

For the FY2022 legislative session, Illinois Collaboration on Youth (ICOY) had several priorities that we advanced to ensure that families, children, and young adults have the tools and skills needed to thrive, and that the organizations serving them have the capacity and resources needed to serve them effectively. Some of these priorities were ones in which ICOY remains the leading partner, or champion, and others were priorities in which we continue as allies in coalition with others. As always, ICOY will engage with emerging issues that arise throughout the year when they align with our mission, vision, and values.

We continue to engage legislation with a racial equity lens with the intention of correcting systemic racism and promoting justice and equity. We will respond to budget proposals as they develop and will advocate for adequate resources and investment needed to ensure that children, youth, and families have a strong foundation.

Below are our priority areas:

ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Human Services Workforce Crisis Package

Champion

- **Human Service Professional Loan Repayment Program – *Passed Both Houses***
[*HB4720*](#) & [*SB3925*](#)

- To address the increasing workforce crisis that is plaguing the human services sector, ICOY is collaborated with Illinois Partners for Human Services in championing legislation that created a **Human Service Professional Loan Repayment** program to help recruit and retain qualified human service professionals to work for community-based service providers. Community-based agencies have a high turnover rate and struggle to maintain consistent staffing levels. According to a survey conducted by Illinois Partners for Human Services, most organizations experienced their highest turnover at the onset of the pandemic. More than half of the survey respondents experienced higher vacancies during the study period than their pre-pandemic baseline. This turnover is particularly disruptive to families and youth in foster care and is associated with increased risk to children and longer lengths of stay in the foster care system. Many positions in the human services field require bachelor's or master's degrees in human service-related fields of study. Higher education requirements for the workforce often mean that many students graduate with a high level of debt for jobs that may pay slightly above minimum wage, with a great deal of stress and burnout. This loan repayment program will help recruit and retain human service professionals and help to alleviate the workforce crisis.



- **Illinois Youth Residential Treatment Rate Study – Passed and Signed by GOV**
[HB4700](#) & [HB4792](#)
 - ICOY partnered with the Office of the Cook County Public Guardian to develop legislation that would require the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to issue a request for proposal for a rate consultant to develop potential new rates and rate methodologies. The prospective consultant would use objective, publicly available data sources, standard administrative cost reporting, and provider-reported costs to determine the resources necessary to create and maintain a robust continuum of care in Illinois. Such a continuum would include therapeutic residential placements, evidence-based alternatives to residential care including therapeutic foster care, specialized foster care, community supports for youth in care who are returned home to parents or guardians, and emergency foster care and emergency shelter.
- **Credentials/Degree Expansion – Re-referred**
[HB5044](#) & [SB3794](#)
 - Due to the ongoing workforce crisis, ICOY advanced legislation to amend the Child Care Act of 1969 [225 ILCS 10/2.08] to expand the degree and credential requirements for child welfare positions such as direct service workers and supervisors. Our legislation aimed to amend DCFS Rules 401, 403, and 404 to include a wider array of acceptable degree requirements, credentials, and type of experience.

Juvenile Competency to Stand Trial – Re-referred

Champion

[SB3999](#)

- This legislation will create a new standard to determine whether minors are competent to stand trial that considers age, developmental maturity, trauma, and disability. It includes provisions to evaluate competency and processes to remediate or dispose of the case when incompetency is found. Current Illinois law applies the same standard to adults and children alike, however, many other states have separate standards for adults and minors that recognize that children have unique needs that must be considered when evaluating their fitness to stand trial. Children and youth of color are disproportionately involved in the justice system; Black children especially experience “adultification”. ICOY, the Juvenile Justice Initiative, and the Illinois Justice Project are leading the effort to advance this legislation, which was developed in coordination with the Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership, the Loyola University Legislation and Policy Clinic, and the Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

Community-based Foster Care Provider Safety Net – Re-referred

Champion

[HB5152](#) & [SB3730](#)

- Community-based providers are increasingly finding that they cannot access sufficient and affordable liability insurance for their work in foster care and adoption. These community-based



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agencies are the backbone of the child welfare system in Illinois, serving 85% of the children in foster care and 90% of intact families. State contracts require liability insurance. But access to liability insurance, if available, is increasingly unaffordable, with providers seeing annual increases of up to 80%. Only a handful of insurance carriers are even participating in the Illinois marketplace. This legislation would require the State to cover judgements or settlements that exceed \$2 million.

Bias-Free Child Removal – *Passed Both Houses*

Champion

[HB4299](#) & [SB3720](#)

- ICOY advanced legislation that creates a **Bias-Free Child Removal** pilot program in up to three counties that, based on data, disproportionately remove Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) children from their families. Removing children from their families is traumatic for both the child and parent. The goal of the **Bias-Free Child Removal** pilot program is to reduce bias in decision-making during the child protective services removal process, decrease racial disproportionality in the child welfare system, decrease the overall number of children being removed from their homes, and promote racial equity in the child welfare system to achieve better outcomes for children and families.
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Remote Court Hearings for Juveniles Resolution – *Adopted*

Champion

[HR616](#) & [SR757](#)

- This resolution urged the Illinois Supreme Court to require courts responsibly transition juvenile delinquency cases back to in-person hearings and exercise a rights-based approach focused on in-person participation, especially when determining the impact that future policies have on virtual court hearings for juveniles. Virtual court proceedings can create barriers to effective representation, putting a youth's constitutional rights in jeopardy. ICOY worked in partnership with the Juvenile Justice Initiative to advance this legislation.
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Ban Detention of Young Children Under Age 13 – *Re-referred*

Ally

[HB3767](#)

- This bill prohibits detention of children under age 13 and makes recommendations for adequate resources and systemic responses to meet the needs of young children who encounter the justice system. Children and youth of color are disproportionately represented in the justice system; this disparity is even more pronounced for the youngest children who interact with the system. ICOY has worked in partnership with the Juvenile Justice Initiative to advance this legislation and will continue to engage this issue.



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FY23 ILLINOIS STATE BUDGET

ICOY is a fierce advocate to ensure that community-based providers have adequate resources to support children, youth, and families to reach their potential and contribute back to their communities.

Members of ICOY can refer to the Virtual Community or Thursday Digest newsletter for a breakdown of the FY23 Illinois State Budget.

Funding for a Robust Human Services System

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Every year, ICOY advocates for a robust human services budget to ensure adequate investments in human service programs for children, youth, and families. ICOY opposes government offloading services onto community-based human service organizations without paying for the full cost of providing these services. Human services promote well-being and help individuals achieve their potential so that they can participate in our community and give back to society. Our work is essential to the optimal functioning of the Illinois economy and should be funded accordingly.

Substantive Funding for CCBYS

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ICOY continues to advocate for substantive funding for Comprehensive Community Based Youth Crisis Services providers to ensure that Public Act 102-0688 is fully funded and implemented.

Investments in the Child Welfare Workforce

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The wage disparity between the public sector and the community-based child welfare workforce is large and growing. We have advocated that the Governor's budget includes funds to support comprehensive wage increases to reduce the wage disparity with our public sector counterparts. The child welfare workforce is predominantly a female and BIPOC workforce. Low wages fuel an unsustainable turnover rate, which in turn drives longer lengths of stay in the child welfare system.

Rate Reform for Behavioral Health Services

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Behavioral health services are essential to help individuals, families, and communities thrive. Illinois must ensure that rates paid to community-based providers for behavioral healthcare services are sustainable and adequate to meet the needs of the individuals and families that they serve. ICOY continues to work in coalition with the Community Behavioral Healthcare Association (CBHA), Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (IARF), and the Illinois Association for Behavioral Health (IABH) to advance rate reform for Behavioral Health Services.



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Legislative Proposal to Exempt QRTPs from IMD Definition

Ally

[HR5414](#) & [S2689](#)

- Work in coalition with other state and national advocates to push for a budget proposal that would prevent Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs) from being considered as Institutions for Mental Diseases (IMDs)
 - Ensure continued Title IV-E reimbursement for Medicaid coverage for children in foster care while placed in that QRTP.
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Increase HHS, HUD, & Department of Education Appropriations

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- Work in coalition with other human service advocates to ensure that children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness have access to services, housing, and education.
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Support the Human Service Workforce

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- Work in coalition with other human service advocates to advance legislation that would recruit and retain a highly qualified workforce for community-based human services.

