



HEAD START ANNUAL REPORT

FY22 | July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022



illinois
action for
children

★ Early Learning Programs

COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

After two years of remote learning, it thrilled us to open our classrooms to on-site learning! Recreating an in-person community between children, teachers, and caregivers is wonderful. I continue to find inspiration and excitement in our ongoing work to educate and nurture young children and their families in Chicago's south suburbs. We hosted several special events that contributed to a greater sense of connection, highlighted by:

- **Harvest Fun Festival:** Teachers made pumpkin farms at each Early Learning Center for children and families to pick pumpkins and take home. In the classroom, children carved and cooked pumpkins to their delight!
- **Holiday Fun:** Teachers helped to make the holidays extra special by presenting a gift-wrapped, developmentally appropriate toy to each of the 372 children in our Early Learning Programs.
- **Week of the Young Child:** Teachers at each site created fun activities for families. They expressed their ingenuity as architects and joined a boisterous music parade, among other activities.
- **Preschool Transitions:** Staff celebrated preschoolers as they transitioned to kindergarten, and three-year-olds moved up to the three-to-five program. Additionally, each student was gifted a backpack filled with age-appropriate school supplies.
- **Science Fair:** Children worked with their teachers on an age-appropriate science project to present to parents. Each classroom had children agree on a project to explain to guests who visited their room.

Throughout the year, teachers meet weekly to implement enriching, fun, and developmentally appropriate experiences using our child-centered approach to learning. This approach allows children to explore activities they are drawn to while teachers guide the learning experiences.

Looking ahead to the 2022-2023 school year, we aim to enroll children in our classrooms to capacity. I am proud of the way Illinois Action for Children's (I AFC) Early Learning Center staff, teachers, and families came together again this year for high-quality early education, focusing on rebuilding our community on-site.



I AFC's commitment to supporting the role of parents as their child's first and most important teacher remains clear. Please read this Annual Report to learn more about our progress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "April Janney".

April Janney
CEO
Illinois Action for Children



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About Illinois Action for Children

Our History

It started back in 1969 when our founder, Sylvia Cotton, asked the question no one else was asking, “What about the children?” That was the beginning of our journey to help make a difference in the lives of families in Illinois.

Our Approach

Our broad approach—to supporting children by supporting families—is a proven and effective means to address endemic poverty, which is the root cause of educational failure of American children in families with the least access to financial resources.

Our Path

Illinois Action for Children exists today because we recognize that American families need access to quality, safe, and affordable child care to be self-sufficient. This allows parents to go to work with confidence, knowing that their children are in good hands. We lead the way in serving children and families distinguished by our “Strong Families, Powerful Communities” approach to child development.

What We Believe

We practice what we believe. Our work begins with promoting the safety, health, happiness, and education of all children. By the nature of our cause, our work extends to parents and families’ child care providers, and the systems that support child development.

ABOUT HEAD START

Head Start is a federally funded program that promotes the school readiness of young children from low-income families through local programs.

These programs—along with educational programs that provide children and their families with health, nutrition, and other services—support the social, and emotional development of children from birth-to-five. Head Start promotes the highest standards of quality in the delivery of evidence-based, comprehensive, early care and education services to low-income children and families.

Early Head Start programs provide access to educational opportunities for expectant families and children up to three years old. These programs (both home- and center-based programs) include Parent-Infant Educator weekly home visits, a biweekly socialization group at centers, opportunities to develop relationships with other children and families, resources for parents and families (including prenatal support), and a seamless transition from Early Head Start to Head Start programs and services.



General Information

Grantee

Illinois Action for Children

Program Number

05CH10105: Illinois Action for Children

Address

4753 N. Broadway, Chicago, IL 60640

Telephone

312.823.1285

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773.561.2256

Head Start Director

Mark Barrett
mark.barrett@actforchildren.org

Agency Website

www.actforchildren.org

EL Website

<https://earlylearning.actforchildren.org>

Grantee Early Head Start Site Locations

Chicago Heights

202 S. Halsted St., Lot C1
Chicago Heights, IL 60411

Ford Heights

1055 Berkeley Ave
Ford Heights, IL 60411

Harvey-South Holland

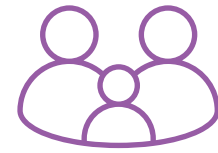
16515 S. Park Avenue
South Holland, IL 60473

Dolton

721 Engle St.
Dolton, IL 60419

Through a respectful partnership with families, Illinois Action for Children's Head Start and Early Head Start locations apply an evidence-based approach to engage children and families with limited access to financial resources. Children benefit from warm, nurturing, and effective interactions; support for basic mental, dental, and physical health; and developmentally appropriate school readiness education. IAFCs multidisciplinary approach is based on leading-edge research and science about brain development.

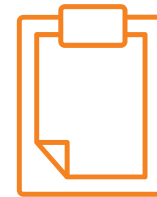
Families participate in a wide variety of activities to support children's development and to build strong parent-child relationships that align with each family's specific goals and needs. All IAFC Early Learning Programs (ELPs), during in-person learning, follow public health guidelines mandated by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), and the Cook County Department of Health (CCDPH). All ELPs are well-equipped with personal protective equipment (PPE) to ensure health and safety practices are followed in all classrooms and during home visiting activities. Additionally, they are now equipped to support full remote instruction if future situations arise that prevent in-person service delivery. The ELPs provide parents, children, and staff with the equipment necessary to access lessons remotely. IAFCs curriculum also supports delivery of lesson plans and activities to families via email.



331
Families Served



372
Children Served



330
Children Up-To-Date on Age
Appropriate Health Care



61.28
Average Monthly
Attendance per Site



Curriculum and Program Model

IAFCs Early Learning Programs (ELPs) use Practice-Based Coaching (PBC), a cyclical approach to supporting effective teaching practices that lead to positive outcomes for children. PBC components include focused observations, reflections, and feedback about teaching practices, actions, and goal setting and planning.

IAFCs ELPs include both children with previously identified disabilities and their typically developing peers. Our inclusive programming prepares children and their families for school at an earlier age.

During Fiscal Year 2022 (July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022), IAFCs ELPs continued their participation in Lead Learn Excel facilitated by Start Early. Through this work, IAFC is building its early learning team's capacity to develop high-quality classroom environments and teacher-child interactions. By participating in the program, which includes data dialogues, team lesson planning, professional development, and peer learning communities, IAFC equips its early childhood professionals with systems and routines for continuous learning and quality improvements. These elements support our teachers as they work one-on-one with families to improve specific outcomes for each child in the program.

IAFCs ELPs implement the Pyramid Model to promote healthy social-emotional development. The model's practice inventory helps identify each staff member's training needs and implements a training plan to address them, allowing the team to pinpoint specific skill needs across ELPs.

All classrooms use the research-based Creative Curriculum, which aligns with state standards for early learning. Through ongoing assessments, the ELPs team uses observations, pictures, videos, audio recordings, and children's own work to demonstrate children's competency in a variety of learning domains that are essential for school readiness. Each year, following completion of three checkpoints, the team analyzes results, guides classroom and individual instruction, and plans for teachers' professional development.

Regular screenings of children's overall development, social-emotional development, and hearing/vision help the ELPs team determine if further evaluation is needed. If a screening identifies a concern, IAFC refers children to the appropriate agencies and provides support to families throughout the evaluation process.

IAFCs Home Visiting Program uses Parents as Teachers, a research-based curriculum to increase parents' knowledge of early childhood development and improve parenting practices that prepare their young children for school readiness and success.

CURRICULUM

The **Creative Curriculum for Preschool** remains the primary curriculum for our center-based Early Learning Programs.

The Parents as Teachers curriculum guides the work of Parent Educators in our home visiting program for children under the age of three. Each of these curricula is aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework and the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards.

The program model is firmly rooted in a two-generation approach that serves families.

Early Learning Programs staff work in partnership with families to support the success of each child. Parent-teacher conferences are held three times a year, during which the Teaching Strategies Development and Learning Reports are shared. Teachers and parents focus these discussions on each student's strengths. If a transition is to occur, the final conference focuses on planning for a smooth transition.

Children receiving Early Head Start and Head Start services are assessed using the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment tool. Illinois Action for Children's educators assess children's growth and development in ten domains identified by the Creative Curriculum. This assessment data provides program staff and families with a clear and comprehensive picture of each child's development, growth over time, and the resources and supports that they need to thrive.





Family Engagement

Despite restrictions on in-person engagement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, IAFCs Family Engagement Specialists continue to encourage family involvement to support children's school readiness. To maximize outreach to local families, the Early Learning Programs leverage robust partnerships with community organizations, agencies, businesses, and individuals. Family Engagement Specialists and Parent Educators (Home Visitors) are deeply committed to working in partnership with families to help them achieve their goals and basic needs.

Our program served **331** families in FY22

With families' input, IAFCs ELPs offer varied ways for families to engage in the program to support their children's learning. These include interactive at-home activities, participation in Parent Committee activities, educational workshops and training sessions, and leadership development through representation on the Policy Council and Board of Directors. IAFC also hosts family fun nights, activities designed for men; opportunities for parents to work with Human Resources to interview candidates for open staff positions; and Parent Cafés to support their children's social-emotional development. Families show a high willingness to participate in Parent Café conversations.

Families and teachers have powerful strategies to connect children's continuous learning from school to home. Through the research-based Family Curriculum ReadyRosie, families receive videos to work from at home with children on multiple topics that enhance children's skills, learning, and behaviors and improve the relationships between parents and their children. In addition, parents have opportunities to take part in ten minutes videos, which lead to meaningful conversations of their own interest. The ELPs also provide families with external opportunities to develop their leadership skills. For example, one parent was elected President of the Illinois Head Start Association (IHSA) Board's Parent component, while another was selected to be one of the Illinois Parent Ambassadors to advocate for Early Learning funding at the national level.

To facilitate communication between families and ELPs, IAFC has expanded both the method and frequency of its communications. Platforms now include the e-Learning website, *remind* texting system, emails, phone calls, newsletters, virtual meetings and parent events, parent-teacher conferences, verbal reminders during drop off/pick up times as well as the distribution of flyers. IAFC customizes its communication to reflect each family's preferred language.

- The total number of families served in FY22 was **331**: **167** single-parent families; **64** two-parent families
- Of **331** families, **167** were employed; **164** were not in the work force.
- Foster children served: **11**
- Homeless families **8**. **1** family acquired housing during the school year.
- Total number of volunteers was **109**; out of these **90** were current parents.
- **53** father figures were engaged throughout the school year.
- **69%** of families received at least one service.

Volunteer Opportunities

Although the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic restricted on-site volunteer opportunities, families continued to volunteer remotely for meetings of the Parent Committee, Health Service Advisory Committee, Policy Council, and Board of Directors. IAFCs family volunteers co-facilitated Parent Cafés—planned parent activities. New Policy Council members were trained in their responsibilities.

Impact Stories

1 A Transformed Mother-Son Relationship

The Rucker family struggled with parent-child interactions. The mother was concerned that her son was easily distracted and wasn't interested in playing with her. Not wanting to worsen their dynamic, Ms. Rucker sought positive discipline practices, for when the need arose. Guided by the Parents as Teachers curriculum, I helped her better connect with her child through discipline and play. Feeling that Illinois Action for Children's home-based program was incredibly beneficial to her family, she plans on seeking similar support in her new hometown. — *Irene Gante, Parent Educator*

2 From Stay-at-Home Mom to Early Learning Leader

Ms. Cool, a single mother re-entering the workforce, needed trusted, and quality child care. She enrolled her daughter at our Ford Heights Early Learning Center. Taking advantage of our resources, Ms. Cool reinforced her children's education at home through activity sheets and other learning aides. Additionally, she utilized our job and housing resources. After a successful year, Ms. Cool's daughter transitioned to our three-to-five-year-old program. She flourished there until starting kindergarten in the 2022-2023 school year.

Continuing to harness opportunities, Ms. Cool was elected Chair of the Parent Committee of Ford Heights and Policy Council Representative. There she enhanced her leadership skills as an active member of the decision-making body. Recently, she formally joined our Ford Heights Early Learning Center as a Program Aide. — *Thomas Ewing, Family Engagement Specialist*

3 Holistic Healing After Tragedy

A bright and beautiful little girl who'd been with us for two years lost her mother from intimate partner violence. The four-year-old's elderly grandmother became her legal guardian. IAFCs mental health program allowed us to provide the family with support, which included the bereavement book *Death of a Loved One*. Our classroom teachers, mental health consultants, and office staff offered continuous emotional support and material assistance. Additionally, the Family Engagement staff made frequent wellness visits. The young girl is thriving in school and at home with her grandmother. — *Thomas Ewing, Family Engagement Specialist*





Early Learning Program Data

Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG) provides IAFCs Early Learning Program teachers and administrators with valuable data that is collected and reported three times a year to track each child’s progress. This data also helps assess progress in each classroom and each site, providing an overall snapshot of performance.

The domains covered by TSG are designed to assess all the domains of school readiness in the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.

Results for the 2021-2022 spring checkpoint are provided in the data table for Early Head Start and Head Start. Children’s performance level by age in each of the areas of development is highlighted. The percentages below show how many children met expectations outlined in Teaching Strategies GOLD.

Domain	Children Ages 0-3	Children Ages 3-5
Social-Emotional	86%	81%
Physical	88%	89%
Language	75%	72%
Cognitive	88%	82%
Literacy	67%	85%
Mathematics	22%	77%

Populations Served

Illinois Action for Children’s Early Learning Programs place special emphasis on recruiting and enrolling children and families that may be furthest from opportunity attainment.

Unhoused children	8
Unhoused families	8
Children Under the Care of a Guardian	28
Teen Parents	5
Single Parents	292
Parents with a Disability	4
Children in Foster Care	7

Number of Families Receiving WIC	8
Number of Families Receiving TANF	8
Number of Families Receiving SNAP	28
Number of children with an IEP	5
Number of children with an IFSP	292
Number of Families Receiving SSI	4
Children in Foster Care	7



Statement of Financial Position

As of June 30, 2022

Assets

Current Assets	\$ 7,559,146
Noncurrent Assets	\$ 3,270,415
Total Assets	\$ 10,829,561

Liabilities

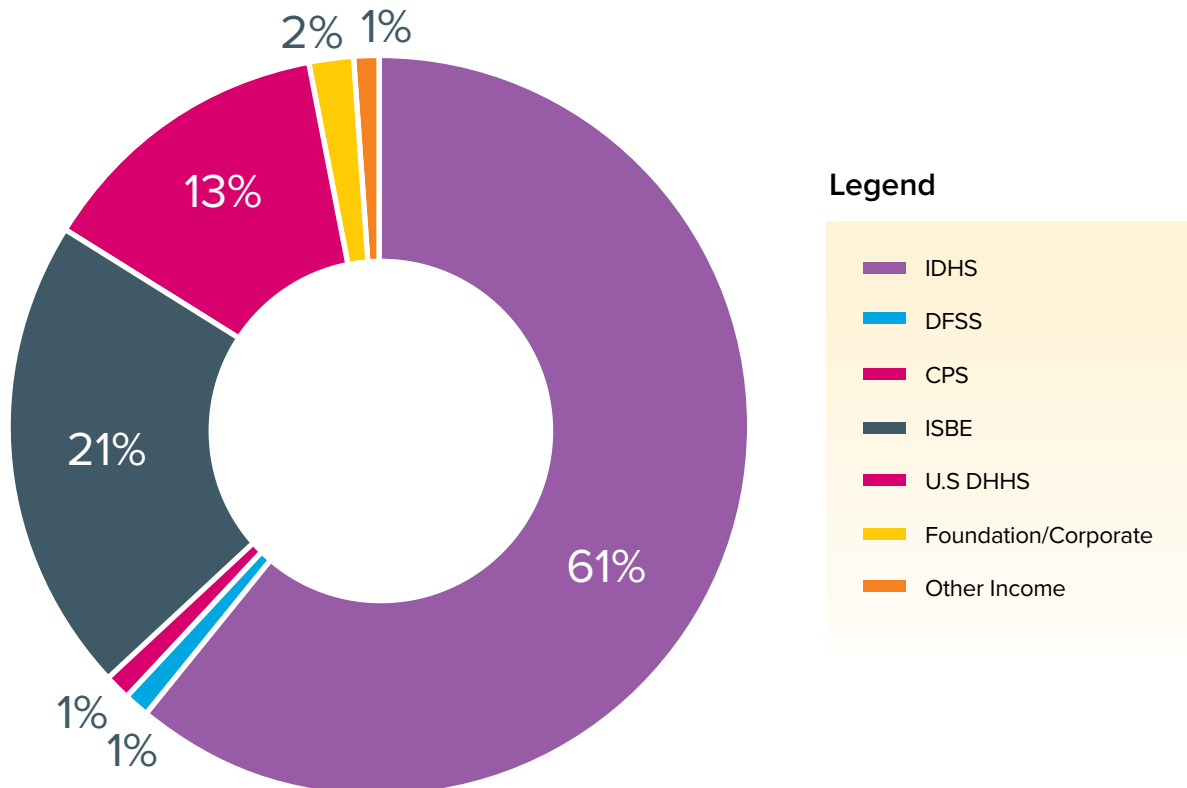
Total Liabilities	\$ 4,764,304
Total Net Assets	\$ 6,065,257
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 10,829,561



Support and Revenue

Government Contracts

IDHS	\$ 26,042,599
DFSS	\$ 1,262,246
CPS	\$ 250,000
DCFS	\$ 227,185
ISBE	\$ 14,348,017
U.S. DHHS	\$ 7,439,375
Foundation/Corporate	\$ 2,576,778
Other Income	\$ 472,545
Total Support and Revenue	\$ 52,618,745



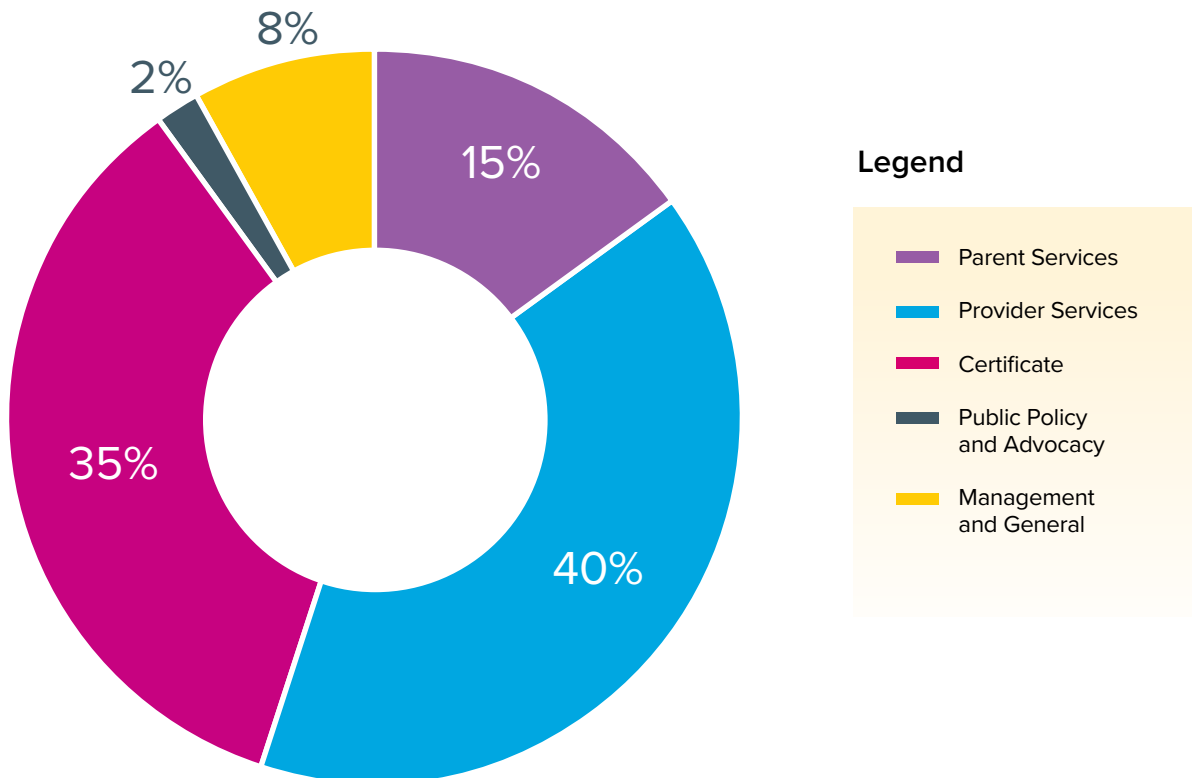
Expenses

Program Services

Parent Services	\$ 8,658,411
Provider Services	\$ 22,343,108
Certificate	\$ 16,758,480
Public Policy and Advocacy	\$ 1,142,546

Supporting Services

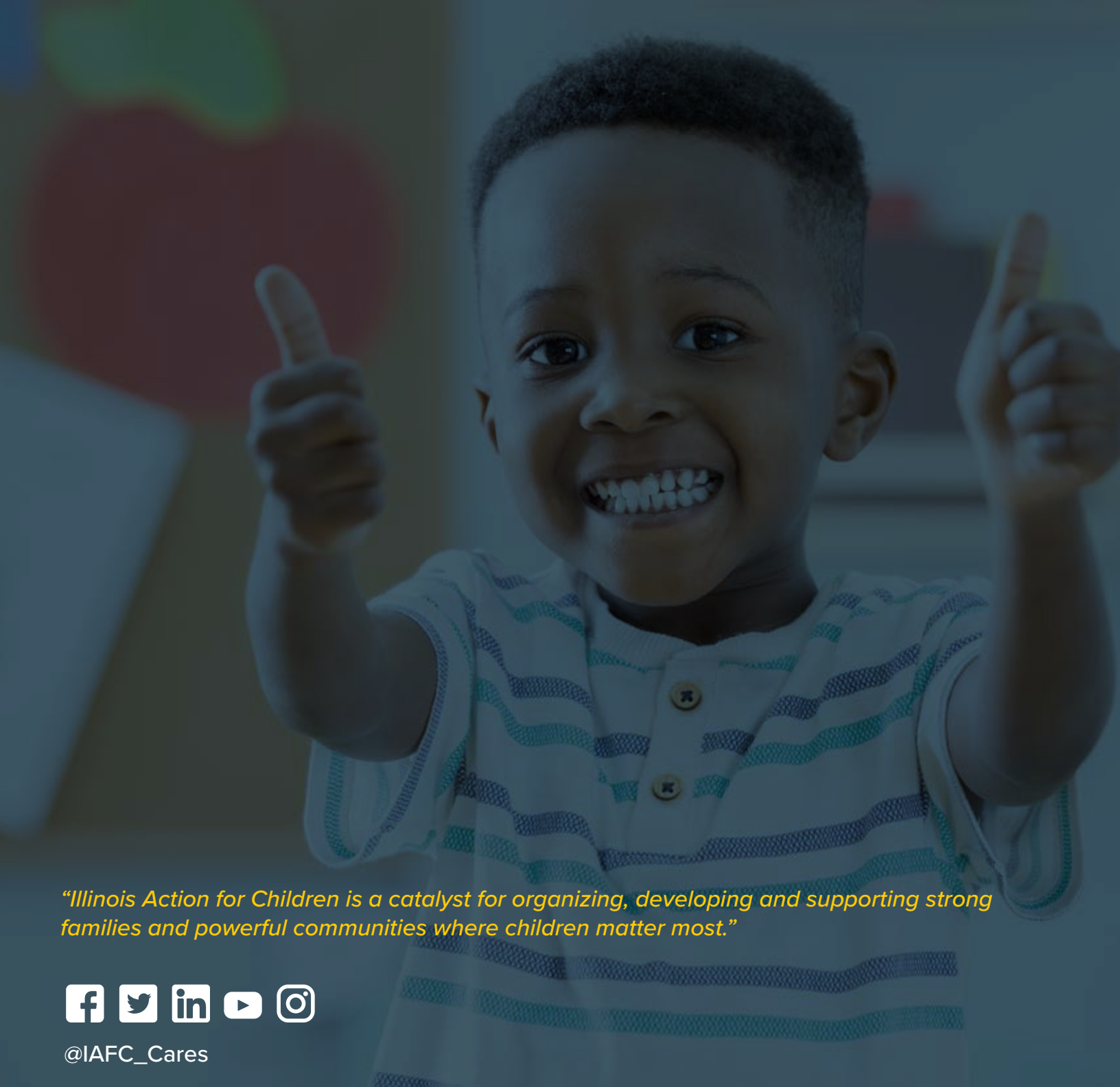
Fundraising/Marketing/Outreach	\$ 84,408
Management and General	\$ 3,860,552
Total Expenses	\$ 52,827,475
Change in Net Assets	\$ (208,730)





*“Education is the most powerful
weapon which you can use to
change the world.”*

– Nelson Mandela



“Illinois Action for Children is a catalyst for organizing, developing and supporting strong families and powerful communities where children matter most.”



@IAFC_Cares



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