

Calendar of Events

April 16, 2026

[April 16, 2026] Statewide HS/EHS Directors Meeting

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST

ABOUT

The Illinois HS/EHS Directors Meeting is a monthly working group built for Head Start and Early Head Start leadership across Illinois. Executive Directors, Program Directors, and other senior leaders come together to share challenges, exchange solutions, and walk away with practical tools they can apply directly in their programs. If you're in a leadership role at an Illinois Head Start or Early Head Start agency, this group was built for yo

WHY JOIN

Senior leaders in Illinois Head Start/Early Head Start carry a unique set of responsibilities that most professional development spaces don't address. This group does. You'll get a candid peer environment to work through real problems, stay current on federal and state policy, funding, and regulatory updates that affect your program, and connect with other leaders across Illinois who understand the work firsthand.

Being part of this group automatically includes you in the listserv, where members share questions, resources, and timely information between meetings so you're never waiting a month for an answer you need now.

WHEN

Every 3rd Thursday at 10:00 am each month

April 7, 2026

Family Services & ERSEA QEC

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST

Cathy Welsh, 2173815007

cwelsh@ilheadstart.org

Family Services & ERSEA QEC

Join a peer-led learning group for professionals responsible for family engagement systems and ERSEA-Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance. This QEC is a virtual space for real talk, skill-building, and practical problem-solving with others who manage these critical systems.

You'll connect with peers who are working to reach full enrollment, strengthen family partnerships, and meet compliance requirements--often all at one. Whether you're leading a team, managing reports, or designing outreach strategies, this space is built for you.

Sessions are led by experienced practitioners and include guest speakers, breakout discussions by region, and plenty of time to learn from each other. You'll walk away with new tools, fresh insights, and a stronger network of colleagues.

All QECs are fully virtual, with flexible attendance. No travel. No fluff. Just useful time spent with people who get it.

April 10, 2026

Beyond Enrollment: Reimagining Family Engagement: An ERSEA and Family Engagement Web Series

10:00 AM - 11:30 AM CST

Cathy Welsh, 2173815007

cwelsh@ilheadstart.org

Join us for a web series on recruitment, enrollment, and authentic family engagement. Whether your job title is Family Engagement Coordinator, Family Advocate, or some variation thereof, THIS WEB SERIES IS DESIGNED ESPECIALLY FOR YOU WITH YOUR SPECIFIC NEEDS IN MIND!!!

Many who serve in these positions (or desire to serve in the future) must work to engage all site stakeholders (staff, children, parents, administrators, community members/partners) from various skill levels, backgrounds, and experiences. You must keep staff and families motivated all while ensuring you have the infrastructure (both physical and mental) in place to yield positive outcomes for children and families.

IHSA has recognized these challenges and has partnered with Yolanda Winfrey of Freestyle by Winfrey, LLC., a very experienced Trainer/Consultant to provide you with an engaging, skill & knowledge-building web series.

Here are 8 reasons to invest your valuable time and join us:

Gain a better understanding of agency culture and relationship building and how it impacts enrollment and family engagement.

Enhance skills in creating systems for effective and impactful family engagement through establishing partnerships and involving key stakeholders that nurture engagement and support.

Explore how values, norms, and internal dynamics of an organization shape family interaction.

Explore how personal and professional beliefs shape engagement efforts.

Turn insight into action

Receive tools and strategies to understand why trust should be the first step in recruitment, not the last.

Demonstrate that enrollment isn't just paperwork—it's relationship-building.

Don't miss this opportunity to refresh your approach, build your skills, and reignite your passion for authentic family engagement.

Dates: (1) December 19, 2025, (2) January 9, 2026, (3) February 6, 2026, (4) April 10, 2026

Time: 10:00 am - 11:30 am

Location: Virtual (Zoom)

Registration Fee: \$225 per person or \$175.00 per person for teams of 5+ from same agency

Who Should Attend: Family Engagement Coordinators, Family Advocates, and anyone supporting Head Start and Early Head Start enrollment and family engagement efforts.

Yolanda Winfrey - Freestyle by Winfrey, LLC

Owner and Lead Consultant

Yolanda is the Owner and Lead Consultant for Freestyle by Winfrey, LLC. She has worked in the ECE field for 30 years in various roles including Social Services and Mental Health Coordinator, Assistant Head Start Director, Early Childhood Director, Chief Talent and Organizational Development Officer and Federal Reviewer Consultant.

Yolanda is also an Adjunct Instructor in the Social Work Department at Mount Mary University. She teaches an undergraduate level course, Race, Gender, and Class and has taught a graduate level course, Social Work with Families and Children.

Yolanda is an experienced educator, consultant and trainer well versed in systems development, staff and leadership development, organizational redesign, management systems, and implementation practices. Her interests include staff and leadership development, systems thinking, and empowering individuals and programs to support their growth and to attain their goals and objectives.

Yolanda earned her Bachelor of Science Degree in Social Work from Southern University and A & M College, a Master's Degree in Social Work from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a Master's Degree in Education (Early Childhood) from Concordia University Wisconsin, and an Advanced Practice Social Work Certification from the State of Wisconsin. She also holds a Certificate in Human Resource Management and Organizational Development from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Continuing Education.

The skills, expertise, and perspective Yolanda provides has led to the opportunity to work with a variety of individuals and programs across the country and present to various audiences at state, regional, and national conferences.

During her "free time", Yolanda enjoys creating customized quilts, creating custom crafts and apparel, and spending quality time with her family and friends.

April 14, 2026

Family Services Workers, Specialists & Advocates QEC

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST

Cathy Welsh, 2173815007

cwelsh@ilheadstart.org

Family Services Workers, Specialists & Advocates QEC

Join a peer-led learning group built for the front line staff who work directly with families every day. This Quality Enrichment Circle (QEC) is a virtual space for real talk, skill-building, and practical problem-solving with others who understand the demands of family support work.

You'll connect with peers who are building trust with families, setting goals, navigating systems, and showing up during tough times. We'll focus on how to stay grounded, get families what they need, and keep doing this work with heart and skill.

Sessions are led by experienced practitioners and include guest speakers, breakout discussions by region, and plenty of time to learn from each other. You'll walk away with new tools, fresh insights, and a stronger network of colleagues.

All QECs are fully virtual, with flexible attendance. No travel. No fluff. Just useful time spent with people who get it.

April 21, 2026

Health, Safety & Nutrition QEC

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST

Cathy Welsh, 2173815007

cwelsh@ilheadstart.org

Health, Safety & Nutrition QEC

Join a peer-led learning group for professionals who oversee health services, safety protocols, and child nutrition in Head Start and Early Head Start. This Quality Enrichment Circle (QEC) is a virtual space for real talk, skill-building, and practical problem-solving with others who manage the systems that keep kids safe and healthy.

You'll connect with peers balancing compliance, documentation, family communication, and hands-on logistics. From meal planning to health tracking to safety drills—this space is for those making it all run smoothly.

Sessions are led by experienced practitioners and include guest speakers, breakout discussions by region, and plenty of time to learn from each other. You'll walk away with new tools, fresh insights, and a stronger network of colleagues.

All QECs are fully virtual, with flexible attendance. No travel. No fluff. Just useful time spent with people who get it.

April 28, 2026

Mental Health, Wellness & SEL QEC

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST

Cathy Welsh, 2173815007

cwelsh@ilheadstart.org

Mental Health, Wellness & SEL QEC

Join a peer-led learning group for professionals leading mental health, wellness, and social-emotional learning (SEL) efforts in Head Start and Early Head Start. This Quality Enrichment Circle (QEC) is a virtual space for real talk, skill-building, and practical problem-solving with others supporting emotional well-being across programs.

You'll connect with peers working on behavior supports, staff wellness plans, trauma-informed practices, and SEL integration. Whether you're a consultant or managing a team, you'll get grounded support and fresh ideas to strengthen your mental health systems.

Sessions are led by experienced practitioners and include guest speakers, breakout discussions by region, and plenty of time to learn from each other. You'll walk away with new tools, fresh insights, and a stronger network of colleagues.

All QECs are fully virtual, with flexible attendance. No travel. No fluff. Just useful time spent with people who get it.

Coming Soon

PD @ a Glance Roll Out

Illinois Head Start Association

3435 Liberty Drive

Springfield, IL 62704

12:00 AM - 12:00 AM CST

Cathy Welsh, 2173815007

cwelsh@ilheadstart.org