

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ILLINOIS

### **ABOUT START EARLY**

Each year, more than one million children enter kindergarten unprepared to learn. Since its beginning in 1982, Start Early has persistently pursued a single goal, that all children living in America—particularly those born into under resourced communities—have quality early childhood experiences in the crucial first five years of life. Children born into under resourced communities begin life with the odds stacked against them. That is not just unfortunate for them. It is a problem for all of us—one that can and must be solved. Start Early is demonstrating effective solutions every day through work anchored in equity and leveraging a growing body of scientific evidence about early brain development. Private dollars are used to apply that science to develop innovative programs, and then leverage public funding to support their implementation and replication. Start Early’s ultimate vision is that every U.S. community has a comprehensive, equitable prenatal-to-five system that delivers excellent programs and services.

Start Early is a national organization headquartered in Chicago, with offices in Seattle, Washington, D.C., and Springfield, Illinois, and remote employees nationwide.

Start Early:

- Serves more than 4,000 children and families directly through birth-to-five programs it funds and operates in Chicago as well as through its network of voluntary home visiting programs throughout Illinois.
- Integrates the latest research and best theories into program development efforts.
- Trains nearly 3,000 community-based early childhood professionals in Illinois each year.
- Advocates for state and federal funding for early childhood services that reach hundreds of thousands of children across the country.
- Partners with advocacy organizations in 17 states and Washington, D.C. to build their capacity to advance policy change and increase public investments in effective birth-to-five programs.

### Key Facts

- \$101 million budget for FY22
- 350 full time staff
- 4,000 children served in birth-to-5 programs in Illinois; 164,664 children served through pre-kindergarten programs nationwide

### Programs

- [Early Learning Programs](#)
- [Research](#)
- [Policy and Advocacy](#)
- [Connecting Communities](#)

### Visit



- Communicates through publications and other resources to ensure that knowledge is translated into understanding that leads to action—in homes, schools, board rooms, and on Capitol Hill.
- Designs and develops models, curricula, education materials, and other programs that help prevent the academic achievement gap and the social problems it can create, including school dropout rates, teenage pregnancy, juvenile crime, and chronic health conditions.
- Start Early is proud that its work in early childhood development demonstrates its long commitment to equity and anti-racism. We are working to actively and intentionally center equity and address structural racism in Early Childhood Education workforce development and programs. We are working in partnership with key early childhood partners to address historic access, quality, and opportunity gaps that disproportionately impact under resourced communities.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

The Executive Director, Illinois is responsible for Start Early’s program, policy, and research agenda in Illinois, including setting strategy, overseeing operations, and serving as the chief relationship manager and spokesperson for Start Early’s work in Illinois. Start Early’s Illinois program, policy, and professional learning activities are the foundation of the organization’s field expertise, credibility, and reputation for quality and innovation. Illinois operations comprise more than two-thirds of Start Early’s budget and staff. The Executive Director, Illinois will work closely with Start Early’s Illinois policy team, program leadership of Head Start and home visiting networks, communications, and development staff to advance Start Early’s vision for a comprehensive, prenatal-5 system of early learning and care and to ensure program excellence in all direct service, professional development, training, and technical assistance work in Illinois. In this role, they will strengthen our commitment to anti racism and ensure we are centering equity across our core work.

Representing the full scope of Start Early’s work in Illinois, the Executive Director will represent Start Early at key external tables, develop and maintain relationships with local and state policymakers, and strategically manage relationships with public and private funders. The Executive Director will champion Start Early’s mission and generate attention for early learning in external communication across the state, serve as the organization’s lead advocate in Illinois, and represent Start Early in fundraising activities.

This is a visionary, charismatic leader with exceptional judgment and expertise around the systems and programs necessary for an organization’s success. They recognize the existing and potential alliances that will strengthen an organization’s mission and bring experience successfully forging those alliances.

Reporting to the President, the Executive Director, Illinois will oversee: 1) Vice President, Illinois Policy Team; 2) Vice President, Early/Head Start Network; 3) School Director, Educare Chicago; 4) Director,



Home Visiting and Doula Network; and 5) Director, Professional Learning Network of Illinois. The Executive Director will have overall responsibility for approximately 170 staff. Additional matrixed support for these positions will come from Start Early's Chief Operating Officer; Senior Vice President, Policy and Advocacy; and Vice President, National Home Visiting. The Executive Director, Illinois is a member of Start Early's Executive Team and plays a critical role in organizational strategy and leadership, board relations, and fundraising.

The Executive Director, Illinois will lead an exceptional team of talented leaders who are established experts and thought leaders in their respective areas. Further, they will focus on ensuring that there are strong internal systems to strengthen and enhance the effectiveness of Start Early's work in Illinois.

While the successful candidate should have a passion for early childhood issues, equally important is the ability to recognize and create collaboration with the external systems that are critical to Start Early's success in Illinois. They will convey a single-mindedness regarding the mission of Start Early. Knowledge of the public sector in Illinois will be important for the successful candidate. They will be a strategic thinker with excellent interpersonal and communications skills. They will also bring a highly collaborative style of management and decision making. They will be comfortable leading committee and commission venues.

They should possess demonstrated leadership abilities with organizations and cultures that have been forged from public-private partnership-driven strategies. The candidate may have started their career in the public sector, in agency or social services work, or in academia. Successful experience in a fast-moving program development and policy-influencing role will also be important. This opportunity requires a strong, emotionally intelligent leader.

Specific areas of oversight include:

**EARLY HEAD START AND HEAD START NETWORK:** EHSN provides support to community-based agencies to enable them to implement high quality, innovative, and joyful Early/Head Start programs. We ensure the best outcomes for 2,155 children and families for success in school and life, and we contribute to credibility, community/parent engagement, and learning to fuel the policy, systems building, and research work of Start Early. Our network includes (2) programs directly operated by Start Early Illinois:

**HEALTHY PARENTS AND BABIES:** Using our unique Doula / Home Visiting program model, our HP&B team engages with pregnant woman and their partners to provide perinatal education and care, including support during labor & delivery. HP&B home visitors coach and support new parents, strengthening their knowledge of child development, health, and wellbeing, from birth to age 3.



**EDUCARE CHICAGO:** The Educare Chicago team ensures the best outcomes for 145 children and families for success in school and life. Educare contributes credibility and learning for Start Early's program development, policy, systems building, and research work, providing a platform for educating the field and engaging thought leaders. Educare Chicago is an active contributor to and participant in the Educare Learning Network.

**HOME VISITING AND DOULA PROGRAM NETWORK:** HVDN provides support to 27 community-based agencies to enable them to implement high quality, innovative, and joyful home visiting/doula programs in their communities. We ensure the best outcomes for more than 2,000 children and families for success in school and life, and we contribute to credibility, community/parent engagement, and learning to fuel the policy, systems building, and research work of Start Early. Our vision is that new parents will have the support they need to attend to their children's needs, thereby improving developmental trajectories for their children and realizing their own life goals.

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NETWORK OF ILLINOIS:** The Professional Learning Network provides high quality program support to Illinois home visiting and center-based programs with technical assistance, coaching, and training. Our vision is to ensure the best outcomes for children and families through continuous quality improvement of our direct work with programs and to continuously develop early childhood expertise through best-in-class advocacy, professional development, research, and program delivery that is coherent and leveraged internally and externally.

**ILLINOIS POLICY TEAM:** The Illinois Policy Team advances policy change through: systems building; legislative, administrative and grassroots advocacy; consultation; and thought leadership, including through our special initiatives Every Child Ready Chicago and Raising Illinois (formerly known as the Illinois PN3 Coalition). We will continue to work broadly across child- and family-serving systems.

The Executive Director, Illinois must reside in the Chicagoland area or in downstate Illinois.

## MAJOR OBJECTIVES

Within the first 12 to 18 months, the Executive Director, Illinois, will achieve the following major objectives:

- Create better fluency, awareness, and connections across the divisions that they oversee.
- Establish relationships with key external partners and is seen as a reliable partner for Start Early interests in Illinois.
- Consider capacity needs for program partners that ensures time and space for high quality collaboration.
- Become the primary relationship manager with existing funders while expanding opportunities for new funding sources



## RESPONSIBILITIES

The Executive Director, Illinois defines, leads, and oversees all aspects of the following areas:

### ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

- A history of building and supporting a diverse team. The ability to model inclusive leadership and coach leaders on building inclusive teams. Start Early believes in and practices equal opportunity in its operations, community engagement, employment, and decision-making, and encourages inclusion of diverse members of our community.
- Prior experience in nonprofit management, educational leadership, or community leadership. The Executive Director will have analytical, organizational, and problem-solving skills that support sound decision making. Strong business, financial, and organizational savvy will be evidenced by a proven ability to set clear priorities, delegate, and guide the investment of human and other resources to help achieve goals.
- Proven ability to build a culture that is both positive and productive. The Executive Director will help the team develop a culture both of accountability and of mutual respect and support. Start Early seeks candidates who display evidence of strong collaborative skills to develop buy-in and to reach consensus across the organization. The successful candidate will be an active listener who will support and value the important skills of staff and who will bring authenticity, as well as a communicative and compassionate nature to problem solving.

### STRATEGIC PLANNING

- Establish a rolling three-year strategy and operating plans for Illinois, aligned with and nested under the Start Early strategic plan.
- Develop and implement strategies for each of Start Early's existing programs and services.
- Work with Start Early leaders to ensure that the tactics and resources necessary to implement these programs are in place.
- Identify areas of opportunity, evaluate, and recommend future strategies.
- Develop funding plans and budgets with respect to new programs, advocacy initiatives, training, and research.

### SPOKESPERSON, NETWORKING, AND COMMUNICATIONS

- Champion Start Early's vision and mission across all Illinois programs and services.
- Generate attention for early childhood issues across the state.
- Represent Start Early as its primary spokesperson at the state level.



- Identify and increase Start Early visibility and influence in critical venues.
- Develop and maintain relationships with key top-level local, state, and federal government (Midwest/Chicago regional offices) representatives.
- Effectively marshal communications and media resources to increase Start Early’s prominence as a force for early childhood in Illinois.

## FUNDING

- Ensure full funding for Illinois activities through a mix of public and private support.
- Represent Start Early in state-level fundraising activities.
- Work closely with the Start Early development team to identify, qualify, and capture funding opportunities.

## ADVOCACY AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- Maintain understanding of leading research that influences policy formation.
- Maintain understanding of state-level policy developments across the early childhood field, in Illinois and nationwide.
- Monitor trends in key constituents’, stakeholders’, and competitors’ positions on key issues.

## PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

- Direct the efforts of the Vice President, Early Head Start and Head Start Network (E/HSN), and work with that individual to develop plans to attain Start Early objectives.
- Ensure adherence to performance standards and success measures in all Start Early Illinois activities.
- Guide execution and expansion of core existing programs within the state.
- Guide assessment of new program opportunities within Illinois.
- The Executive Director is also responsible for expanding Start Early Illinois through talent acquisition, staff development, and ongoing management.

## QUALIFICATIONS

The successful Executive Director, Illinois will bring most of the following qualifications:

- An advanced degree or equivalent experience in an area of human services, such as early childhood development, social work, education, public health, family studies, or developmental psychology.



- Minimum of ten years of progressively responsible experience and management that includes program development, program administration, staff supervision, fiscal management, and board interaction.
- A strong balance of strategic and management skills, including delegation.
- Knowledge of funding mechanisms and budgeting processes.
- Capability for recognizing, attracting, and developing talent.
- Efficient and productive work style.
- Orientation toward information sharing.
- Ability to successfully manage multiple and competing priorities.
- Demonstrated experience balancing strategic thinking with pragmatic execution.
- A history of building and supporting a diverse team.
- Prior experience in nonprofit management, educational leadership, or community leadership.
- Proven ability to build a culture that is both positive and productive.

## CRITICAL COMPETENCIES FOR SUCCESS

- Communications—a compelling and charismatic communicator and active listener who engages effectively at a high-level with a variety of audiences, especially high-level decision makers, and who will create a strong public presence for Start Early in Illinois.
- Organization and Mission Focus—looking across the organization for opportunities to apply ideas that expand Start Early’s influence and impact. Role modeling Start Early’s values.
- Program Acumen—depth of understanding of Start Early’s program history, current program successes, and potential for future innovations.
- Inclusive Leadership – awareness of structural inequality and their own biases, and a commitment to actively seek out and consider different perspectives to inform their decision-making and collaborate more effectively with others.
- Talent and Relationship Development—capacity to identify, observe, and contribute to management and staff development; ability to model appropriate words and actions; ability to gain credibility and build cross cultural relationships across functions and among multiple constituencies.
- Thought Leadership—demonstrated innovation, intention, and quality of contribution to program, advocacy, training, and research activities. Intellectual curiosity and a learning orientation for themselves and the organization.
- Funding Literacy and Stewardship—depth of understanding of early childhood funding sources and uses. Ability to redirect resources as necessary to serve the organization.



## APPLICATION

Start Early has retained Campbell & Company to conduct this search. The team for this project includes Marian DeBerry, Joey Scheiber, and Abigail Husain. To be considered for this opportunity, please send a letter of interest and resume to:

### JOEY SCHEIBER

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