

**IHSA Advisor
March, 2018**

Who's Ready for Spring?!!



The spring equinox (also called the March equinox or vernal equinox) falls on Tuesday, March 20, 2018, at 12:15 P.M. EDT. This event marks the astronomical first day of spring in the Northern Hemisphere.

At the spring equinox, the amount of daylight and darkness is approximately equal. The name *equinox* comes from Latin words which mean “equal night”— *aequus* (equal) and *nox* (night).

Enjoy the increasing sunlight hours, with earlier dawns and later sunsets.

Signs of the Equinox in nature:

The vernal equinox signals the beginning of nature's renewal in the Northern Hemisphere!

- Worms begin to emerge from the earth. In fact, the March Full Moon is called “The Full Worm Moon” for this reason.
- Notice the arc of the Sun across the sky as it shifts toward the north. Birds are migrating northward, along with the path of the Sun.
- Speaking of birds, did you know that the increasing sunlight is what triggers birds to sing? Cool, eh? Enjoy this [Bird Songs](#) page.
- Trees, shrubs, and flowers are sensitive to temperature and day-length, too! Since ancient days, people have used them as indicators of when the weather is right for planting. For example: Blooming [crocus](#) are your cue to plant [radishes](#), [parsnips](#), and [spinach](#). See more of nature's signs.
- Of course, the longer days bring warmer weather! Both we and the animals around us strip off our clothes and heavy coats!
- Ready, set, plant! March is time to start gardens and sow seeds in many regions. See the [Best Planting Dates](#) according to your local frost dates.

From the Farmers' Almanac website
<https://www.almanac.com/content/first-day-spring-vernal-equinox>

Head Start and Homelessness

If you have not seen the excellent information on the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth website, please see this link: <http://naehcy.org/educational-resources/early-childhood>. There are a lot of details about Head Start and what we offer for families experiencing homelessness.

Early Childhood Block Grant Update

FY18 Preschool for All Expansion (PFAE) and Prevention Initiative (PI) grants have been evaluated and programs have been notified. The FY19 Request for Proposal opportunities for the statewide re-compete of Preschool for All (PFA), Preschool for All-Expansion (PFAE) and Prevention Initiative (PI) funds are being evaluated now. I have heard they hope to let programs know in March about PFA and PFAE, and in April for PI awards.

Encryption List (Send me your zip codes if you haven't!!!!)

I think I have finally met with the right person on the Governor's Do IT team, David Nika. He is checking with DCFS internal staff who worked on the list before and also checking on the confidentiality factor. I am to get them a list of current HS/EHS programs with the zip codes that they serve. Currently I have 45 of the 54 grantee zip codes. So I still need 9. If you have not sent me your zip codes very soon, your program will not receive a monthly listing of DCFS children in care eligible for enrollment in HS or EHS. These children deserve a great program like HS or EHS and we could use the referrals!

DCFS and Enrolling Foster Kids

On the last Regional Collaboration Directors' call with John Tschoe from the Regional Office, John noted that he had been comparing PIR enrollment data of foster children against the number of open DCFS 0-5 cases. The child welfare numbers are increasing but he is **not** seeing increases of corresponding numbers in the enrolled and eligible for HS/EHS due to being in foster care.

John said his instinct is that HS/EHS is not serving that many foster children in relation to the number of children in foster care in Region V. As far as our Illinois stats—last year on the PIR, Illinois reported serving 919 foster children or 1.93%. According to DCFS statistics (2015), there were about 4700 children from 0-5 in custody. I think we need to do better!!

The DCFS School Readiness team is EAGER to get their children enrolled. They are now reaching out to PFA and PI. They really want the kids in HS/EHS but evidently that is not always working out.

Are you aware we have a state MOU with DCFS about referrals and meeting with DCFS locally and at the quarterly regional meetings? If you want any help with your Regional or your local collaboration with DCFS, please let me know.

Suspension/Expulsion

The Illinois Interagency Team or IAT remains focused on developing state policies and procedures on suspension/expulsion. The IAT will be providing recommendations to DCFS and ISBE as they write the rules and procedures for this new law that went into effect on January 1, 2018. I am part of the work group and fortunately we have added Alli Lowe-Fotos who actually helped write the Illinois legislation using the Head Start Performance Standards as a basis. The team has also included input from the Pyramid Model team. Illinois is now a Pyramid Model state and will be offering free training to programs about the Pyramid Model.

Here is an excellent resource to help you develop your policies and procedures around suspension/expulsion: <http://nrckids.org/index.cfm/products/stepping-stones-to-caring-for-our-children->

[3rd-edition-ss3/stepping-stones-to-caring-for-our-children-3rd-edition-ss3/](#). Especially see Chapter 2 although the whole publication is great for many kinds of program policies and procedures!!

Upcoming Conferences

[Limit is the Sky Conference](#), March 10, Joliet, IL

[Early Choices Inclusion Town Hall](#), March 12, Normal, IL

[Early Choices Inclusion Town Hall](#), March 15, Chicago, IL

[Heart of Illinois AEYC, “Engaged Learners, Inspired Teachers,”](#) March 23, Peoria, IL

[Heart of Illinois AEYC Spring Mini-Conference](#), April 7, Peoria, IL

National Head Start Association Conference, April 23-27, Anaheim, CA

<https://www.nhsa.org/event/2018-national-conference>

[Leadership Connections National Conference: Building Bright Futures](#), May 10–12, Wheeling, IL

Illinois Birth to Third Grade Continuity Conference, June 13-14, Bloomington, IL,

<https://education.illinoisstate.edu/csep/b3/conference2018.php>