

EARLY HEAD START

FAMILY DEVELOPMENT CENTER

2026 ANNUAL REPORT



Governors State
UNIVERSITY

An Illinois Public University

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear Families, Partners, and Friends,

At the Family Development Center, our guiding star is simple: to provide every child with an exceptional educational experience, every family with meaningful support, and every member of our community with opportunities to learn, grow, and thrive. Our Strategic Plan, affectionally dubbed Our Guiding Star, is built around five priorities that guide our work each day: High-Quality Education and Care, Meaningful Family Engagement, Transition Supports for Children and Families, Strengths-Based Social-Emotional Development, and Health, Wellness, and Nutrition Access.

This report highlights the progress we made together over the past year. Through the dedication of our staff and the partnership of our families, children demonstrated strong growth across developmental domains while engaging in meaningful, hands-on learning experiences. We continued to strengthen teaching practices through coaching, reflective supervision, and continuous quality improvement, ensuring our programs remain responsive to the evolving needs of children and families.

As a university-based school, we are proud to connect education and community engagement through innovative programs and interdisciplinary partnerships that enrich learning both inside and outside the classroom.

Thank you to our families, staff, Policy Council, Governing Board, Governors State University leadership, and community partners for your continued trust and collaboration. Together, we are building a stronger future for children and families and advancing our vision of being the Star of the South Suburbs for education, care, and support.

Erin Gutiérrez
Executive Director
Family Development Center
Governors State University



MISSION

The mission of the FDC is to provide an exceptional educational experience that exemplifies best practices, an innovative learning environment for GovState students, and to create a network of support for the families we serve.

VISION

Like our guiding symbol, FDC will be known as a Star of the South Suburbs for the education, care, & support we provide.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

We believe that children learn in many different ways, and children's learning is impacted by a variety of forces. When children are actively engaged and construct their own knowledge through hands-on activities in a stimulating environment, their growth and development flourish. We use a research-based, reasoned eclecticism approach with Creative Curriculum as our play-based foundation. We honor diversity, creativity, and joy in every experience and strive to provide security and emotional support for our children and families.

FACILITY

The FDC, a Division of the College of Education and Human Services at Governors State University, was originally established as a charter school in 2003. The building, nested on campus among native prairie flowers and GovState's esteemed Sculpture Park, is a state-of-the-art facility whose architectural design earned it a position as a Merit Award Finalist from the Chicago Building Congress.

PROGRAMS

The FDC serves up to 162 children ages 6 weeks through age eight in our infant/toddler, preschool and school age programs. The Program is designed to serve the needs of the surrounding community as well as university constituents.

All center-based programs are licensed by the State of Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and rated Gold by ExceleRate, the states Quality Recognition and Improvement System.

Over this fiscal year, 204 children were served in our program by a total of 46 staff members.

Early Head Start is a year-round, federally funded grant program that provides comprehensive education and support to 56 low-income children ages birth to three in our center, home based, and pregnant women programs.

GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY

FDC LEADERSHIP

Executive Director

Erin Gutiérrez

Center Director

Barb Calibraro

Family Services Director

Jill Roth

Education Director

Dorothy Bertram

Health Services Director

Claudia Nguyen

Business Manager

Sharon Palmer

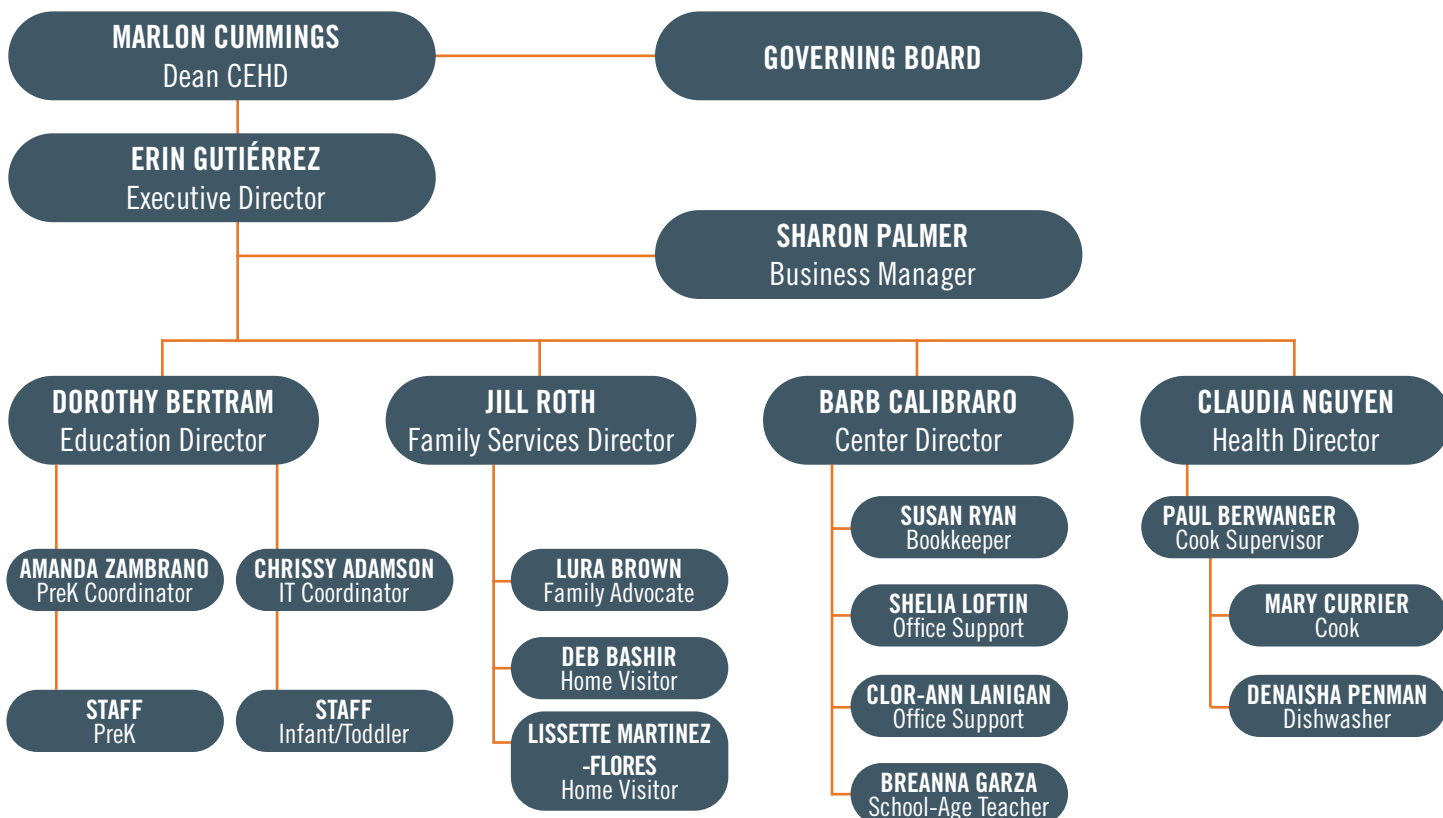
IT Coordinator

Christine Adamson

PreK:Coordinator

Mandy Zambrano

FDC ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



GOVERNING BOARD



BOARD CHAIR

Dr. Marlon Cummings
Dean CEHD



VICE CHAIR

Dr. Candice Smith
Assistant Professor,
CEHD, ECE Expert



SECRETARY

Dr. Natalia Ermasova
Full Professor,
CAS Financial Expert



LEGAL EXPERT

Jennifer Guimond-Quigley
Attorney at Law



COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE

Tracy Rocchietti
Assitant Director,
Early Learning Center

POLICY COUNCIL

CHAIR

Christina Johnson

VICE CHAIR

Maya Hightower-Willis

SECRETARY

Madison Hughes

ADVOCACY

During the 2025–2026 program year, FDC represented Head Start through leadership and advocacy on the Birth to Five Illinois Region 56 Action Council, the Illinois Head Start Association, the Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC) Early Learning Council Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Resources and Programs, and the IDEC) Program Standards Alignment Workgroup.

These committees provided opportunities to share the perspectives of campus-based Head Start programs while contributing to discussions on early childhood funding, program standards, and state policy. FDC's participation ensured our program remained informed of emerging initiatives and helped shape Illinois' new Department of Early Childhood.

PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This year, the program continued to strengthen services for children, families, and staff. Through the Seeds to Sustenance Grant, toddlers maintained two raised garden beds, gaining hands-on experiences with gardening, healthy foods, and nature. We also welcomed a new Mental Health Consultant to support children's social-emotional development and family well-being.

Health Services continued to achieve strong outcomes, with an average of 89% of Early Head Start children remaining up to date on required physical examinations and immunizations throughout the program year. In addition, the program exceeded its school readiness and health goal of having at least 80% of children receive a lead screening, with an average of 88% of Early Head Start children completing this important preventive health requirement.

The Family Development Center remains committed to inclusive services. During the program year, 13 children (23% of enrollment) received services through an IFSP. This included 7 children with Speech and Language Impairments, 5 children with Developmental Delays (Non-Categorical), and 1 child with an "Other Health Impairment" (OHI). Through our developmental screening process, an additional nine children were referred for evaluation; however, some did not qualify for services; some concerns resolved over time, and some families declined services. This reflects our ongoing commitment to early identification, intervention, and support for children's developmental needs.

Professional development remained a priority. In addition to the 20 hours of required trainings, all staff completed Conscious Discipline training; one staff member earned a bachelor's degree, and five staff members are currently pursuing higher education (four bachelor's degrees and one associate degree). The IT program coordinator was also selected to attend and completed the McCormick Institute for Early Childhood's "Ready to Lead" leadership Academy. These accomplishments reflect our ongoing commitment to high-quality early childhood education and continuous program improvement.

DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

SINGLE PARENT	FOSTER PARENT	HOMELESS	TWO-PARENT	# RECEIVING TANF	# RECEIVING SNAP
40	1	2	26	5	80
BI-RACIAL	AFRICAN AMERICAN	WHITE	ASIAN	HISPANIC	OTHER
31	73	26	0	26	1

ENROLLMENT

FUNDED ENROLLMENT- EHS	# ENROLLED	% ENROLLMENT
Total Funded Enrollment	56	100%
Total Cumulative Enrollment	114	203%
Average Monthly Enrollment	56.16	100%
Total Children	105	91%
Total Pregnant Women	9	9%

ENROLLMENT BY ELIGIBILITY		
Income Below 100% FPL	7	7%
Income 100%-130% FPL	6	6%
Public Assistance	80	76%
Foster Care	1	1%
Homeless	2	2%
Over-Income	8	8%

ATTENDANCE	
Average Monthly Attendance	88.26%

MEDICAL INFORMATION ON EHS CHILDREN ENROLLED FOR MORE THAN 45 DAYS.

INDICATOR	2026 PIR DATA
Percentage of children with health insurance at the end of the year	99%
Percentage of children with an ongoing source of health care at the end of the year	92%
Percentage of children who are up to date on a schedule of age-appropriate preventive and well-baby care according to the Illinois EPSDT schedule	82%
Percentage of children who are up to date on all immunizations/all possible immunizations	82%
Percentage of children who received oral health preventative care during the program year	82%
Percentage of children with disabilities	23%

SCHOOL READINESS

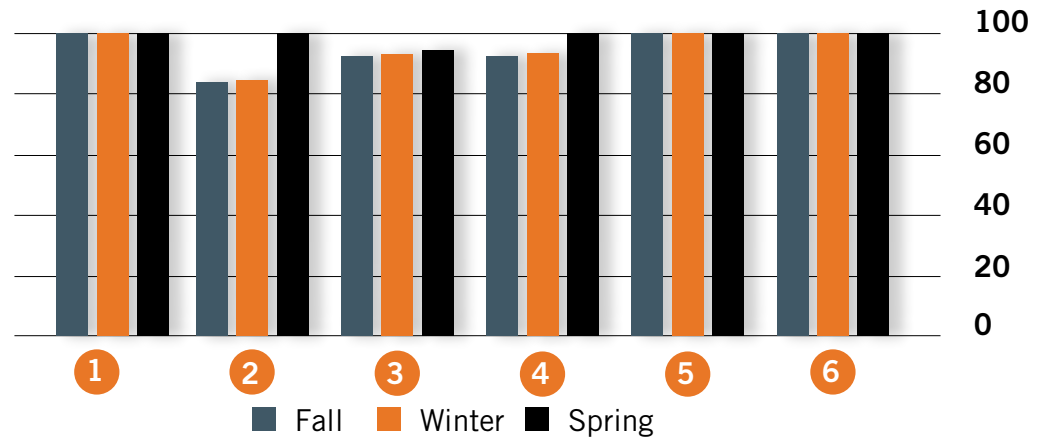
FDC uses Teaching Strategies SmartTeach as its formal child assessment system. Teachers document ongoing observations throughout the year to assess each child's development and compare progress to widely held expectations for their age group. Formal checkpoints occur three times annually in the fall, winter, and spring.

The data presented in this report includes all children who are enrolled in the program, including children in home-based and center-based programs, as well as children with disabilities.

Our goal is for 80% or more of enrolled children to meet or exceed widely held expectations by the end of the program year. For infants, this generally reflects achievement of age-appropriate developmental milestones. As children grow, expectations expand to include increasingly complex skills in areas such as language, literacy, mathematics, social-emotional development, cognition, and physical development.

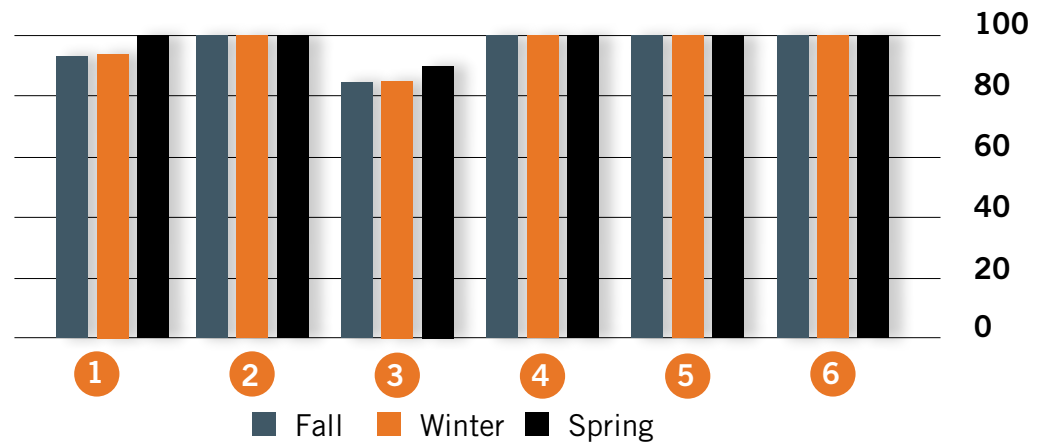
COMPARATIVE OUTCOMES REPORT 0 - 1 YEARS

- 1 **Self-Emotional**
100 100 100
- 2 **Physical**
84.6 85 100
- 3 **Language**
92.3 93 95
- 4 **Cognitive**
92.3 93 100
- 5 **Literacy**
100 100 100
- 6 **Mathematics**
100 100 100



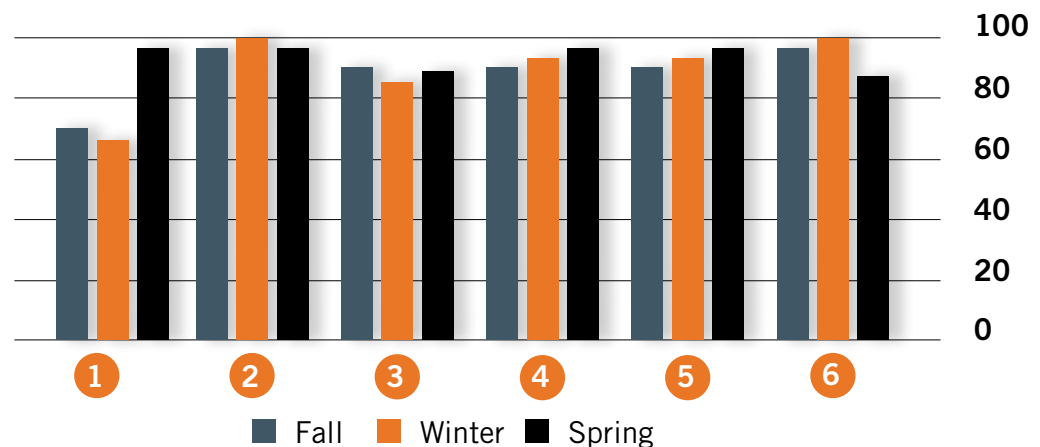
COMPARATIVE OUTCOMES REPORT 1 - 2 YEARS

- 1 **Self-Emotional**
85.7 100 100
- 2 **Physical**
100 100 100
- 3 **Language**
86.4 87 90
- 4 **Cognitive**
100 100 100
- 5 **Literacy**
100 100 100
- 6 **Mathematics**
100 100 100



COMPARATIVE OUTCOMES REPORT 2 - 3 YEARS

- 1 **Self-Emotional**
70 65 95
- 2 **Physical**
95 100 95
- 3 **Language**
90 86 89
- 4 **Cognitive**
90 93 95
- 5 **Literacy**
90 93 95
- 6 **Mathematics**
95 100 89





OUTCOMES SUMMARY

Overall, children across all age groups demonstrated strong developmental progress throughout the program year, with most outcome areas maintaining or exceeding established benchmarks. The data demonstrate that most age groups were meeting or exceeding expectations by Spring 2026. Strong outcomes in literacy, cognition, mathematics, and physical development reflect effective instructional practices and learning experiences. Continued emphasis on language development and mathematical concepts for older toddlers will support sustained growth and school readiness outcomes.

FAMILY OUTCOMES & ENGAGEMENT

FAMILY OUTCOMES SUMMARY									
LOCATION	FAMILIES	ASSESMENT	FAMILY WELLBEING	POSITIVE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS	FAMILIES AS LEARNERS	EARLY ENGAGEMENT IN TRANSITIONS	FAMILY CONNECTIONS TO PEER & COMMUNITY	FAMILY AS ADVOCATES & LEADERS	TOTAL
REPORT AVERAGE									
FAMILIES WITH COMPLETE ASSESSMENTS	70	1	22.7	5.7	4.8	5.7	5.3	5.2	57.9
	46	2	23.7	5.9	5.5	5.9	5.7	5.6	61.2
	46	+/-	+0.3	+0.1	+0.5	+0.2	+0.2	+0.2	+1.7

During the 2025–2026 program year, families showed growth in every area measured. Families reported improvements in their well-being, relationships with their children, ability to support their children’s learning, personal learning goals, transitions, community connections, and leadership skills. The greatest growth was seen in families continuing to learn and work toward their own goals. Overall, these results show that families strengthened their skills, confidence, and connections throughout the year.



FAMILY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The following has been submitted and approved with consent from the individual.

I was working in the cafeteria at GovState, pregnant, and an employee approached me about the prenatal program, and I was interested and started with her. My goal was to get a better job to provide for my family. I was renting and my landlord gave us three weeks to move out, and we had to relocate back to my parent's house. My home visitor helped me figure out how to get my kids into schools and daycare and how to start figuring out how to buy my own home. I was then approached by someone at the university who encouraged me to apply for her department, which led to a better job for me and my family. After my third child was enrolled at the FDC, I continued to work on my goal of purchasing a house and was able to do so in January of 2026. Throughout this whole process, the staff at the FDC continually checked in with me about the hiring process and home purchasing process. They were all fully invested in my success and celebrated with me for each milestone. I have been in my new position for a year now and am coming up on the year marker for owning my first house, by myself. I am currently expecting my fourth child and am enrolled in the prenatal program with another home visitor who continues to encourage and support me through processes, always letting me know that I can do this. I don't know that without the support of the FDC and their staff, I could have achieved these goals so quickly or at all. They were constantly supporting and encouraging me, letting me know that I can do this, like my own personal cheerleaders. I'm forever grateful for the relationships I have built with them, and I look forward to the future experiences and lessons I will learn from them.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Orientation Meetings
- Transition Meetings
- Parent Partnership Agreements
- Self-Assessment Surveys
- Home educational activities
- Monthly Policy Council Meetings
- Parent Committee
- Open House
- Classroom Volunteers
- Teacher Appreciation
- Conscious Discipline Parent Curriculum Workshops
- Literacy Activity Night
- Math Activity Night
- Home Visits
- Parent Teacher Conferences



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This year, we partnered with a local high school to host an on-site career exploration session focused on opportunities in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Students learned about funding sources that support early childhood programs, educational requirements for various roles, workforce needs, and the growing demand for qualified professionals in the field. Following the session, students visited the Governors State University main campus, enjoyed lunch, and explored academic programs and college opportunities firsthand. This experience helped promote awareness of ECE career pathways and encouraged students to consider careers in early childhood education.

Family engagement remained a priority through our Parent Pop-Up Education events, which connected families with valuable community resources and services. During the program year, we partnered with the Will County WIC Program, a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician to provide car seat safety education, the Workforce Center of Will County, and the Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness. These events provided information on nutrition, child passenger safety, employment and career resources, and vision health, serving a total of 54 families.

HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

We extend our sincere appreciation to the members of the Family Development Center's Health & Mental Health Services Advisory Committee (HMHSAC) for their commitment, expertise, and partnership in supporting the health and well-being of our children and families.

The committee's mission is to build and strengthen relationships between the Family Development Center and community organizations to improve access to services, increase collaboration, and enhance comprehensive supports for families.

HMSAC COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Nicole Veazey, Mental Health Consultant
Rebecca Anderson, WCHD Community Educator
Gia Washington, Dir. of Community Education Sertoma Star Services
Dr. Dustin Hogan, GovState-OT Lecturer

Essence Clark, Business & Community Liaison Workforce Center of Will Co.
Kayleigh Miller, Nurse Consultant
Elaine Reyna, GovState-CDIS Lecturer
Nicole Leubke, Health & Nutrition Manager Catholic Charities

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

GovState EHS has Memoranda of Agreement with the following agencies:

SOCIAL SERVICE

Anew: Building Beyond Violence and Abuse (formerly South Suburban Family Shelter)

Apostolic Church

Catholic Charities of Joliet

Governors State University Counseling Lab

Illinois Action for Children

Illinois Department of Health & Human Services for Children & Families

Illinois Network of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies

Park Forest Public Library

Respond Now

University Park Library

Workforce Services Division of Will County

HEALTH SERVICES

Sertoma Centre, Inc.

The Heart That Smiles Dental Clinic and Mobile Unit

Will County Community Health Center

Will County Health Department

Will County- WIC

EDUCATION/DISABILITIES

Child and Family Connections #12

Child and Family Connections #15

Crete-Monee Early Learning Center

Steger School District 194



COMMUNITY PARTNER SUCCESS STORY

Supplemental Speech Services: Our longstanding partnership with the Department of Communication Disorders (CDIS) program at Governors State University continued to provide supplemental speech-language services for children with identified communication needs. During this program year, 9 children received services through the program; 2 were Early Head Start children. Since the partnership began in School Year 2021–2022, 31 children have benefited from these supplemental speech-language services, further strengthening access to early intervention and supporting positive developmental outcomes.

Consultation and Professional Development: This year, the Family Development Center also established a new partnership with Governors State University's Physical Therapy Department to support the inclusion and success of a child with Osteogenesis Imperfecta. Physical therapy faculty collaborated with program staff to develop an Individual Health Plan, conducted classroom observations, provided consultation, and delivered professional development for teaching staff titled "Supporting Children with Osteogenesis Imperfecta Through Therapeutic Positioning and Handling." This partnership strengthened staff knowledge and confidence while ensuring the child could safely participate in daily classroom routines and activities.



FY25 FUNDING	
PROGRAM	TOTAL FUNDING
Early Head Start (January-December)	\$1,217,851
EHS Non-Federal Share	\$0
ISBE Prevention Initiative	\$481,788
US Department of Agriculture Child and Adult Care Food Program Reimbursement	\$108,702
INCCRRA	\$207,000
Illinois Department of Human Services Child Care Subsidies (July 1-June 30)	\$765,535
TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET	\$3,426,876

EHS BUDGET TO ACTUAL REPORT		
EARLY HEAD START	BUDGETED	ACTUAL
Personnel Salaries	\$738,256	\$626,691
Fringe Benefits	\$ 365,215	\$334,659
Travel	\$ 10,785	\$ 3,128
Equipment	\$ 0	\$ 0
Supplies	\$ 15,116	\$ 48,681
Other	\$ 38,782	\$ 49,807
INDIRECT COSTS	\$ 49,696	\$ 45,221
TOTAL	\$1,217,851	\$ 1,108,187

AUDIT RESULTS

- GovState EHS received an FA2 Monitoring Review in June 2023 and was found to be in full compliance with all regulations.
- Copies of the Compliance and Financial Audit Reports can be found on the Illinois General Auditor Page: <https://www.auditor.illinois.gov/Audit-Reports/GOVERNORS-STATE-UNIVERSITY.asp> EHS did not receive a finding for 2025.

