

FY24 ICOY Legislative & Advocacy Agenda

Priority Areas in Illinois General Assembly and United States Congress

For the FY2024 legislative session, Illinois Collaboration on Youth (ICOY) has several priorities that we are advancing 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. 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 advocate for adequate resources and investment needed to ensure that children, youth, and families have a strong foundation.

ADVANCING CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Poverty Is Not Neglect

Champion

In 2021, 64% of allegations in Illinois were due to neglect, unrelated to abuse. Some neglect allegations consist of inadequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care, which are directly linked to a lack of resources, not intentional physical harm. ICOY is advancing efforts to encourage alternative supports for families experiencing poverty, which research shows will reduce the number of families referred to the child protection system.

Diaper Insecurity ([HB545](#), [SB3162](#))

Ally

ICOY supports Brightpoint's legislation to make diapers more affordable for families in Illinois. One in three families in America who experience diaper need cannot afford to keep their child clean and dry; often stretching for hours without a diaper change or using inadequate options as a substitute. This can lead to irritation, prolonged diaper rash, UTIs, or even long-term health issues for the child. Poverty and the inability to meet a child's basic needs due to low incomes are often mistaken for child neglect, something we collectively work to address.

Illinois Child Tax Credit ([HB4917/SB3329](#))

Ally

To help reduce the number of children living in poverty, ICOY is supporting the establishment of a permanent state-level Child Tax Credit for Illinois families. According to a recent study by the Illinois Economic Policy Institute (ILEPI), a credit of \$300 per child with an income phaseout would reduce child poverty by 3.3% while reaching 840,100 households.

Strengthening Mental Health & Sub. Use Parity Act ([HB4475/SB2896](#))

Ally

ICOY supports the Healthy Minds, Healthy Lives Coalition's efforts to eliminate discriminatory private insurance practices that restrict access to mental health (MH) and substance use (SU) treatment. This legislation incentivizes providers to join insurance networks by setting a higher minimum reimbursement rate than Medicare rates for private insurers. It would also require coverage and payment for same day MH/SU services. To allow for greater flexibility the bill would permit MH and SU services to be provided under the supervision of a licensed behavioral health provider.



STRENGTHENING THE HUMAN SERVICES SECTOR

Background Check Delays

Champion

DCFS previously permitted community-based organizations to offer “conditional employment” at Child Care Institutions (CCI), Group Homes (GH), or Child Welfare Agencies (CWA). Conditional employment allowed agencies to make employment offers with a start date, and to onboard employees while waiting for pending background checks to be cleared. Under conditional employment, staff were able to participate in training and orientation activities while awaiting full background clearances. Conditional employees were not permitted to interact with children. Federal legislation eliminated conditional employment for all CCIs (residential treatment centers, shelters, and other congregate care settings) and GHs. However, DCFS has applied this policy across the board. The long period to attain background clearance, along with the limited number of facilities offering fingerprinting services, has resulted in many candidates finding other jobs and significant delays in onboarding the candidates that make it through the process.

Community Partner Fair Contracting Act (HB5064/SB3457)

Champion

In partnership with the Health and Human Services Coalition of Illinois, ICOY supports this comprehensive reform of the contracting process in Illinois. This legislation would amend various statutes that govern how the State conducts business with the social service providers to reduce the occurrence of late payments and contracts. It also introduces several reforms to the Illinois Court of Claims process, including empowering State agencies to cover small claims resulting from lapsed appropriations with current year funds.

Eliminate Matching Fund Requirements (HB4897)

Champion

Community-based providers have expressed that funding match requirements in their contracts are financially constricting. This legislation would eliminate that match fund requirement to ensure that the State covers full costs of care and not shift that burden onto the community-based providers who are doing the work.

Human Service Professional Loan Repayment Program (HB4601/SB3082)

Champion

Illinois human service providers are facing a workforce crisis that directly impacts the clients we serve. A joint effort between ICOY and Illinois Partners for Human Services persuaded the General Assembly to create the Human Services Professional Loan Repayment program to help recruit and retain qualified human service professionals to work for community-based services providers. This bill will appropriate \$15M to fund the program.

Task Force on Cert. for Women or Minority-led Nonprofit Organizations

Ally

Establish a task force to consider stand-alone certification in Illinois state law for nonprofit organizations that are minority, disabled, and/or women-led, allowing eligible organizations to receive preferences in state contracting, similar to the preference established in the Illinois Business Enterprise for Minorities, Women and Persons with Disabilities Act (30 ILCS 575). This will expand opportunity and investment for community-based nonprofit organizations. ICOY is working in partnership with Elevate Energy to advance this legislation.



ADDRESSING RACIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY

Juvenile Fitness to Stand Trial (**HB1294/SB3368**)

Champion

This legislation creates 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. Unlike many other states, current Illinois law applies the same standard to adults and children alike. Children and youth of color are disproportionately involved in the justice system; Black children especially experience “adultification”.

This legislation was developed in coalition with several justice and youth advocacy organizations including the Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership, the Loyola University Civitas ChildLaw Center, The Cook County Public Defenders’ Office, the Illinois Alliance for Reentry and Justice, and the Chicago School of Professional Psychology, among others.

End Detention of Young Children (**HB2347**)

Ally

This bill prohibits the 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 continues to work in partnership with the [Juvenile Justice Initiative](#) to engage in this issue and advance this legislation.

ILLINOIS STATE BUDGET

FY24 Illinois State Budget

Champion

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.

- **Funding for a Robust Human Services System**

- ICOY advocates for a robust human services budget to ensure adequate investments in human service programs for children, youth, and families.

- **Investments in the Child Welfare Workforce**

- The wage disparity between the public sector and community-based child welfare workforce, which is predominantly female and BIPOC, is large and growing. We have advocated that the budget includes funds to support comprehensive wage increases.

Funding for Afterschool and Community Schools

Ally

ICOY supports calls from ACT Now Illinois to bolster appropriations for after school and youth development programs. Including their calls for creating a new \$50 million annual appropriation to fund community learning centers to ensure stable funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) programs.



UNITED STATES CONGRESS

Ensuring Medicaid Continuity (S.3196)

Ally

ICOY continues to work in coalition with other state and national advocates to advance legislation that would exempt Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs) from being considered Institutions for Mental Diseases (IMDs) and ensure continued Title IV-E reimbursement for Medicaid coverage for children in foster care while placed in that QRTP.

Foster Youth and Driving Act (H.R.1446/S.699)

Ally

The Act creates a grant that would enable states to institute driving programs. This would provide financial assistance to help foster youth complete driver's education classes, obtain auto insurance, obtain a driver's license, and purchase a vehicle. This financial assistance would NOT be included in the child's gross income or count against them in applying for other federal benefits.

Federal Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act (H.R.6041/S.3125)

Ally

ICOY supports the efforts of the National Network for Youth (NN4Y) in championing legislation to reauthorize key federal grant programs to provide states with funding to help thousands of homeless youth nationwide. This reauthorization would expand protections to youth who are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking.

