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Press Release from: **Erikson Institute**

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Risk and Reach Report Provides Pre-Pandemic Baseline Data on Young Child Well-Being in Illinois

County-level data is a powerful tool for local stakeholders to address areas of need



CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, August 13, 2021 — Do babies and young children in Illinois have equitable access to high-quality programs/services that support their development, particularly children from

historically marginalized groups? To help answer this question, [Erikson Institute](#) recently released the second edition of the **Risk and Reach Report**, which features mostly 2019 data that provide a comprehensive, county-by-county analysis of **Risk** factors that undermine optimal child development for the 916,880 children aged 5 and under in Illinois (7.32% of the state's population) and compares them to the **Reach** of publicly funded programs and services that support early childhood well-being. Coupled with 2016 data from the first Report, the 2019 data establishes a baseline measuring conditions for children and their families prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. You can download the report and watch a short video about it [here](#).

With visuals that distill complex data into at-a-glance maps, the Report presents risk factors with data on government resources that are intended to reach or address those risks. The Report is a powerful tool for elected officials and community leaders to build a deeper understanding of the circumstances in their communities and develop action plans to better allocate resources, improve policies, and develop stronger systems so young children can reach their fullest potential.

"Taken together, the data in the Report can help challenge assumptions, as risk exists across the state, and indicate where efforts to mitigate risk seem to be working—thus providing potential solutions for more communities," said Maura Daly, Chief External Affairs Officer for Erikson Institute.

Data are organized by the three domains that define and inform early experiences: **Family Stability, Health, and Early Care and Education**. In total, data consist of 15 risk indicators and 19 reach indicators. Where possible, indicators are disaggregated by race and ethnicity at the state level to better understand disparities and inform strategies to alleviate risks.

Key takeaways from the second edition of the Report include:

- **Illinois has seen a 3% decrease in the child population under the age of five** with 945,752 in 2016 and 916,880 in 2019. Possible reasons for this could be the state's general population decrease, a downward trend in the state's birthrate; and, possibly, the well-known issue of a Census undercount of children aged 5 and under.
- The percent of **Black and Latinx children aged 5 and under experiencing poverty decreased** by 6 and 3 percentage points respectively since 2016; however, they still experience poverty at higher rates than other racial/ethnic groups. 2019 data shows **42.25% and 25.34% of Black and Latinx children, respectively, were living below or at 100% of the Federal Poverty Level**.
- **The rate of reported abuse and neglect has increased.** In 2019, the child maltreatment rate for children aged 5 and under was 19 per 1,000 children, up from 14 per 1,000 in 2016. In conjunction with this increase, the percent of children aged 5 and under in substitute care attaining permanent homes within 12 months slightly decreased by 1.9

percent in 2019. This data point may be attributed to an increase in reporting either by families or the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

- **The state rate of reported violent crimes per 100,000 people decreased in 2019 to 393 per 100,000 from 436 in 2016.** This is significant as children exposed to violence, whether in the home or community, experience post-traumatic stress, which can affect development and have lifelong health consequences. This data point could reflect changes in enforcement policy, reporting by the population or reporting by the Illinois State Police.
- **There has been a significant increase in children aged 5 and under who received developmental screenings.** In FY2019, there were 109,149 children who received beneficial screenings to assess hearing, vision, physical coordination, speech, cognitive development, and social-emotional skills compared to 96,344 in FY2018. However, it is important to note that this data point is based on voluntary reporting and the increase may be attributed to better reporting.
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participation for children aged 5 and under increased by 5.8 percentage points in 2019.** The state rate of children in this age group receiving benefits is 87.43% compared to 81.6% in 2016.
- **There was a decrease in the gap between available publicly funded preschool slots and number of children ages 3-4 eligible for preschool programs, dropping to 11,439 slots in 2019.** This is a positive and substantial shift compared to the gap in available slots in 2016, which was 30,466. State-funded programs include Preschool for All (PFA) and PFA Expansion and the federally funded Head Start Program. In addition to the increase in available slots (from 107,660 in FY2016 to 110,892 in FY2019), this data point can also be attributed to the decrease of eligible 3–4-year-olds, which went from 138,126 in FY2016 to 122,331 in FY2019.

“It’s important to note that the data should be utilized to ignite conversation and requires contextualization by communities and local stakeholders to understand the root causes of risk and develop solutions,” Daly said.

Dialogue among local leaders and community members, including families who benefit from public resources, is essential for planning action steps based on local needs.

*The Illinois Risk and Reach Report is a collaborative effort of three organizations committed to ensuring young children have access to high-quality early childhood programs, services, and equitable opportunities to thrive, Erikson Institute, **Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM)** at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and **Voices for Illinois Children**. These organizations were guided by The Risk and Reach Advisory Council, a group of more than 40 stakeholders from across the state. The 2021 report was generously funded by the **Irving Harris Foundation**, **Pritzker Children’s Initiative**, and the **Governor’s Office of Early Childhood***

Development.

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