



April 24, 2017

Dear Colleagues:

We are writing to inform you that deadlines for compliance with all credential requirements in ExceleRate® Illinois will be extended until July 1, 2018. This is being implemented due to multiple circumstances outside the control of providers and staff. These challenges include the lack of Gateways Scholarship funds and MAP grants for students, as well as the tight timeframe for completing new IDHS training requirements for compliance with the Child Care and Development Block Grant. Specifically:

- Gateways Scholarship funds for early childhood professionals have been exhausted since January 2017, leaving many staff without access to resources to complete required college coursework in the spring semester of 2017.
- While we expect Gateways Scholarships to be funded again in FY18, this cannot be confirmed prior to July 1, 2017 at the earliest, which is well past the deadline for students to register for summer semester classes.
- State-funded MAP grants, which many in our workforce rely upon to finance college coursework, remain unfunded. It is unknown whether these grants will be funded in FY18.
- New trainings required under the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) were announced in March 2017, and must be completed by all CCAP providers by September 30, 2017. It will be challenging for many staff to complete the training requirements by the deadline, while simultaneously taking college courses in the fall semester. Completion of these trainings is essential for Illinois to ensure compliance with federal requirements. As such, federal CCDBG compliance requirements must take precedence over ExceleRate requirements.
- Uncertainty over the state's FY18 budget continues to impact all our systems on multiple levels.

During this extension, INCCRRA will work with programs to support and ensure compliance with progress on continuous quality improvement and individual professional development plans. We encourage you to keep your staff list updated in the Gateways Director's Portal to help manage this task. Please feel free to reach out to the counselors at INCCRRA with your specific questions.

More than 17,000 early childhood professionals have achieved credentials under Race to the Top-Early Challenge Grant initiatives since 2012. We thank all of you for your efforts to date, and urge those who have not yet applied for credentials to do so before June 30, 2017, in order to benefit from reduced fees still available under RTT-ELC.

As always, we thank you all for your participation and support, and for all your good work on behalf of children and families in our state every day.

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