



JB Pritzker, Governor


Dulce M. Quintero, Secretary

100 South Grand Avenue, East • Springfield, Illinois 62762  
401 South Clinton Street • Chicago, Illinois 60607

DATE: March 4, 2026

## **MEMORANDUM**

TO: The Honorable Don Harmon, Senate President  
The Honorable John F. Curran, Senate Minority Leader  
The Honorable Emanuel "Chris" Welch, Speaker of the House  
The Honorable Tony McCombie, House Minority Leader

FROM: Dulce Quintero   
Secretary  
Illinois Department of Human Services

SUBJECT: **Commission on Poverty Elimination and Economic Security FY2025 Annual Report**

---

The Illinois Department of Human Services respectfully submits the Commission on Poverty Elimination and Economic Security FY2025 Annual Report on behalf of the Office of Secretary in order to fulfill the requirements set forth in Public Act 101-0636.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Priya Khatkhate, Chief Policy Officer, at (312) 882-1884

cc: The Honorable JB Pritzker, Governor  
John W. Hollman, Clerk of the House  
Tim Anderson, Secretary of the Illinois Senate  
Legislative Research Unit  
State Government Report Center



State of Illinois  
Illinois Department of Human Services

# 2025

ANNUAL

REPORT



ILLINOIS COMMISSION ON POVERTY  
ELIMINATION AND ECONOMIC SECURITY





CONTENTS

**Introduction .....2**

**Pillar 1 - Ensuring Illinois is the Best in Nation for Raising Families..... 10**

**Pillar 2 - Stabilize Homes and Communities..... 13**

**Pillar 3 - Ensure Just and Equitable Access to Economic Security Programs..... 18**

**Pillar 4 - Address Barriers to Paid Work, Education, and Advancement..... 20**

**Pillar 5 - Support Trusted Community-Based Providers to Serve the Needs of Those in Deep Poverty..... 24**

**Conclusion .....25**

**Appendix .....26**

## Introduction

### Commission Background and Objective

The Illinois Commission on Poverty Elimination and Economic Security (Commission), completing its third year, continues to work toward the goal of ending “the intergenerational transmission of poverty by addressing root causes of economic insecurity, racial disparities, and other contributing social, economic, and cultural factors,” as set out in the Intergenerational Poverty Act (IPA). ([305 ILCS 70/95](#)). Over the past year, the Commission and its subcommittees have convened to promote cross-agency collaboration, to examine systemic barriers to exiting poverty, and to advance programs that break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

This report outlines the goals established and the activities achieved for Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25).

The Commission’s work in FY25 built upon the foundation, groundwork, and goals established in Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24), which included research into the root causes of deep poverty and childhood poverty in Illinois and the most promising means to address both the symptoms of the intergenerational cycles of poverty and its underlying causes. The 2024 Report can be found [here](#) or by visiting the [Commission webpage](#), and using the link under Commission Annual Reports.

As of the publishing of this report, much work in Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) has focused on navigating federal policy changes. Federal policies, such as H.R. 1, the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act,” have resulted in dramatic changes to Medicaid, SNAP, housing assistance, and other essential services that shift costs to the State and threaten service capacity.

### Overview of Poverty in Illinois

The Federal Poverty Level is the income threshold, determined by the federal government, below which a family and every individual in it is considered to be in poverty. As shown below, poverty is based on both income level and the number of individuals living in the household. Poverty is defined as falling below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL); deep or extreme poverty is defined as falling below 50% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Almost 1.5 million Illinoisans, or 11.6% of Illinois residents, are living in poverty, and **731,469 or 6% are living in deep poverty**. More than 14% of residents are considered low-income, at 100-199% of FPL (see Figure 1 below). In 2023, which is the most recent data available, all three levels of poverty decreased compared to the previous year: deep poverty fell by 4.2%, poverty by 2.9%, and low income by 0.8%.

Figure 1. Number of IL Residents at or below Various Income Levels<sup>1</sup> (2023 data)

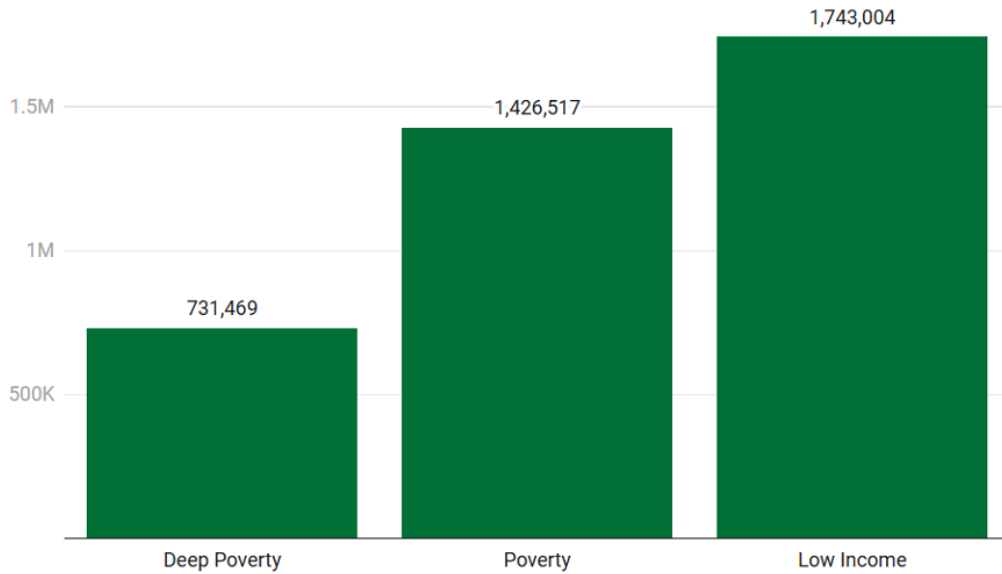


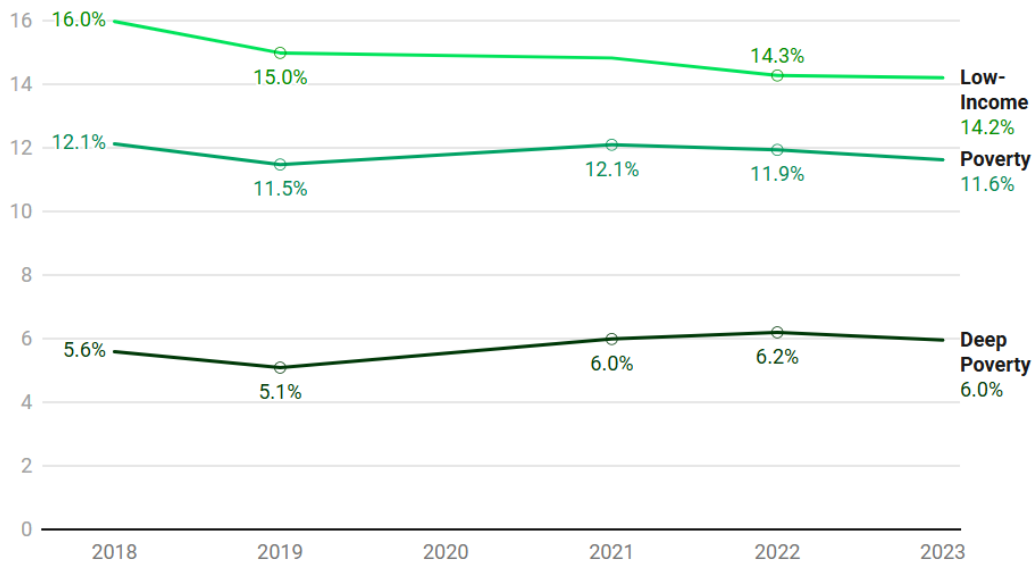
Table 1. Thresholds and Income Limits

Household Size	Deep Poverty	Poverty	Low Income
<i>Threshold</i>	0-49% FPL	0-99% FPL	100 - 199% FPL
One	\$7,290	\$14,580	\$29,160
Two	\$9,860	\$19,720	\$39,440
Three	\$12,430	\$24,860	\$49,720
Four	\$15,000	\$30,000	\$60,000

The most recent data, from 2023, shows a decrease in the number of Illinois residents categorized as low income (down 0.8 percent from 2022 and 5.1 percent from 2021), experiencing poverty (down 2.9 percent from 2022 and 4.8 percent from 2021), and extreme poverty (down 4.2 percent from 2022 and 1.4 percent from 2021). This data is important because in 2021, following the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of people living in poverty increased by 5.5%, and those in extreme poverty rose by 17.7%.

1. U.S. Census Bureau, “Ration of Income to Poverty Level in the Last 12 Months,” American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S17002, 2022, <https://data.census.gov/table?q=B17002&g=040XX00US17&y=2022>

Figure 2. Income Rates Over Time (2018-2023)<sup>2</sup>



While the Chicago metropolitan area—including Cook, DuPage, Lake, and Will counties—holds the counties with the largest number of households living in deep poverty, the highest rates of poverty are found in other parts of Illinois, highlighting significant disparities across the state. According to 2023 data, the top 10 counties with the highest percentages of families living in deep poverty tend to be smaller in population. For example, Vermilion County, in the eastern part of the state between the Indiana border and Champaign County, is the largest county in this group with just over 71,000 residents in 2023. The county with the highest percentage of families living in deep poverty in 2023 was Pulaski County, located along the Ohio River in southwestern Illinois. With a population of only 4,911—the seventh smallest in the state—Pulaski stands out for having the highest rates in all three key poverty measures at the county level: 15.2% of families live below the poverty line, 37.8% of residents fall below 150% of the federal poverty guidelines, and 26.1% of individuals live below the poverty line. This data illustrates how poverty in Illinois is deeply uneven, concentrated in populous urban centers by sheer numbers and in smaller, rural counties by percentage.

2. U.S. Census Bureau, “Ratio of Income to Poverty Level in the Last 12 Months,” American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S17002, 2022 <https://data.census.gov/table?q=B17002&g=040XX00US17&y=2022>

Figure 3. Rate of Poverty (persons below 150% FPL) by IL County

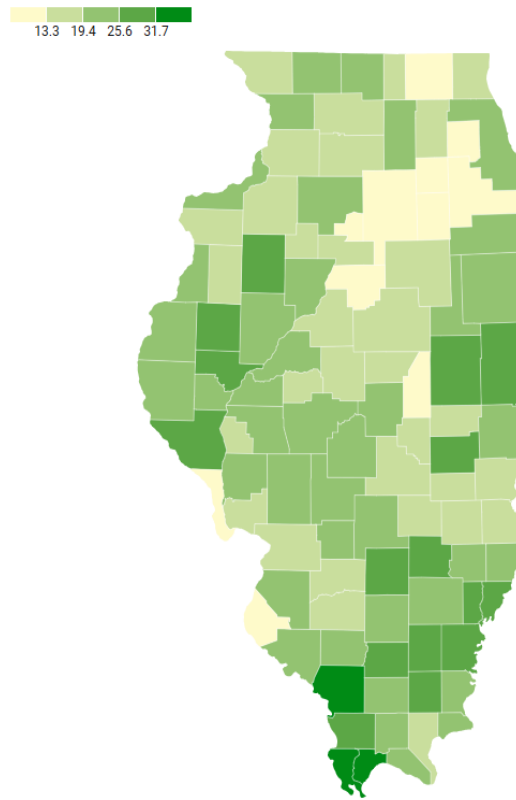


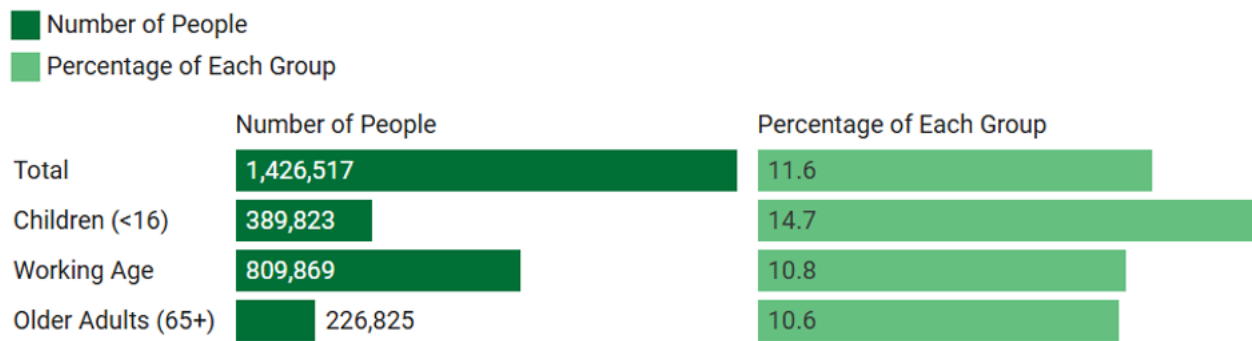
Table 2. Poverty by County 2023 (Top 10 Counties)<sup>3</sup>

County	Population	Families Below Poverty (<100% FPL)	Persons Below 150% FPL	Persons Below Poverty (<100% FPL)
Pulaski	4,911	15.2%	37.8%	26.1%
Alexander	4,695	13.3%	34.2%	21.0%
Johnson	13,326	13.1%	23.6%	16.7%
White	13,401	13.1%	28.9%	16.4%
Saline	22,873	13.0%	26.2%	17.1%
Perry	20,503	12.7%	24.6%	16.9%
Union	16,667	12.4%	27.6%	19.4%
Franklin	37,138	12.3%	29.0%	16.9%
Vermilion	71,652	12.2%	27.6%	17.2%
Jackson	52,141	12.1%	35.1%	21.8%

3. U.S. Census Bureau, “Poverty Status in the Last 12 Months,” American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1701, 2022, <https://data.census.gov>.

In 2023, about 14.7% of Illinois children under age 16—approximately 389,823 individuals—were living in poverty. Similarly, around 10.6% of older adults (65+), totaling roughly 226,825 people, were also living in poverty. Among all individuals experiencing poverty in Illinois, children made up 27.3%, working-age adults comprised the largest share at 56.8%, and older adults accounted for 15.9%. These figures highlight that while working-age adults represent the majority of those living in poverty, as a percentage of each population, children remain disproportionately affected.

**Figure 4. Poverty (100% of FPL) by Age Group (2023)<sup>34</sup>**



Illinois residents with disabilities face a significantly higher risk of poverty compared to those without disabilities. Although people with disabilities make up 12.6% of the state’s population, they represent a disproportionately large share—20.4%—of those living in poverty. Furthermore, among individuals experiencing extreme poverty, nearly 19.6% have a disability.<sup>45</sup>

People of color in Illinois experience significantly higher poverty rates than White residents. In 2023, 23% of Black/African American residents and 14.1% of Hispanic/Latino residents lived below the poverty line, compared to just 8.6% of White residents. This means about one in four Black residents and one in seven Latino residents live in poverty, compared to one in 12 White residents. Although Black residents make up 13% of the state’s population, they represent 25.8% of those living in poverty. However, White residents comprise the largest share of people in poverty, accounting for 45.1%, reflecting their larger overall population size in Illinois.

[gov/table?q=s1701&g=040XX00US17&y=2022](https://data.census.gov/table?q=s1701&g=040XX00US17&y=2022)

4. *Ibid*

5. U.S. Census Bureau, “Ratio of Income to Poverty Level in the Past 12 Months by Disability Status,” American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table C18131, 2022, <https://data.census.gov/table?q=c18131&g=040XX00US17&y=2022>

Figure 5. Poverty by Race/Ethnicity in Illinois (2023)<sup>6</sup>

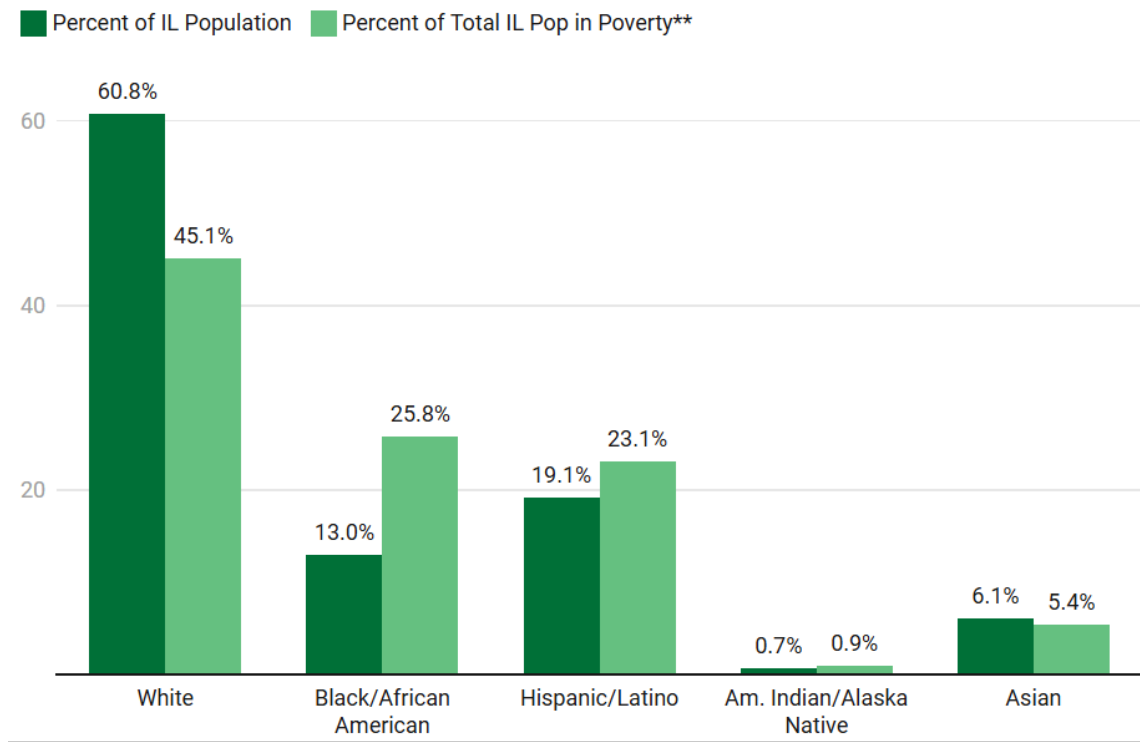


Table 3. Poverty by Race/Ethnicity in Illinois (2023)

	Total IL Population	Percent of IL Population	Below Poverty	Percent below poverty within each group*	Percent of Total IL Pop in Poverty**
White	7,460,194	60.8%	643,047	8.6%	45.1%
Black/African American	1,599,146	13.0%	367,486	23.0%	25.8%
Hispanic/Latino	2,341,252	19.1%	328,954	14.1%	23.1%
Am. Indian/Alaska Native	85,509	0.7%	12,228	14.3%	0.9%
Asian	744,160	6.1%	77,468	10.4%	5.4%
TOTAL	12,230,261		1,429,183		

\* Within each racial group, this number indicates the percentage in poverty, i.e., out of the White population in Illinois, 8.6% are below poverty.

\*\* Of those who are in poverty in Illinois, this number indicates the percentage of each racial group, i.e., White people represent 45.1% of those who are in poverty.

6. U.S. Census Bureau, “Poverty Status in the Last 12 Months,” American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1701, 2022, <https://data.census.gov/table?q=s1701&g=040XX00US17&y=2022>

In terms of families in Illinois (rather than individuals), 5.3% of families headed by a White householder live below the poverty level, compared to much higher rates among families headed by people of color: 18.5% for Black householders, 11.6% for Latino householders, 11.3% for American Indian/Alaska Native householders, and 7.5% for Asian householders.

More than 12% of Illinois families with children under age 18 live in poverty, including about 10% of families with children under age 5. These figures show that a substantial number of Illinois youth—especially those in larger families—are growing up in economically vulnerable households.<sup>7</sup> Poverty rates increase with family size: 9.8% of families with one or two children live in poverty, compared to 20.4% of families with three or four children, and 37.3% of families with five or more children.

In 2023, poverty rates varied by citizenship status. Among American-born citizens, 5.9% experienced deep poverty and 11.4% lived in poverty overall. Foreign-born residents had slightly higher rates, with 6.3% in deep poverty and 12.7% in poverty. However, foreign-born individuals who became naturalized citizens had the lowest poverty rates of all groups: 3.9% experienced deep poverty and 9.2% lived in poverty.<sup>8</sup>

In 2023, among Illinois residents living in poverty, the majority (67%) were born in Illinois. Another 15% were born in other U.S. states, while 16.5% were foreign-born. The remaining 1.3% were born outside the United States to U.S. citizen parents. These figures show that poverty in Illinois is predominantly concentrated among long-term residents rather than Recent arrivals, with over two-thirds of those in poverty being Illinois natives.<sup>9</sup>

## Overview of Comprehensive Approach

The Commission seeks to improve policymakers' understanding of poverty and economic insecurity in Illinois, and makes policy and other recommendations to the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the State that promote equal opportunity for economic security. In 2022, based on extensive research and feedback collected from stakeholders, the Commission adopted a comprehensive approach to addressing poverty to reach the statutory goals of

- reducing deep poverty in Illinois by 50% by 2026;
- eliminating child poverty in Illinois by 2031; and
- eliminating all poverty in Illinois by 2036.

The Commission identified five action pillars, issued in the Commission's 2022 five-year strategic plan, which are the guiding force for its work:

1. Ensure Illinois is Best in Nation for Raising Families
2. Stabilize Homes and Communities
3. Ensure Just and Equitable Access to Economic Security Programs
4. Address Barriers to Paid Work, Education, and Advancement
5. Support Trusted Community-Based Providers to Serve the Needs of Those In Deep Poverty

7. U.S. Census Bureau, "Poverty Status in the Last 12 Months of Families," American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1702, 2022, <https://data.census.gov/table?q=s1702&g=040XX00US17&y=2022>.

8. U.S. Census Bureau, "Selected Characteristics of People at Specified Levels of Poverty in the Past 12 Months," American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1703, 2022, <https://data.census.gov/table?q=s1703&g=040XX00US17&y=2022>.

9. U.S. Census Bureau, "Place of Birth by Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months in the United States," American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table B06012, 2022, <https://data.census.gov/table?q=b06012&g=040XX00US17&y=2022>.

Organized around each of these five pillars, the Commission's subcommittees are designed to unify experts in the field and to create and advance annual goals that are incremental steps toward the overarching statutory goals.

**Pillar 1: Ensuring Illinois is the Best in Nation for Raising Families**

Expand Access to High Quality Early Childhood Services, Including Early Intervention, Home Visiting, and Affordable Childcare

Explore Ways to Replicate the Federal Child Tax Credit for Families Raising Children

Expand Access to Free and Reduced - Price School Meals

Increase Participation in WIC by Improving Accessibility for Those Who are Eligible



The Commission identified the following strategies to address some of the long-term implications of poverty that often begin in childhood.

## **Strategy 1A – Expand Access to High Quality Early Childhood Services, Including Early Intervention, Home Visiting, and Affordable Childcare**

In the FY24 Report, the Commission highlighted progress towards expanding capacity to serve families with high-quality infant/toddler care by making the provision of this care economically viable for providers. Most notably, the report highlighted the launch of Smart Start Transition Grants to prepare for the future Smart Start Workforce Grants. Through Smart Start Grants and beyond, in FY25 the State expanded its investment in the early childhood services network, detailed below.

Through its Division of Early Childhood (DEC) and Division of Family and Community Services (FCS), the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) is advancing this work as part of Smart Start Illinois, a multi-year strategy to strengthen the State's early childhood system.

In SFY25, GRF investments in IDHS-DEC's early childhood programs grew by \$169.5 m to include:

- \$6 M increase to the Early Intervention Program,
- \$5 M increase to the Home Visiting Program,
- \$36.5 M increase for CCAP, and
- \$122 M towards Smart Start Child Care

These efforts aimed to stabilize the early childhood workforce, expand equitable access to care, and create a sustainable foundation for high-quality infant and toddler programming, statewide.

IDHS's Smart Start Early Intervention program increased reimbursement rates by 10%, resulting in a reduction in Service Coordinator caseloads of 10% and a reduction in service delays of 24%. Concurrently, IDHS' DEC conducted comprehensive research into EI systems and costs, releasing a report outlining a cost model for EI service provision, a plan for a demonstration project to address systemic barriers to EI, and an aggregated report of national best practices.

Smart Start Workforce Grants, in their first year, resulted in a total investment of \$212M to support child care professionals' wages, professional development, and career advancement. These grants helped childcare programs to offer competitive wages and, therefore, attract and retain educators. More than 4,000 child care programs received awards, impacting more than 20,000 members of the childcare workforce and more than 150,000 children in childcare programs. Across the state, 82% of all eligible child care programs received at least one round of grant funding.

The Smart Start Home Visiting program, administered by IDHS, continued to expand, nearing a \$28M total annual investment in FY25. Smart Start Home Visiting supported a 7% expansion in home visiting slots (compared to FY24) and a 41% growth in services since pre-pandemic levels. Home visitor salaries increased by 16%, resulting in over 95% of funded positions being filled. These investments have strengthened the Home Visiting ecosystem across Illinois.

Additionally, over FY25, the State has expanded home visiting and maternal health services. The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) awarded \$4.5 million in grants to improve access to critical early childhood and maternal health services across the state. These funds support programs that connect families with essential services during pregnancy and the early years of a child's development.

Grant recipients are establishing comprehensive support systems that include home visitation programs, culturally responsive doula services, new maternal and child health centers, and behavioral health support for substance use and mental health needs. These services provide families with direct access to professional guidance and resources during the crucial period from pregnancy through early childhood.

The Commission supports IDHS's transformation of Maternal Health in FY26, as its Office of Family Wellness, Bureau of Maternal and Child Health sunsets its 30-year-old maternal and child health legacy programs and implements new programs which use a strengths-based, equity-centered approach. FY25 ended with funding opportunities being launched for three programs:

- **Better Birth Outcomes-Navigation** in the City of Chicago is designed to connect families with the various resources available to them and support the Chicago Family Connects program.
- **Better Birth Outcomes-Comprehensive** will cover the majority of the state outside of Chicago and is designed to provide a nurse assessment for pregnant and postpartum persons and their new infants at the first contact followed by the specific care level needed through the baby's sixth month.
- **High-Risk Family Case Management Pilot Program** was launched late in 2024 in 3 locations offering nurse home visits monthly through pregnancy and the first 6 months of the baby's life and is being expanded to 3 additional counties.

These programmatic changes align the work of the Bureau with the Improving Health Care for Pregnant and Postpartum Individuals Act (20 ILCS/10-23) and were created following listening sessions with families and providers across the state in the fall of 2024.

## **Strategy 1B – Explore Ways to Replicate the Federal Child Tax Credit for Families Raising Children**

Following the successful enactment of a state Child Tax Credit benefit in 2024, Illinois has continued to expand the benefit. In 2024, Commission members were part of a coalition that worked collaboratively with State legislators and the Governor's Office to pass a bill in the 2024 legislative session implementing a Child Tax Credit in Illinois. As part of the FY25 State budget, Illinois enacted a child tax credit for working families with a child under the age of 12 for tax year 2024 (equivalent to calendar year). The tax credit was 20% of the taxpayer's State earned income tax credit with an estimated value of \$50 million. In tax year 2025, the tax credit will double to 40 percent of the taxpayer's State earned income tax credit, or a value of about \$100 million.

## Strategy 1C – Expand Access to Free and Reduced-Price School Meals

Commission members, in concert with the Illinois Commission to End Hunger, helped pass a bill in the 2024 legislative session that removes access barriers to school breakfast for low-income children to decrease food insecurity, help improve academic performance, reduce behavioral problems, and improve children's diets.<sup>10</sup>

In January 2025, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) awarded \$300,000 in Breakfast After the Bell Grant program funding to help schools start or expand more flexible breakfast models, with priority given to schools with higher percentages of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

Forty-six schools received an average of \$6,522 in FY25 Breakfast After the Bell Grants, benefitting 21,364 students overall, of which 89% were eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Schools used grant funds to cover costs such as mobile breakfast carts, portable milk coolers, and food transport containers – items necessary to add/expand one or more breakfast after the bell service models. Among the 46 awarded schools, 13 implemented breakfast service in the classroom, 36 implemented grab-and-go breakfast stations, and second-chance breakfast was offered at 25 schools. Following implementation, these schools have reported positive impacts and indicated improved access to breakfast has shown an increase in overall breakfast participation among students.

## Strategy 1D – Increase Participation in WIC by Improving Accessibility for Those Who are Eligible

In FY25, the State educated grandparents about WIC benefits and expanded WIC payment options at grocery stores to reach grandparents who are raising young children. Through virtual training sessions and educational materials, the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) partnered with IDHS and the Greater Chicago Food Depository to inform providers in the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren program about WIC eligibility and benefits, ensuring that grandparents caring for children under age 5 know about this nutrition assistance.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) helps WIC participants access their benefits at more locations throughout the state. DCEO ensures that all grocery stores receiving funding through the Illinois Grocery Initiative—including new stores in food deserts and existing stores receiving equipment upgrades—accept WIC payments. This requirement is mandated by the Illinois Grocery Initiative Act.

These coordinated efforts address two key barriers to WIC participation: lack of awareness among eligible caregivers and limited places where benefits can be used.

WIC participation has increased over FY25 from 170,387 in June 2024 to 174,700 in June 2025. Additionally, child participation has increased from 86,531 to 91,036 in the same time frame. WIC has also entered an MOU with Illinois' Head Start Association that requires local Illinois WIC agencies to partner locally with Head Start to make it easy for families to participate in both programs from infancy to age 5.

---

10. Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), "Benefits of School Breakfast," <https://frac.org/programs/school-breakfast-program/benefits-school-breakfast>

## Pillar 2: Stabilize Homes and Communities

Reduce Homelessness by Half and Ensure Housing Affordability and Accessibility

Invest in High-Quality, Specialized Supports for Persons Experiencing Mental Health and Substance Use-Related Crises

Invest in Interventions that Address Cycles of Trauma and Violence in our Communities

### Strategy 2A – Reduce Homelessness by Half and Ensure Housing Affordability and Accessibility

After record levels of homelessness in calendar year 2024, data from calendar year 2025 shows a decrease in both sheltered and unsheltered homeless populations.

From January 2024 to January 2025, Illinois’s overall Point-in-Time Count (PIT Count), which counts both sheltered and unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness, dropped from 25,832 to 14,571 people. This was a 44% decrease. Eight of Illinois’ 19 Continuums of Care (CoC) saw increases in the number of people counted and eleven CoCs saw decreases. The Chicago CoC saw a 60% decrease, due in large part to a decrease in the new arrival population experiencing homelessness in Chicago. Of Chicago’s PIT population of 7,452 in January 2025, 1,282 people were recent arrivals.

Illinois saw an overall unsheltered PIT count drop from 2,664 people counted in 2024 to 2,074 counted in 2025. This was a 22% decrease in the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Seven CoCs saw increases and twelve CoCs saw decreases in the number of unsheltered people. The Northwestern Illinois and Kane County Continuums of Care each saw single year decreases of more than 80% in the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

The Commission supports the work and leadership of the Illinois Office to Prevent and End Homelessness, the Illinois Interagency Task Force to End Homelessness, and the Illinois Community Advisory Council on Homelessness to ensure safe, stable housing for every Illinois resident. Housing is a key social determinant of health, and stable housing can have a significant impact on physical and mental health, as well as access to steady, well-paying employment and community resources and supports.<sup>11</sup>

[Illinois’ recent, first-of-its kind study on Black homelessness](#) found that in Illinois, Black people are eight times more likely to become homeless at some point in their lives than White residents. While this racial disparity in homelessness is not unique to Illinois, the state’s gap is one of the most acute in the country. Illinois’ racial disparity in homelessness is double the national rate.

Following historic investment in emergency rental assistance during COVID-19, the State once again invested in housing stability by putting \$75M in FY25 and \$50M in FY26 into a Court-Based Rental Assistance Program (CBRAP), which helps low-income renters navigate and prevent eviction and the devastating consequences

11. Arenas, I., Scarborough, W, Lehmann, A., Brown K., and Lewis A.E., Black Homelessness in Illinois: Structural Drivers of Inequality Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy (IRRPP) University of Illinois at Chicago (2024) [https://news.wttw.com/sites/default/files/article/file-attachments/BlackHomelessnessInIllinois\\_FULL%20REPORT\\_0.pdf](https://news.wttw.com/sites/default/files/article/file-attachments/BlackHomelessnessInIllinois_FULL%20REPORT_0.pdf)

that can follow. In FY25, the first year CBRAP was state funded, more than \$63M was distributed to more than 7,680 families facing eviction. 39% of these households earned less than \$36,000 per year.

In FY25, Pillar 2 continued its work to advocate for expanding housing options for middle-income families, creating supportive housing for vulnerable populations, preventing homelessness through pre-release planning, and preventing senior homelessness. As part of Executive Order 2024-03, a Director of Housing Solutions role was created and filled in the Governor's Office. To continue the work recommended by EO 2024-03 and the Ad-Hoc Missing Middle Housing Solutions Advisory Committee, DCEO will lead key initiatives to make housing more affordable and accessible for working families who struggle to find reasonably priced options.

The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) has significantly expanded supportive housing capacity through multiple targeted programs:

Through the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program, IHDA funded 218 new supportive housing units in July 2024, including three developments specifically designed for permanent supportive housing that received over \$8 million in combined federal and State tax credits. The Permanent Supportive Housing Development Program added another 129 units in May 2025, with \$50 million in funding across seven developments, including \$15 million specifically targeting individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

IHDA's Non-Congregate Shelter Development Program allocated \$37.5 million to create 241 shelter units with 583 beds, providing immediate housing alternatives for those experiencing homelessness. IHDA awarded \$40 million for nearly 200 units in four non-congregate shelter developments in FY26. This investment will add more than 400 much-needed shelter beds in Cook County.

The Supportive Housing Institute has trained 22 development teams through intensive technical assistance, with IHDA extending the program for two additional years due to its success in increasing supportive housing construction. Additionally, the Housing for Justice-Involved Individuals Program awarded nearly \$11 million in December 2024 to create 190 beds supporting individuals reentering communities from the criminal justice system.

The Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) is working to prevent homelessness among individuals reentering communities by securing housing placements before release. The Department partners with Cook County's Flexible Housing Pool to place individuals with mental health and ADA needs into long-term supportive housing, and collaborates with IDHS's Housing is Recovery program to ensure those with high mental health needs have stable supportive housing and continued care upon release. Additionally, IDOC works with both the U.S. and Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to screen veterans in custody and implement housing referral processes to prevent veteran homelessness.

IDoA strategically redirected its Emergency Senior Services funds to specifically target older adults who are homeless or at risk of losing their housing.

These coordinated efforts create a comprehensive approach to housing challenges, from preventing homelessness among vulnerable seniors to providing permanent supportive housing and expanding options for middle-income families.

## Strategy 2B – Invest in High-Quality, Specialized Supports for Persons Experiencing Mental Health and Substance Use-Related Crises

Persons with severe mental illness (SMI) and substance use disorder (SUD) are disproportionately likely to experience poverty. SMI and SUD themselves are often co-occurring, thus requiring holistic care. To better provide holistic support, IDHS established a new, integrated **Division of Behavioral Health & Recovery (DBHR)** that encompasses the roles and responsibilities of the former Divisions of Mental Health (DMH) and Substance Use Prevention and Recovery (SUPR). This integration is expected to enhance outcomes for Illinoisans, including expanding access to high-quality, specialized supports. The new Division began operating on July 1, 2025, with ongoing implementation activities extending over several years.

In FY25, Illinois continued to advance a Unified Crisis Continuum, comprising: “Someone to call” (988/CARES hotline), “Someone to respond” (statewide mobile crisis response teams and other non-law-enforcement crisis response), and “Somewhere to go” (Living Room programs and alternatives to hospitalization). IDHS and the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) met regularly to align system design across these components, and legislation passed in Spring 2025 established a designated funding stream for 988 and crisis services via a surcharge on telecommunications services. Thus, while the original \$35 million federal funding catalyzed mobile crisis capacity, the State has since moved toward more permanent infrastructure and funding mechanisms to sustain and scale crisis response across Illinois.

In FY25, IDOC expanded coordination of mental health and developmental disability support for justice-involved individuals returning to their communities. Through partnership with IDHS’s Housing is Recovery program, IDOC connects individuals with significant behavioral health needs to stable supportive housing and ongoing treatment. IDOC also collaborates with IDHS’s Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) and DBHR to identify incarcerated individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Together, the agencies initiate waiver applications and facilitate enrollment into residential or community-based services before release, ensuring continuity of care and a smoother reentry process.

IDPH is implementing several targeted programs to provide specialized support for individuals experience substance use crises: building community-based harm reduction capacity, supporting rural first responders, and delivering direct crisis intervention.

- The Harm Reduction Community Linkages Program strengthens organizations statewide that serve people with opioid and substance use disorders. This initiative helps these organizations expand their reach and create better connections between harm reduction services, prevention programs, and treatment options, ensuring individuals in crisis can access comprehensive support.
- Two rural-focused programs address the unique challenges of substance use crises in underserved areas. The First Responder Post-Overdose Outreach program trains law enforcement and emergency personnel to connect overdose survivors with immediate support services after a crisis. Meanwhile, the Naloxone Distribution Initiative provides overdose prevention training and life-saving Narcan to public safety agencies across 24 rural counties in southern-central Illinois.
- The Block-by-Block Initiative uses fatal overdose statistics to identify the most affected neighborhoods. Teams then conduct door-to-door outreach in these high-risk areas, providing immediate access to naloxone, fentanyl test strips, training on their use, and information about local treatment services.

## Strategy 2C – Invest in Interventions that Address Cycles of Trauma and Violence in our Communities

Illinois continues to make investments to address community trauma, historic racism, and violence through targeted, integrated behavioral health services, and economic opportunities. IDHS' [Reentry Resource Hub](#) highlights the breadth of resources the State provides across housing, employment, mental health services, and legal assistance. The Healing-Centered Illinois Task Force, led by Lt. Gov. Julianna Stratton, issued its 2024 report<sup>12</sup> including recommendations to build a trauma-informed and healing-centered justice system. In FY25, Illinois made progress towards the report's recommendations and towards nationwide best practices in protecting victim's rights to receive services, providing mental health responses to firearm violence, and creating career and life pathways for returning individuals.

One recommendation in the Healing-Centered Illinois Task Force Report was to create trauma-response protocols to foster healing within communities. IDHS, through its Division of Behavioral Health & Recovery and Office of Firearm Violence Prevention, has launched a groundbreaking Mental Health Response to Mass Firearm Violence pilot program, which ensures that when mass shootings occur, culturally appropriate, community-driven mental health support is available in the immediate aftermath and on an ongoing basis. This work represents a step towards highly targeted behavioral health supports to communities in crisis.

In terms of reentry support, IDOC addresses cycles of trauma by providing comprehensive pre-release planning that connects individuals to community supports. This includes collaborating with IDHS' Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) to help high-needs individuals apply for employment and rehabilitative community services before release, identifying and supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities through waiver programs, and ensuring veterans receive appropriate housing and service referrals. Related, in FY25 IDHS initiated the Women's Dignity in Choice Program, which creates career and life pathways for formerly incarcerated women returning to the South and West Sides of Chicago. Results of this pilot program will inform how the State provides support to returning individuals, especially preventative measures



12. <https://ltgov.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/ltgov/documents/archived-reports/2024%20HCITF%20Report.pdf>

that proactively address reentry needs. Lastly, IDHS, the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness, and IDOC continue to run the Permanent Supportive Housing project to serve individuals returning from prison to Central and Southern Illinois who have serious mental illness, sex offense registry requirements, and/or convictions for arson-related crimes.

In the workplace, the Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL) continues to enforce the Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act (VESSA), which provides critical workplace protections for individuals breaking cycles of violence and trauma. This law recognizes that survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, gender violence, and other violent crimes—as well as their family members—need time and resources to access essential services without risking their employment. IDOL conducts ongoing education for employers and employees about their rights and responsibilities under the law and, in FY25, investigated 33 complaints about VESSA violations and processed 36 cases.

These areas of focus for Pillar Two demonstrate the ongoing commitment to stabilizing homes and communities across the state.





## Pillar 3: Ensure Just and Equitable Access to Economic Security Programs

Create a Single, Accessible Platform for Individuals to Enroll in All State Benefits

Increase Uptake, Access, and Value of Public Benefits for Those in Extreme Poverty

Deploy Direct Cash Assistance Programs to Lift Families Out of Poverty

### Strategy 3A – Create a Single, Accessible Platform for Individuals to Enroll in All State Benefits

The Pillar 3 subcommittee continues to advocate for multi-benefits access beyond the State’s integrated benefits system, the Application for Benefits Eligibility (ABE). The Public Benefits Project Steering Committee, which includes IDHS and HFS, is working to help develop a unified platform that would allow residents to apply for and manage all State benefits through a single, user-friendly system. This cross-agency collaboration aims to eliminate the current fragmented process where individuals must navigate multiple departments and applications to access the various State services for which they qualify.

### Strategy 3B – Increase Uptake, Access, and Value of Public Benefits for Those in Extreme Poverty

The State administers several federal antipoverty programs, including Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and Unemployment Insurance, among others. In FY25, the State focused on navigating unprecedented federal action against public benefits, particularly implementing added work requirements, changing eligibility rules, and other monumental changes in federal statute, budget, and policy. The State continues this work in FY26, as well as expanding on the progress outlined below.

In FY25, State agencies expanded Medicaid access for justice-involved individuals. The Illinois Department of Corrections is implementing the 1115 Medicaid waiver to ensure individuals have healthcare coverage upon release. IDOC is collaborating with IDHS and HFS to extend the pre-release Medicaid application timeframe from 60 days to 90 days before release, providing more time to complete enrollment and avoid coverage gaps.

IDOC is also increasing education efforts to help individuals in custody understand the importance of Medicaid enrollment and their managed care organization options, ensuring that they can make informed decisions about their healthcare coverage. Additionally, IDOC is partnering with community organizations to identify reentry services that can be provided before release and billed to Illinois Medicaid under the 1115 waiver.

These coordinated efforts ensure that individuals leaving the justice system—who often face extreme poverty and limited access to healthcare—can immediately access medical care and supportive services through Medicaid, preventing health crises, and supporting successful reintegration into their communities.

### Strategy 3C – Deploy Direct Cash Assistance Programs to Lift Families Out of Poverty

As part of an ongoing multiyear effort, the State’s Office to Prevent and End Homelessness and the Commission continued their partnership with the University of Chicago Inclusive Economy Lab (IEL) on the Stability Investment for Family Housing (SIFH) Guaranteed Income Pilot. In FY25, the initiative completed a third and final round of funding, both accepting applicants and issuing benefits through a lottery selection. Notably, in this round, funds were distributed to families through IDHS benefit cards, improving IDHS administrative capacity to operate similar projects in the future. The initiative focuses on helping families experiencing homelessness to exit shelters and stabilize through the provision of a one-time cash transfer. Related data collection and research activities, including initial results anticipated to be published in FY26, continue and will help Illinois make well-informed policy decisions on reducing homelessness and supporting families escape deep poverty.<sup>13</sup>

On the legislative front, Subcommittee members played a role in the creation and promotion of a [fact sheet for the Child Tax Credit](#) and also assisted in documenting a district-by-district impact analysis [and a legislative toolkit](#) for community members and advocates to talk to their legislators about the Child Tax Credit.



13. <https://urbanlabs.uchicago.edu/projects/guaranteed-income>  
Brady, F., Croes, M., Robinson, S., Schexnider, M., Stapleton, S., Wallace, N., University of Chicago Urban Labs (2023) Chicago Resilient Communities Pilot  
<https://urbanlabs.uchicago.edu/attachments/5c577639c291dbf0e037e3ebc5627cd73985b2d9/store/ecddd230d6b35dba45fd6c61ff1d0edb15e4491326aa9afe6894cc955/CRCP+First+Look+Report+Winter+2023.pdf>



## **Pillar 4: Address Barriers to Paid Work, Education, and Advancement**

**Address Barriers that Prevent Consistent Work at a Living Wage by Investing in Transportation, Childcare, Paid Leave, Broadband, Legal Aid, Reentry Services, Disability and Rehabilitation Supports, and Immigrant and Refugee Services**

**Invest in Apprenticeship, Work-Based Learning, and Barrier-Reduction Programs so Individuals Can Learn and Train While Supporting their Family**

**Expand Access to Legal Counsel for Illinoisans and Ensure Equitable Access to Court and Legal Processes**

### **Strategy 4A – Address Barriers that Prevent Consistent Work at a Living Wage by Investing in Transportation, Childcare, Paid Leave, Broadband, Legal Aid, Reentry Services, Disability and Rehabilitation Supports, and Immigrant and Refugee Services**

In FY25, Illinois and the Commission made progress towards address a number of the systemic challenges and barriers that make it especially difficult for those living in poverty to maintain stable, well-paid employment or to complete the education that would help them hold such jobs.

One such advance was the passage of the Dignity in Pay Act (DIPA), which charts a gradual 5-year process to expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities and phases out 14(c) subminimum wage authorization in Illinois.

In FY25, State agencies have also focused on expanding broadband access for economic opportunity, protecting worker rights and wages, and supporting successful reentry. DCEO’s Office of Broadband continued to invest the \$1 billion awarded in June 2024 through the Connect Illinois program to build high-quality broadband infrastructure to every home, business, and community anchor institution statewide. The Office of Broadband is issuing grants for broadband deployment projects starting in early 2026 and continuing through 2030; approximately 162,000 locations across the state will gain high-speed, quality broadband. The State also awarded \$2 million in Digital Equity Capacity Kickstarter Grants to organizations providing digital equity programs like computer centers and digital skills classes, ensuring all Illinoisans have the broadband access, devices, and skills needed to participate in the modern economy. Lastly, the State is addressing the labor shortage in the broadband industry by launching the Broadband Workforce Development Initiative in partnership with Heartland Forward. This initiative creates the Illinois Broadband Job Board to connect workers to opportunities for both employment and training.

Additionally, IDOL enforces critical wage protection laws including the Illinois Wage Payment and Collection Act and Illinois Minimum Wage Law, ensuring workers receive promised wages and maintaining a wage floor for all employees. In FY25, IDOL collected millions in unpaid back wages for low-wage workers, including a \$4 million settlement addressing labor exploitation of migrant child workers. This work, in addition to work enforcing the Paid Leave for All Workers Act, ensures both employers and employees understand their rights and responsibilities.

Towards supporting successful reentry, the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) participates in reentry summits and resource fairs hosted by the Department of Corrections, helping individuals preparing for release access benefits and services that support stable employment and community reintegration.

The Commission continues to support of the work of the Illinois Welcoming Centers (IWC), which help to eliminate barriers immigrants may have to approaching State services and achieving self-sufficiency and help support the resilience of immigrant and refugee communities in Illinois. The IWC Program funds community-based organizations across the state that in turn serve their local immigrant and refugee communities with case management, crisis intervention, referrals to other resources, workshops, mental health and wellness services, employment services, and more. In FY25, 49 organizations served more than 45,000 clients statewide, a 40% increase in total households served in FY24.

To support low-income individuals seeking work, IDHS administers the Employment Barrier Reduction Fund (EBRF), a program that provides assistance to enter and sustain employment. EBRF provides supportive services to help job seekers/workers pay for expenses like utilities, transportation, childcare, uniforms, tools/equipment, and other expenses that bridge the gap between unemployment and economic stability. The program has grown each year and now has a budget of over \$3 million and serves over 6,000 people annually. In FY25, EBRF worked through an intermediary, IACAA (Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies), to distribute supportive services to low-income job seekers/workers in all 102 Illinois counties.

Lastly, the State made strides towards increasing the accessibility of childcare, allowing more parents to thrive in the workforce. In FY25, IDHS continued its partnership with Code for America to develop the first digital Child Care Assistance Program application. Applicant satisfaction is over 90% in pilot areas in DeKalb and Southern Illinois and, in FY26, IDHS is committed to completing this partnership with Code for America, rolling out the digital application statewide, and transitioning sustainable maintenance and operation of the application to the Department of Innovation and Technology.

## **Strategy 4B – Invest in Apprenticeship, Work-Based Learning, and Barrier-Reduction Programs so Individuals Can Learn and Train While Supporting their Family**

In FY25, the State made progress towards increasing the number of education and training programs, that help individuals attain well-paid jobs or education while still working. These programs are essential for those who cannot afford to pause paid work while gaining valuable skills.

DCEO expanded apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities by releasing \$5 million in funding on January 30, 2025, to support high-impact Apprenticeship Intermediaries that help individuals and businesses enter apprenticeship programs. This initiative targets community-based organizations, municipalities, educational institutions, industry associations, and nonprofits to expand apprenticeship access across Illinois.

In terms of implementing clean energy workforce development, under the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, DCEO has established five workforce programs, including the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship, Clean Energy Workforce Network Hubs, Energy Transition Navigators, the Returning Resident Program, and the Barrier Reduction Program. With 11 of 14 statutorily required hubs now operational, these programs are enrolling participants in clean energy occupational training, serving over 1,500 individuals in various stages from outreach to program enrollment.

To provide employer-driven training with barrier reduction, The Job Training and Economic Development (JTED) Program offers training and flexible funding for emergency basic needs, allowing participants to address immediate challenges while training. The first round served more than 2,900 individuals in FY25, while the Illinois Manufacturers' Association's STAMP program used JTED funding to provide manufacturing training to over 6,000 high school students across 18 school districts. A second round of JTED will occur during FY26.

For justice-involved individuals, the Home Illinois Workforce Pilot Project is a \$6 million partnership between DCEO, the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness, and the Interagency Task Force on Homelessness. The Illinois PROWD Initiative serves approximately 500 individuals in minimum-security facilities and reentry centers, providing education during incarceration, and workforce connections after release. As of March 2025, Illinois has served 342 participants in this program. Collaborative reentry efforts resulted in 1,845 individuals enrolling in WIOA Title I Programs and over 650 in JTED programs, supported by virtual job fairs, vocational rehabilitation (VR) training pilots, and clean jobs programming.

IDOC is significantly expanding vocational programming to provide individuals with industry-recognized skills and certifications while incarcerated and a pathway to employment after release. These vocational programs include:

- **Building Construction and Manufacturing Skills:** IDOC will launch construction training including welding programs at Kewanee Correctional Center with both AWS and U.S. Department of Labor certification, HVAC technician training at Western Correctional Center, and expanded metal fabrication programming using upgraded equipment.
- **Developing Agricultural and Food Production Expertise:** expanding urban agriculture programming at Hill Correctional Center to include vertical farming techniques and at Dixon Correctional Center for broader agricultural training. Lincoln Warehouse will implement a gardening program leading to general farm worker U.S. Department of Labor certification.
- **Advancing Transportation and Automotive Training:** IDOC is implementing diesel automotive technician programming at East Moline Correctional Center and expanding simulator training programs, with goals of 50 completions each at Robinson and Vandalia Correctional Centers and additional simulator training at Logan Correctional Center.
- **Creating Innovative Technology and Manufacturing Programs:** IDOC is upgrading technical programs to industry-standard software, including modernizing drafting and engraving programs at Graham Correctional Center and Shawnee Correctional Center, and updating the graphic design program at Danville Correctional Center. These improvements ensure participants learn on current technology platforms used in today's workforce.

State agencies have also focused on advancing women in trades; IDOL received \$1.35 million in federal funding through the Tradeswomen Build Infrastructure program, partnering with Chicago Women in Trades and other organizations to support women's entry into infrastructure and construction careers through specialized training and mentorship.

To develop direct care worker career pathways, IDoA partnered with RUSH University to develop a core training curriculum for direct care workers, creating specialized certificates and mentoring programs that establish career ladders within the direct care workforce.

## Strategy 4C – Expand Access to Legal Counsel for Illinoisans and Ensure Equitable Access to Court and Legal Processes

The Commission and Subcommittee focused significant energy in this area in FY25. State agencies have expanded access to legal counsel for Illinoisans through emergency legal and financial support for individuals facing eviction and strengthening legal advocacy for older adults.

To prevent evictions through emergency legal and financial support, IHDA has disbursed over \$57 million in FY25 through its Court-Based Rental Assistance Program (CBRAP), providing critical support to low-income households facing eviction proceedings. This program offers up to \$15,000 in emergency rental assistance and \$500 for court costs, helping families remain housed while navigating the legal system. More than 6,900 households received assistance through this program in FY25.

In response to updated federal Older Americans Act requirements, IDoA is establishing an enhanced Legal Assistance Developer position to provide dedicated leadership in securing and maintaining the legal rights of older individuals. This role will focus on expanding access and ensuring older adults can effectively navigate legal processes that affect their health, safety, and independence.

The Commission also supported the State’s work with immigrant communities. Illinois Access to Justice (ILA2J) is a statewide initiative designed to mitigate the consequences of deportation and family separation within vulnerable immigrant communities by expanding access to holistic legal and case management services, providing emergency assistance, and cultivating local leadership through Community Navigators. The program prioritizes broad-based community education and direct legal support for immigrants navigating immigration proceedings, while also addressing the impacts of incarceration and family separation on individuals and communities affected by the criminal justice system. Through ILA2J, the program provides outreach, legal representation, and education to reduce the collateral consequences of incarceration and to promote community leadership.

The Immigrant Legal Support Program (ILSP) is a statewide initiative designed to expand immigration legal services and address the growing needs of Illinois’ immigrant population, while responding to the resource limitations faced by legal service providers. The program delivers comprehensive legal services at scale through five components: (i) scalable intake and screening to provide applicants with screening outcomes and referrals; (ii) workshops offering pro se or pro bono technical assistance and application support; (iii) expansion of limited-scope legal aid services and consultations; (iv) development of information resources, such as help desks, fact sheets, and self-help guides; and (v) strengthened referral services through clear policies and partnerships.

Through these FY26 commitments, Pillar Four aims to create a more supportive environment that empowers Illinoisans to achieve stable employment and economic independence.





## **Pillar 5: Support Trusted Community Based Providers to Serve the Needs of those In Deep Poverty**

**Support our caregiving workforce by ensuring equitable wages and develop meaningful supports for unpaid caregivers**

**Provide community-based providers with consistent and equitable access to State funding that adequately keeps pace with rising costs**

### **Strategy 5A: Support our caregiving workforce by ensuring equitable wages and develop meaningful supports for unpaid caregivers**

In FY25, State agencies have worked to protect domestic workers' rights and fair wages, increase direct care worker compensation, develop professional training and career pathways, and build statewide caregiver support systems. IDOL provides ongoing enforcement of the Workers' Bill of Rights Act, ensuring domestic workers receive protection under the Minimum Wage Law.

To increase direct care worker compensation, IDoA increased reimbursement rates for Community Care Program In-Home Services providers from \$28.07 to \$29.63 per hour, effective January 1, 2025, supporting a minimum wage of \$18 per hour for home care aides. The program allows family members that meet prerequisites and complete training to serve as paid home care aides, providing economic support for family caregivers.

To develop professional training and career pathways, IDoA funded development of a Caregiver Specialist training curriculum through Rush University Medical Center to enhance the skills of professionals employed by Area Agencies on Aging who support family caregivers. This investment in professional development helps ensure that family caregivers receive high-quality guidance and support from knowledgeable specialists.

IDoA also participated in the Administration for Community Living's Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center, a technical assistance collaborative focused on recruiting and retaining direct care workers. IDoA was selected for the Caregiving State Policy Learning Collaborative, positioning Illinois to learn from and implement best practices in caregiver support.

To directly support unpaid family caregivers, IDoA added comprehensive family and caregiver resources to its website and convened a work group to plan for launching a dedicated Caregiver Portal by July 2027, creating a centralized resource hub for those providing unpaid care to family members.

These coordinated efforts address the dual challenge of supporting professional caregivers through fair wages and labor protections, while providing meaningful resources and recognition for unpaid family caregivers who provide the majority of long-term care in Illinois.

## **Strategy 5B: Provide community-based providers with consistent and equitable access to State funding that adequately keeps pace with rising costs**

In FY2025, State agencies have worked towards this goal by adjusting reimbursement rates to support service sustainability, discussed in Section 5a.

To coordinate sustainable finding strategies, the Governor’s Office of Management and Budget works collaboratively with agencies and the General Assembly to secure adequate and consistent funding for community-based service providers. This coordination ensures that State funding mechanisms can respond to inflationary pressures and changing service delivery costs, helping maintain the stability of community-based organizations that serve vulnerable populations.

These efforts recognize that community-based providers face ongoing challenges with rising costs for wages, utilities, supplies, and other operational expenses, and that State reimbursement rates must be regularly evaluated and adjusted to ensure these essential service providers can maintain quality care while remaining financially viable.

## **Conclusion**

The Commission recognizes the many pressures faced in crafting a new State FY26 budget, but is committed to a creative and flexible approach to effectively confronting the challenges faced by Illinoisans living in deep poverty. The Commission will continue the work of reducing intergenerational poverty by addressing the systems that perpetuate this cycle, particularly among non-White Illinois residents and within communities that have long been under-resourced.

This summary of the Commission’s and its Subcommittees’ work captures only a portion of the broader effort across Illinois, with a particular focus on new or expanding programs. These innovations and expansions are essential to achieving the Commission’s ambitious goal of reducing or eliminating poverty, but they must be continually refined, expanded, and strengthened. That imperative comes at a pivotal moment. Illinois faces structural stresses in its budget as the flow of federal funding becomes less certain. The State’s FY25 General Fund budget still leaned on one-time federal support from the pandemic era, softening deeper fiscal pressures. At the same time, changes on the federal level pose material risks to core safety net programs: proposed cuts to Medicaid, SNAP, housing assistance, and other essential services could shift costs to the State and threaten service capacity.

Given these headwinds, the urgency for all stakeholders—state, local, nonprofit, and philanthropic—is heightened. Continued progress will demand not only creativity and perseverance, but strategic planning to absorb federal volatility, early contingency modeling, and adaptive collaboration across systems.

## Appendix

The Commission recognizes the many pressures faced in crafting a new State FY26 budget, but is committed to a creative and flexible approach to effectively confronting the challenges faced by Illinoisans living in deep poverty. The Commission will continue the work of reducing intergenerational poverty by addressing the systems that perpetuate this cycle, particularly among non-White Illinois residents and within communities that have long been under-resourced.

### Poverty by County 2023 (Top 10 Counties)

County	Population	Families Below Poverty (<100% FPL)	Persons Below 150% FPL	Persons Below Poverty (<100% FPL)
Pulaski	4,911	15.2%	37.8%	26.1%
Alexander	4,695	13.3%	34.2%	21.0%
Johnson	13,326	13.1%	23.6%	16.7%
White	13,401	13.1%	28.9%	16.4%
Saline	22,873	13.0%	26.2%	17.1%
Perry	20,503	12.7%	24.6%	16.9%
Union	16,667	12.4%	27.6%	19.4%
Franklin	37,138	12.3%	29.0%	16.9%
Vermilion	71,652	12.2%	27.6%	17.2%
Jackson	52,141	12.1%	35.1%	21.8%

### Poverty by Age Group (2023)

Group	Number of People Living in Poverty (100% FPL)	Percentage of Each Group Living Below Poverty
TOTAL	1,426,517	11.6
Children (<16)	389,823	14.7
Working Age	809,869	10.8
Older Adults (65+)	226,825	10.6

## Poverty by Race/Ethnicity in Illinois (2023)

	Total IL Population	Percent of IL Population	Below Poverty	Percent below poverty within each group*	Percent of Total IL Pop in Poverty**
<b>White</b>	7,460,194	60.8%	643,047	8.6%	<b>45.1%</b>
<b>Black/African American</b>	1,599,146	13.0%	367,486	23.0%	<b>25.8%</b>
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	2,341,252	19.1%	328,954	14.1%	<b>23.1%</b>
<b>Am. Indian/ Alaska Native</b>	85,509	0.7%	12,228	14.3%	<b>0.9%</b>
<b>Asian</b>	744,160	6.1%	77,468	10.4%	<b>5.4%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	12,230,261		1,429,183		

\* Within each racial group, this number indicates the percentage in poverty, i.e. out of the White population in Illinois, 8.6% are below poverty.

\*\* Of those who are in poverty in Illinois, this number indicates the percentage of each racial group, i.e. White people represent 45.1% of those who are in poverty.



**IDHS**  
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT  
OF HUMAN SERVICES



**Illinois Commission**  
**on Poverty Elimination**  
**and Economic Security**