Texas Early Childhood Inclusion Plan

2026 to 2030

Texas Education Agency

TEXAS Health and Human Services

Texas Workforce Commission

Texas Education Agency

Commissioner Mike Morath

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August 21, 2026

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor
State Capitol, Room 2S.1
Austin, Texas 78701

The Honorable Dan Patrick
Lieutenant Governor
State Capitol, Room 2E.13
Austin, Texas 78701

The Honorable Dustin Burrows
Speaker
House of Representative
State Capitol, Room 2W.13
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Governor Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Patrick, and Speaker Burrows:

I am writing to express my approval of the strategies outlined in the Texas Early Childhood Inclusion Plan required by Texas Education Code (TEC), Subchapter A, Chapter 29, §29.0091. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) works to help ensure that Texas children enter school with the foundational knowledge and skills needed to be successful learners. Through partnerships with families, community organizations, local education agencies (LEAs), and other government entities, TEA supports effective, aligned early learning opportunities, policies, and programs. Key areas of support include access to high-quality prekindergarten, early childhood resources and professional learning opportunities, family engagement, implementation of developmentally appropriate practices and instructional guidance, and collaboration with workforce and community partners.

TEA is the agency that manages the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B program for Texas, ECSE is the preschool special education system under IDEA that ensures eligible children with disabilities receive individualized educational services and supports through their LEA at no cost to the family. For

most children, Part B ECSE serves ages 3-5; however, children who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, blind, or visually impaired are entitled to Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) from birth through age 21 under Texas law and IDEA.

TEA is committed to implementing the strategies outlined in the Texas Early Childhood Inclusion Plan and continuing to coordinate with the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to improve and expand early learning and education opportunities for young children with disabilities or developmental delays.

I agree that the Texas Early Childhood Inclusion Plan provides a clear path forward and aligns with the agency's mission and commitment to improving educational outcomes for all students served through Texas public education programs. Thank you for your continued partnership and support of Texas students and schools.

Sincerely,

Mike Morath
Commissioner of Education

TEXAS
Health and Human Services

Texas Health and Human Services Commission

Stephanie Muth
Executive Commissioner

August 12, 2026

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor
State Capitol, Room 2S.1
Austin, Texas 78701

The Honorable Dan Patrick
Lieutenant Governor
State Capitol, Room 2E.13
Austin, Texas 78701

The Honorable Dustin Burrows
Speaker
House of Representative
State Capitol, Room 2W.13
Austin, Texas 78701

Re: Texas Early Childhood Inclusion Plan

Dear Governor Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Patrick, and Speaker Burrows:

I am writing to express my approval of the strategies outlined in the Texas Early Childhood Inclusion Plan required by Texas Education Code (TEC), Subchapter A, Chapter 29, §29.0091. The Health and Human Services Commission supports the inclusion of young children with disabilities or developmental delays in early childhood settings through the work of the Child Care Regulation (CCR) and Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) programs.

- CCR protects the health, safety, and well-being of children by ensuring child care providers meet minimum standards for care. Additionally, CCR provides a public child care database to help parents make informed decisions when choosing a child care provider.

- As the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C program for Texas, ECI provides services and supports to families with children birth to 36 months with developmental delays, disabilities, or medical diagnoses that

may impact development. ECI partners with families to help their children learn, grow, and improve their developmental outcomes.

Both CCR and ECI are committed to implementing the strategies outlined in the Texas Early Childhood Inclusion plan and continuing to coordinate with the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Workforce Commission to improve and expand early learning and education opportunities for young children with disabilities or developmental delays.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Muth

Texas Workforce Commission
A Member of Texas Workforce Solutions

Joe Esparza, Chairman
Commissioner Representing Employers

Alberto Treviño III
Commissioner Representing Labor

Brent Connett
Commissioner Representing the Public

Steve Pier
Executive Director

August 12, 2026

The Honorable Greg Abbott, Governor

The Honorable Dan Patrick, Lieutenant Governor

The Honorable Dustin Burrows, Speaker of the House

Governor Abbott, Lt. Governor Patrick, and Speaker Burrows:

As required by House Bill 2310 (89th Legislature, Regular Session), which amended the Texas Education Code adding §29.0091, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) collaborated with the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to develop the *Strategic Plan to Improve and Expand Early Learning and Educational Opportunities for Young Children with Disabilities*.

While TEA is required to submit the plan, all agencies took active roles in identifying activities that would improve and expand early learning and educational opportunities for young children with disabilities or developmental delays. TWC supports the inclusion of young children with disabilities or development delays in early childhood settings through the work of its child care and early learning programs and committed to 18 specific activities to implement or explore over the next four years to support progress toward achieving the plan's goals.

On behalf of TWC I am pleased to support this plan and underscore TWCs ongoing commitment to serving children with disabilities.

Steve Pier,

Executive Director
Texas Workforce Commission

TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

Texas Early Childhood Inclusion Plan 2026 to 2030

A plan to improve the inclusion of children with developmental diagnoses or delays in high-quality early childhood settings across Texas

Texas Education Agency

Texas Health and Human Services Commission

Texas Workforce Commission

September 1st, 2026

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Texas stakeholders who participated in this plan's focus groups and statewide survey, and to the Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing at UT Austin for its role in collecting stakeholder feedback and drafting the plan.

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Executive Summary

House Bill 2310 was passed in the 89th Texas Legislature and codified into Subchapter A, Chapter 29 of the Texas Education Code (TEC) §29.0091[1], directs the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to jointly develop a four-year strategic plan to improve access to inclusive early childhood settings for children with disabilities and developmental delays. The Texas Early Childhood Inclusion Plan, years 2026 to 2030, fulfills this requirement by presenting a shared vision, goals, and strategies to guide the state's early childhood system through 2030, with updates required every 4 years.

TEA, HHSC, and TWC developed this plan through a coordinated engagement process conducted January through May 2026, gathering input from 1,258 statewide survey respondents, including child care providers, families, school district staff, and Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) providers, alongside focus groups, public comment, and consultation with the Texas Early Learning Council, the ECI Advisory Committee, and all 20 Education Service Centers. This input, together with recent Preschool Development Grant findings and existing agency strategic plans, grounds the plan's definition of inclusion: that all children with disabilities and developmental delays learn, play, and meaningfully participate alongside their peers without disabilities, with the individualized supports they need to engage with and make progress in the same programs and environments.

Stakeholders identified barriers to inclusion in three main areas. Families reported navigating a complex system with little information about available programs, transitions, or how to advocate for their children. Across all respondent groups, workforce shortages emerged as the top barrier, with over half citing a lack of trained specialists and nearly half citing limited training and coaching opportunities, compounded by high turnover and low pay. Stakeholders also identified gaps in coordination and communication, particularly during the transition from ECI to early childhood special education (ECSE) at age three, when families reported losing services and information, and when child care providers reported being excluded from transition planning despite their ongoing role in children's daily care.

In response, stakeholders recommended increasing funding for staff hiring and training, simplifying access to child care inclusion supports, aligning prekindergarten eligibility criteria, building flexibility into ratio and class size rules, reducing behavioral and skill-based barriers to program entry, and strengthening transition planning, communication, and shared data systems across agencies.

Building on this feedback, the plan establishes a joint agency vision that **all Texas children with disabilities and developmental delays learn, play, and meaningfully participate alongside children of the same age without disabilities**, and organizes TEA, HHSC, and TWC's commitments under three goals, each with three supporting strategies:

- **Goal 1: Increase access to and align understanding of quality, inclusive early childhood settings**
    - **Strategy 1.1:** Define and promote a shared understanding of quality inclusion across all early childhood settings
    - **Strategy 1.2:** Increase the availability of and access to inclusive early childhood programs
    - **Strategy 1.3:** Develop family engagement and educational resources so families can navigate the system and advocate for their children.
- **Goal 2: Build a well-supported, trained, and sustainable early childhood workforce**
    - **Strategy 2.1:** Grow and diversify the early childhood workforce
    - **Strategy 2.2:** Expand training and job-embedded coaching so all early childhood professionals can collaborate and support children with disabilities effectively
    - **Strategy 2.3:** Improve working conditions and retention supports to keep qualified staff in the field

- **Goal 3: Improve how programs communicate — with each other AND with families**
    - **Strategy 3.1:** Bridge communication and coordination across early childhood programs, agencies, and families
    - **Strategy 3.2:** Improve transition planning and support so children maintain services and families are meaningfully involved at every step
    - **Strategy 3.3:** Build shared data, policies, and practices across agencies to track inclusion outcomes and drive continuous improvement

Each strategy includes specific activities, categorized as Continue, Create, or Explore, with defined timelines and progress measures through 2030. TEA will maintain a work plan tracking implementation, and the Early Childhood Interagency Workgroup will provide regular updates to the Texas Early Learning Council, the ECI Advisory Committee, and other stakeholder bodies throughout the plan period, ensuring the plan remains responsive to the needs of Texas children, families, and providers.

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Document Acronyms

The following acronyms are used throughout this plan.

Acronym	Definition
APR	Annual Performance Report
BVI	Blind or Visually Impaired
CCR	Child Care Regulation
CCS	Child Care Services
CDA	Child Development Associate
CoP	Community of Practice
COS	Child Outcomes Summary
DB	Deafblind
DHH	Deaf or Hard of Hearing
ECI	Early Childhood Intervention
ECIDS	Early Childhood Integrated Data System
ECIW	Early Childhood Interagency Workgroup
ECSE	Early Childhood Special Education
ECTA	Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center
EIS	Early Intervention Specialist
ESC	Education Service Center
FFY	Federal Fiscal Year
HHSC	Texas Health and Human Services Commission
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Acronym	Definition
IEP	Individualized Education Program
IFSP	Individualized Family Service Plan
IPDP	Individualized Professional Development Plan
LEA	Local Educational Agency
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
PDG	Preschool Development Grant
RA	Registered Apprenticeship
SPP/APR	State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report
SPPI	State Performance Plan Indicator
TAC	Texas Administrative Code
TEA	Texas Education Agency
TEC	Texas Education Code
TELC	Texas Early Learning Council
TWC	Texas Workforce Commission
UDL	Universal Design for Learning

Introduction

Overview of Texas Education Code (TEC) §29.0091 (House Bill 2310)

House Bill 2310 was passed in the 89th Texas Legislature and codified into Subchapter A, Chapter 29 of the Texas Education Code (TEC) §29.0091[1]. The law requires a strategic plan to be developed that focuses on increasing access to inclusive early childhood settings, such as prekindergarten, early childhood special education (ECSE), and subsidized child care, while identifying and addressing barriers that limit participation, including service gaps, transition challenges between early childhood intervention (ECI) and ECSE, and workforce or provider capacity issues.

The required strategic plan must include recommendations for policy, funding, and practice changes, as well as strategies to improve coordination across agencies and stakeholders, including families, providers, and statewide partners. This plan is due by September 1, 2026, and is intended to guide future improvements in how Texas supports young children with disabilities or developmental delays in early learning environments. To ensure continued relevance to emerging needs, the plan will be updated every four years.

Strategic Plan Purpose

TEC §29.0091 directs the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to collaboratively develop and implement the statewide strategic plan to improve and expand early learning and educational opportunities for young children with disabilities or developmental delays.

Each of these agencies plays a distinct role in Texas's early childhood system:

- **TEA** oversees public prekindergarten and ECSE services.
- **HHSC** oversees ECI, which serves infants and toddlers with disabilities and developmental delays, and Child Care Regulation (CCR), which establishes and enforces minimum child care licensing standards.

- **TWC** oversees the Child Care Services (CCS) program and Texas Rising Star, the state's child care quality rating and improvement system.

This document is the **Texas Early Childhood Inclusion Plan**, a four-year strategic plan developed jointly by TEA, HHSC, and TWC. It reflects input from families, educators, providers, advocates, and agency partners statewide.

This plan does five things to accomplish the priorities of TEC §29.0091:

- **Reports stakeholder engagement plan and results**.
- **Describes existing barriers** to the effective inclusion of children with disabilities in high-quality early learning settings.
- **Shares stakeholder recommendations** for statutory, regulatory, guidance, funding, and policy implementation changes.
- **Proposes concrete strategies and goals** to strengthen inclusion practices statewide.
- **Outlines plan communications and sustainability**, including how TEA, HHSC, and TWC will track progress, communicate updates, and prepare for the next plan update in 2030.

What is Inclusion?

Creating a shared understanding of inclusion anchors this strategic plan and guides its recommendations. Grounded in TEA's existing definition of meaningful access and refined through extensive stakeholder input, this definition reflects both research and the lived experiences of families, educators, and service providers across Texas.

For this plan, inclusion means:

All children with disabilities and developmental delays learn, play, and **meaningfully participate** alongside children of the same age without disabilities or delays. They receive the **individualized supports** and services they need to **have equal opportunities to engage with and make progress** in the same programs, general

education curriculum, routines, and environments as their non-disabled peers.

A strong majority (86%) of survey respondents took the time to share, in their own words, what inclusion means to them. Across roles and regions, three ideas came up repeatedly: that children with disabilities deserve to truly belong, not just be present; that inclusion means meaningful participation, not just physical placement; and that the supports children need must be individualized for each child, not generic. Those values are reflected in the above definition and are embedded throughout this plan.

"Ultimately, inclusion means belonging. It is the shift from asking 'How do we fix this child so they can be here?' to asking 'How do we change this environment so this child can thrive with us?" — School district staff and advocate

Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Results

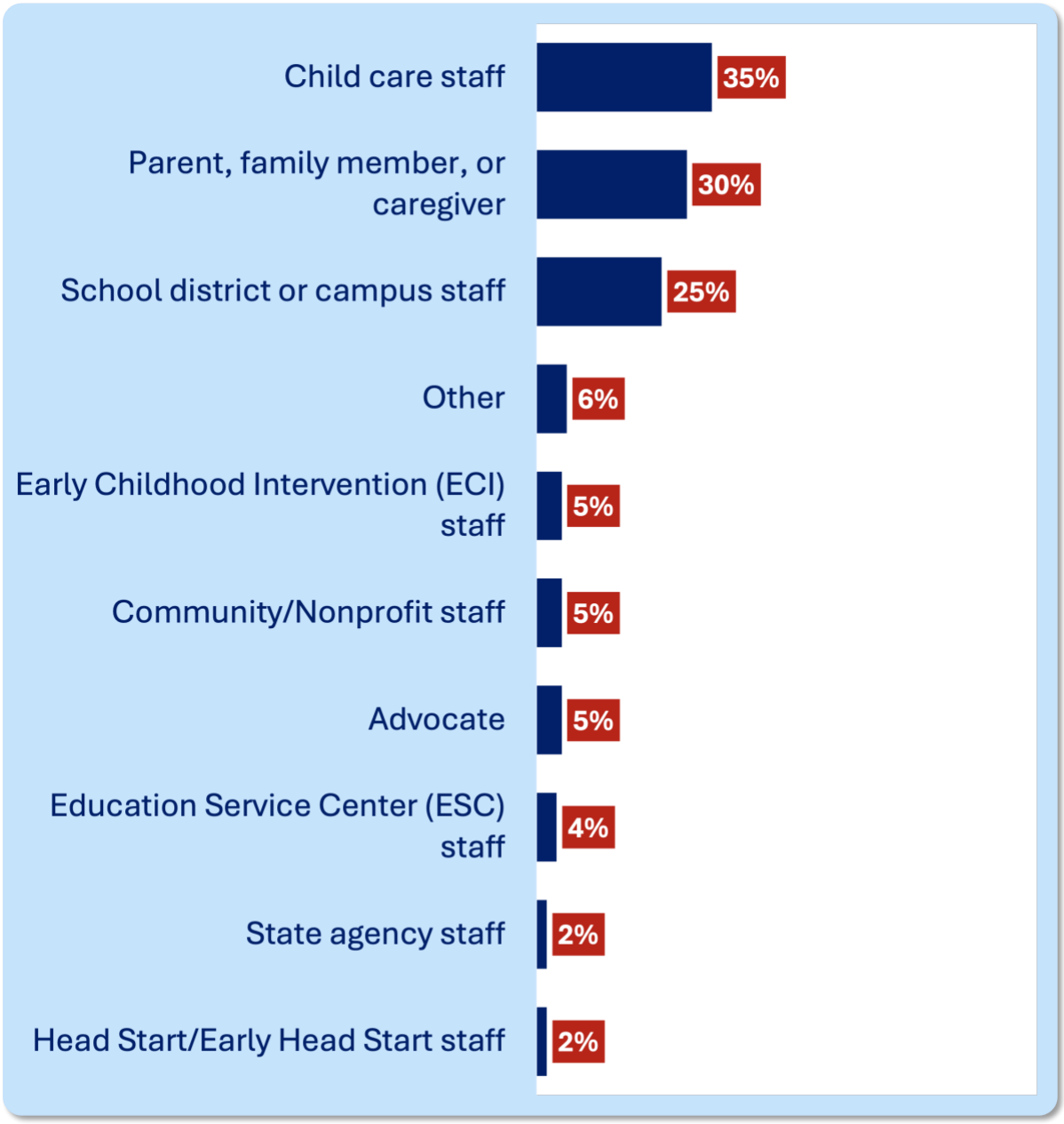
TEA, HHSC, and TWC developed this plan through a coordinated stakeholder engagement process conducted January through May 2026. Engagement activities included a statewide survey, focus groups with families and providers, and structured feedback through the Texas Early Learning Council, the ECI Advisory Committee, and all 20 Education Service Center (ESC) special education directors. Additional input was gathered through public comment, written submissions, and consultation with advocacy organizations and system partners.

Quantitative and qualitative measures, including survey data, focus group input, Preschool Development Grant (PDG) findings[2] and analysis of existing strategic plans [3-6,] informed the identification of key barriers and development of strategies in this plan.

The survey engaged 1,258 respondents representing a broad cross-section of the early childhood system, including families, educators, service providers, school

districts, and community-based organizations. Of the respondents, the majority (35%) were child care providers and (30%) parents, family members, or caregivers (see Figure 1). The survey was distributed statewide. Targeted promotion was used during data collection to help ensure all areas of the state were reflected in the responses. This diverse participation ensured that findings reflect perspectives across early childhood, special education, and family systems statewide.

Figure 1. Stakeholder Survey Respondents (n = 1,258)



Respondents could select all roles that apply

When inclusion works

The statewide survey asked respondents to share a time when inclusion went well for a child they know or care for. Their responses highlighted five conditions that recurred across different settings, roles, and regions of the state.

- **Trained staff and appropriate staff-to-child ratios.** Inclusion succeeds when classrooms have sufficient, well-prepared staff to meet diverse needs.
- **General and special education collaboration.** Inclusion is most effective when staff plan, teach, and communicate as a team.
- **Child-led, individualized, and flexible practice.** Children participate more fully when instruction is responsive to their strengths, preferences, and needs.
- **Peers as partners and friends.** Inclusive settings support social development through meaningful interactions with peers.
- **Family partnership and continuity across programs.** Outcomes improve when families are engaged and programs coordinate across settings, especially during transitions.

Barriers to Inclusion of Children with Disabilities or Developmental Delays in Early Childhood Settings

While there has been meaningful progress and notable areas of success, opportunities remain to expand inclusion for many young children with disabilities and developmental delays across Texas. Stakeholder feedback points to barriers falling into three main areas.

Families report they are navigating a complex early childhood system with little information. Families described not knowing what programs were available, not understanding what they could ask for in planning meetings, and receiving little guidance during critical transitions.

31% of parents who took the survey want clear resources that show what inclusion looks like in everyday classrooms. Stakeholders described program requirements, such as toileting expectations, behavior policies, rigid schedules, and skill-based eligibility that can unintentionally exclude children with disabilities or developmental delays from programs before they have a chance to participate. Class size and supervision ratio rules were also reported as limiting where and how inclusive placements can occur.

Findings from the PDG needs assessment found that parents of children with disabilities or developmental delay were more likely than other families to report being unsatisfied with their child care settings. These challenges are compounded by scale: Texas serves a childhood population roughly 10 times larger than that of most other states, and the PDG needs assessment found that child care deserts are growing.[2] Increased demand in early childhood settings makes it more difficult to find or provide inclusive settings.

Stakeholders reported that workforce challenges are the top barrier to inclusion. Across all respondent groups, the most frequently reported barrier was a lack of trained staff. Over half (53%) of survey respondents identified a shortage of trained specialists, including ECSE teachers, speech-language pathologists, and occupational therapists, as a top barrier to inclusion. A little less than half (44%) stated there are limited staff training and coaching opportunities in inclusive practices. Providers and educators described high turnover, burnout, difficulty hiring qualified staff, and a shortage of paraprofessionals as compounding factors.

Over a third (38%) of providers who took the survey considered coaching or in-class support for providers and teachers during the workday as the most effective way to improve inclusion in their setting. The PDG needs assessment found that training to support children with disabilities and developmental delays is inconsistently available across the state and reported low pay as a primary driver of staff turnover.[2] Survey respondents and focus group participants reported they felt staff turnover often stifled inclusion efforts.

When asked what single investment would have the biggest impact on inclusion, 44% of respondents selected “more staff and aides,” and 45% selected “increased staffing support” as the most effective long-term solution.

Stakeholders reported gaps in program transitions, cross-agency coordination, and communication. Over a third (36%) of all survey respondents believe that early and consistent communication with families would do the most to improve program transitions. The transition from ECI to ECSE at age three was the most frequently reported gap in the survey and focus groups. Families described losing services, information, and support during this handoff.

A little less than half (41%) of survey respondents identified joint transition meetings with families and providers as a key strategy to improve coordination. However, child care providers reported they are often excluded from transition planning and service discussions despite their ongoing role in children's daily care.

Survey respondents also described broader communication gaps between agencies and programs, including inconsistent terminology, varying paperwork, and a lack of shared practices. When asked what data would help monitor progress towards inclusive practices, 65% of survey respondents selected "child developmental growth (learning, social skills, social-emotional skills)."

Stakeholder Program and Policy Recommendations

As required by TEC §29.0091, this section summarizes stakeholder recommendations (and should not be considered the partner agencies' official recommendations) for statutory, regulatory, guidance, funding, and policy implementation. These recommendations highlight several programmatic and policy considerations to address structural barriers to inclusion. **Agency commitments to address barriers and improve inclusion will be presented in the next section.**

Stakeholder recommendations include these key themes:

- **Increase funding for programs.** Throughout the survey and focus groups, one of the clearest and most frequent recommendations was to increase funding to hire and train staff to meet the growing demand for inclusive settings.

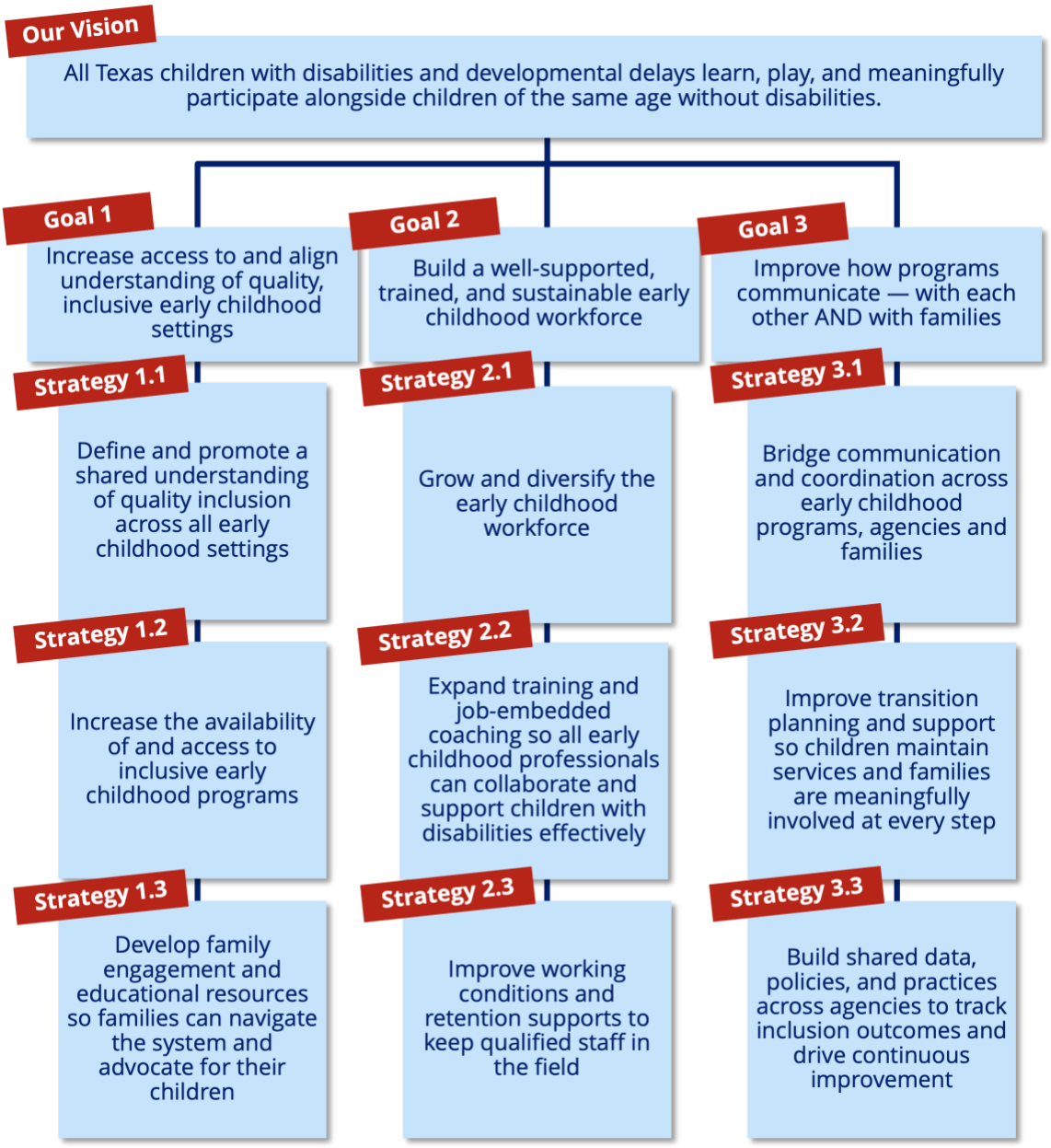
- **Simplify access to the CCS inclusion rate.** Simplify processes and increase awareness of inclusion supports so eligible children can more easily access needed accommodations and services.
- **Review and align eligibility criteria for free public prekindergarten in Texas.** Stakeholders noted that under current requirements, having a disability or an individualized education program (IEP) does not qualify a child for free public prekindergarten. Children who receive ECSE services may have limited access to a general education classroom with typically developing peers because funding structures do not consistently support inclusive placement options.
- **Build flexibility into ratio and class size rules.** Provide ratio flexibility or companion funding to better support inclusive placements for children with higher support needs.
- **Promote responsive behavior expectations.** Reduce reliance on behavioral, developmental, and skill prerequisites for participation, and support programs in implementing flexible routines and individualized supports.
- **Improve continuity of services during transition.** Address gaps in the ECI-to-ECSE transition, including exploration of policy and practice changes to reduce service disruptions (e.g., aligning developmental delay definitions across Part C and Part B; exploring options to extend ECI services beyond age three).
- **Include child care providers and families in transition planning.** Ensure families and child care providers are consistently included as partners, and that communication with families begins early and is provided in their primary language.
- **Strengthen overall system capacity.** Continue to build the infrastructure needed to support inclusion, including workforce development, data systems, and coordinated statewide strategies.

Strategies and Goals to Address Barriers

National guidance from the U.S. Department of Education makes it clear that all young children with disabilities should have access to high-quality early childhood settings where they can participate alongside their peers without disabilities with appropriate, individualized supports. States have both a responsibility and the tools to address barriers to inclusion, and doing so requires coordinated action.[7]

The following plan presents a joint-agency vision for inclusion in Texas and outlines three goals, each with three strategies, to address barriers and improve participation in early childhood settings. These goals and strategies were developed to address stakeholder feedback directly, meet the requirements of TEC §29.0091, and achieve this plan's vision.

Figure 2. Inclusion Plan Vision, Goals, and Strategies



For each strategy, specific activities are identified to support implementation and assess progress toward achieving this plan's goals and improving inclusion in early childhood settings. Activities have been categorized into three types to maximize this plan's comprehensiveness while allowing flexibility to account for unforeseen changes in the early childhood landscape.

Types of Activities

- **Continue:** Activities that refine, expand, or proceed with work already in progress.
- **Create:** Activities that require developing something new that has yet to be started.
- **Explore:** Activities that are preliminary in nature or process-oriented, leading to future strategies and activities.

Goal 1: Increase access to and align understanding of quality inclusive early childhood settings

Strategy 1.1: Define and promote a shared understanding of quality inclusion across all early childhood settings

Continue

- **Activity 1.1.1.** TEA will maintain a coordinated set of statewide guidance, tools, and model policies on the Texas SPED Support website that define and support evidence-based inclusion strategies for meaningful access in early childhood educational settings, including annual review of all special education technical assistance that includes ECSE guidance to ensure alignment with current legislation.
- **Activity 1.1.2.** TEA will provide inclusive early childhood resources during four quarterly early childhood education meetings, and ESC representatives will share this information with regional early childhood leaders, resulting in a measurable increase in engagement with early childhood resources on the Texas SPED Support website, as indicated by increased page views and unique visitors from September 1, 2026 to September 1, 2030.

Create

- **Activity 1.1.3.** TEA, TWC, and HHSC ECI will use aligned language grounded in the *national Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA) guidance* to promote a shared understanding of high-quality inclusion (Access, Participation, and Supports) across guidance and communications for

families, educators, and caregivers, with annual cross-agency review and documentation of updates across agencies.

- **Activity 1.1.4.** TEA will expand the *Determining Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) in Pre-School* guidance document to incorporate training and coaching resources aligned with ECTA indicators of high-quality inclusion and build capacity for 20 ESC ECSE representatives to offer training and coaching to local educational agency (LEA) early childhood staff who opt in by September 1, 2029.

Explore

- **Activity 1.1.5.** TEA will explore ways to embed inclusive practices aligned to ECTA indicators of high-quality inclusion and current legislation within broader early childhood guidance and program supports, in collaboration with TEA Early Childhood Education division.

- **Activity 1.1.6.** TEA will explore alignment between ECTA indicators of high-quality inclusion (Access, Participation, and Supports) and the *ECSE Instructional Leadership Tool* to support administrators and educators in recognizing, coaching, and reinforcing inclusive practices across planning, instruction, and learning environments by September 1, 2030.

- **Activity 1.1.7.** TWC will explore ways to promote a shared understanding of quality inclusion in child care settings, aligned to ECTA indicators of high-quality inclusion and current legislation, and develop resources (e.g. website content) that describe "what inclusion looks like," highlighting provider implementation practices.

Strategy 1.2: Increase the availability of and access to inclusive early childhood programs

Continue

- **Activity 1.2.1.** TEA will increase LEA performance on State Performance Plan Indicator (SPPI) 12 (Early Childhood Transition) by ensuring accurate special education technical assistance to support timely transitions for children served through Part C ECI who are eligible for ECSE services, including the development and implementation of an IEP by the child's third birthday. Efforts will include ongoing monitoring, targeted technical assistance,

corrective action processes, and progress tracking for the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2029 annual performance report (APR).

- **Activity 1.2.2.** TEA will increase LEA performance on SPPI 6A (Preschool Environments) by ensuring accurate special education technical assistance to increase understanding of preschool LRE and implementing ongoing monitoring, targeted technical assistance, and corrective action plan requirements, with annual tracking of progress toward state targets for the FFY 2029 APR.

- **Activity 1.2.3.** HHSC ECI will continue to offer two Child Find forum meetings annually between September 1, 2026 – August 31, 2030. By August 31, 2030, at least one representative from each subrecipient program will participate in the forums.

- **Activity 1.2.4.** HHSC ECI will increase compliance of IDEA Part C State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) Indicator 8 (timely ECI-to-ECSE transition) by the FFY 2029 APR through ongoing monitoring and technical assistance activities and corrective action plan requirements.

    - Part C Indicator 8A measures the percentage of toddlers enrolled in ECI who have transition steps and services included in their individualized family service plans (IFSP) no later than 90 days before their third birthday. HHSC ECI will exceed the national average for SPPI 8A in the annual performance report for FFY 2029.

    - Part C Indicator 8B measures the percentage of toddlers enrolled in ECI who are potentially eligible for ECSE services and for whom required notifications were provided to the LEA and TEA no later than 90 days before the child's third birthday. HHSC ECI will meet the national average for SPPI 8B in the annual performance report for FFY 2029.

    - Part C Indicator 8C measures the percentage of toddlers enrolled in ECI who are potentially eligible for ECSE who have a transition conference with their LEA no later than 90 days before their third birthday. HHSC ECI will meet the national average for SPPI 8C in the annual performance report for FFY 2029.

  HHSC ECI will continue to provide ongoing monitoring to ensure compliance with SPPIs 8A, 8B, and 8C by completing quarterly reviews of subrecipient

data. The target for all three indicators is 100%. Subrecipient programs that have a rating of 90% or less for 8A, 8B, or 8C will be required to submit a corrective action plan to HHSC ECI. By August 31, 2030, there will be no systemic findings of noncompliance for SPPIs 8A, 8B, and 8C.

- **Activity 1.2.5.** In FFY 2026-2030, TWC will continue funding eight Child Care Navigators at HHSC Child Care Regulation. These positions will provide ongoing support and technical assistance to prospective child care providers throughout the permitting process, with the goal of increasing child care services in Texas. Child Care Navigators will also expand targeted outreach in child care deserts to increase engagement with prospective applicants.

- **Activity 1.2.6.** Through the CCS scholarship program, TWC will continue to offer child care provider payment rates up to 190% of the maximum payment rate to support children with disabilities who need special accommodations or additional support in the classroom throughout FFY 2026-2030.

Create

- **Activity 1.2.7.** TEA in collaboration with HHSC and TWC will increase access to inclusive early childhood settings by developing and implementing an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) tool to better inform state level policy decisions and that will include publicly accessible that will allows families, LEAs, and partners to identify and locate inclusive program options across Texas, with progress measured by increased program inclusion in the system and increased user engagement, between September 1, 2026, and September 1, 2030.

- **Activity 1.2.8.** Through prekindergarten and child care partnerships, TEA will train and calibrate early childhood intermediaries on quality metrics to inform improved provider matching by December 2027 and beyond.

Strategy 1.3: Develop family engagement and educational resources so families can navigate the system and advocate for their children.

Continue

- **Activity 1.3.1.** TEA will maintain a coordinated set of family-facing resources on the SPEDTex website to support families in understanding the special education process for children in early education settings, including annual review of all ECSE guidance to ensure alignment with current legislation.
- **Activity 1.3.2.** TEA will improve the SPEDTex website navigability and access for families as measured by an increase in website analytics (e.g., page views, guidance downloads) from September 1, 2026 to September 1, 2028.
- **Activity 1.3.3.** TWC, TEA, and HeadStart will continue to maintain and promote the Early Childhood Eligibility Screener to assist families with identifying free and low cost early learning programs that meet their children's needs.
- **Activity 1.3.4.** TWC, TEA, and HHSC will continue to maintain and promote the Early Childhood Texas website to help families find resources to support parents with young children.

Create

- **Activity 1.3.5.** TEA will create a series of videos (at least five) designed for families modeling evidence-based practices in the home setting, along with downloadable/printable tools and steps for implementation for each evidence-based strategy. All content will be available in Spanish and English and posted to the SPEDTex website for family access by August 31, 2029.
- **Activity 1.3.6.** TEA will create and present at least two family-facing webinars regarding special education early childhood supports, inclusion for children with disabilities, and the ECI to ECSE transition process, to be presented and posted to the SPEDTex website by August 31st, 2028.

Explore

- **Activity 1.3.7.** TEA, TWC, and HHSC will explore the creation of coordinated, family-facing resources, responsive to family preferences, describing

common barriers and strategies for the positive transition of children from ECI to ECSE by September 1, 2030.

- **Activity 1.3.8.** HHSC ECI will explore the efficacy of designated transition service coordinators. If determined effective, ECI will identify distinct strategies to support implementation of transition coordinators across the state, including potential reimbursement strategies by August 31, 2030.

Goal 2: Build a well-supported, trained, and sustainable early childhood workforce

Strategy 2.1: Grow and diversify the early childhood workforce

Continue

- **Activity 2.1.1.** HHSC ECI will revise the ECI professional staff self-assessment and the individualized professional development plans (IPDPs) for early intervention specialists (EISes), service coordinators, and licensed practitioners of the healing arts by August 31, 2030, to enhance pre-service and in-service training, and to ensure learning objectives, activities, and resources are up-to-date and align with current practices and priorities.

- **Activity 2.1.2.** TWC will provide up to 2,250 full scholarships for Child Development Associate (CDA) credentials, associate and bachelor's degrees in early childhood development or a Registered Apprenticeship (RA) program during FFY 2026-2030.

- **Activity 2.1.3.** TWC will promote the Texas Core Competencies for Early Childhood Practitioners and Administrators so early care and education professionals in Texas are equipped with the foundational concepts, skills, and abilities to support all children's growth and development.

Create

- **Activity 2.1.4.** HHSC ECI will establish a university collaboration toolkit to share with university career centers and faculty in departments that prepare ECI professionals (e.g., EISes, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists) to increase awareness about the ECI program and careers in ECI and establish ongoing collaboration with institutes of

higher education across Texas to promote the recruitment, pre-service preparation, and retention of ECI professionals by September 1, 2027.

- **Activity 2.1.5.** HHSC ECI will provide support to ECI subrecipients on how to use the university collaboration toolkit to establish relationships with their local universities and community colleges. By August 31, 2030, at least half of the ECI subrecipients will use the university partner toolkit to establish or enhance their relationships with their local universities and/or community colleges.

- **Activity 2.1.6.** HHSC ECI will publish and promote three videos to raise awareness of ECI as a career path for targeted disciplines, including early intervention specialists, physical and occupational therapists, and speech-language pathologists by August 31, 2027.

- **Activity 2.1.7.** HHSC ECI will establish university-based EIS IPDPs with at least five Texas universities that align academic curriculum with EIS learning objectives and allow prospective EISes to apply coursework and class materials to their required IPDP activities if they choose to work for ECI by August 31, 2030.

- **Activity 2.1.8.** TEA will create guidance to support districts in the intensity of services special education funding model to continue to assist funding ECSE services and inclusive placements in regular early childhood settings by September 1, 2027.

Explore

- **Activity 2.1.9.** HHSC ECI will establish a workgroup that includes HHSC ECI state office staff, ECI subrecipients, and other relevant stakeholders to explore additional pathways to obtaining the EIS credential by August 31, 2028.

Strategy 2.2: Expand training and job-embedded coaching so all early childhood professionals can collaborate and support children with disabilities effectively

Continue

- **Activity 2.2.1.** TEA will update and publish a revised set of state standards (*Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines*) to incorporate examples of foundational

skills across 10 skill domains, informed by stakeholder feedback and collaboration with the special education team by January 2027.

- **Activity 2.2.2.** TEA will update and publish at least two early childhood alignment documents, such as the *Early Childhood Outcomes Prekindergarten Guidelines Alignment* and *Birth-Grade 2 Vertical Alignment* to support children functioning below 3-4 year old developmental expectations by September 1, 2029.

- **Activity 2.2.3.** HHSC ECI will record three updated trainings for early childhood educators that focus on including young children with disabilities in their classrooms and make the recordings publicly available by August 31, 2026. Additionally, HHSC ECI will continue to support ECI subrecipients with using the training packages to provide face-to-face training to early childhood educators. ECI will promote these recorded trainings at five child care focused conferences between September 1, 2026, and December 31, 2027. Between September 1, 2026, and August 31, 2030, 300 attendees will watch at least one of the recorded presentations.

- **Activity 2.2.4.** TWC will provide early learning-related guidance and support through the Early Learning Intervention Training and Education (ELITE) grant to meet the needs of child care programs and Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) supporting children with disabilities and/or children exhibiting challenging behaviors through:

    - Providing timely and targeted technical assistance to all Boards in FFY 2026-2030.

    - Providing up to 67 trainings for child care providers in FFY 2026-2030 to support child care services staff and child care providers.

- **Activity 2.2.5.** TWC will continue a pilot initiative through August 2027 to strengthen and support early learning environments for children by training child care providers on creating supportive environments, managing challenging behaviors, and using peer interactions to build social and emotional skills. Twenty classrooms will receive virtual coaching to support enhanced classroom practices. TWC will explore the replication of the initiative based on pilot results.

Create

- **Activity 2.2.6.** TEA will increase ECSE teacher access to high-quality professional learning by intentionally including and supporting their participation in a statewide conference on evidence-based practices for students with complex needs, emphasizing strategies that include student preference and individualized supports, by August 1, 2028.

- **Activity 2.2.7.** TEA will develop and launch a free virtual training for ECSE staff and evaluation teams regarding the Child Outcomes Summary (COS) Process to strengthen data quality and consistency in measuring child outcomes, enabling improved monitoring of progress toward inclusive early childhood practices by May 31, 2027.

- **Activity 2.2.8.** TEA, with support from HHSC ECI, will launch three free virtual trainings focused on best practices in early intervention (topics: ECI eligibility, services and transition, writing IFSP goals, coaching families) for infants and toddlers who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH), blind or visually impaired (BVI), and deafblind (DB) by September 1, 2030. These trainings support professionals by strengthening their ability to coach families effectively and enhance service delivery outcomes.

- **Activity 2.2.9.** TWC will build on and expand the work started with PDG funding using American Relief Act funding to provide Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consulting in eligible counties based on the requirements outlined in the Child Care Disaster Fund Grant. Implementation will be available in at least six eligible counties and may expand to an additional four eligible counties in by 2028.

Explore

- **Activity 2.2.10.** TEA will explore options to provide the Empowering ECSE Educators to Improve Student Outcomes Grant through a competitive application process for LEAs and ESCs, with up to $5 million available to support inclusion and behavior training for ECSE staff and reimbursement for dual certification, by September 1, 2030.

- **Activity 2.2.11.** TEA will explore expansion of access to training and job-embedded coaching on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), providing early childhood professionals with flexible options (e.g., in-person and asynchronous learning) and ongoing, ESC-supported coaching cycles (pre-

observation, observation, and feedback) to strengthen implementation of inclusive practices and improve outcomes for children with disabilities by September 1, 2030.

- **Activity 2.2.12.** HHSC ECI will explore options for creating and presenting a training focused on best practices in ECSE and a training for best practices on working with certified DHH/BVI/DB teachers to support ECI subrecipients during transition. By December 31, 2027, the agency will identify potential formats for delivering the training and potential subject matter experts who could deliver or support the training.

Strategy 2.3: Improve working conditions and retention supports to keep qualified staff in the field

Continue

- **Activity 2.3.1.** TWC will continue to provide the CCS scholarship program. Through this program, Boards can support CCS-participating child care providers who serve children with disabilities by purchasing classroom materials and special equipment, such as wheelchairs, for the facility throughout 2026-2030.

- **Activity 2.3.2.** HHSC ECI will transfer all training and technical assistance materials that were created by HHSC ECI, the University of Texas at El Paso, and training consultants for the Personnel Retention Grant that HHSC ECI was awarded from 2020-2025 to the ECI Extranet by September 1, 2027. HHSC ECI will continue to promote these resources as part of the ongoing technical assistance to ECI subrecipients to help with recruitment and retention.

- **Activity 2.3.3.** TEA will continue to provide technical assistance to LEA ECSE staff around evidence-based inclusion supports and early childhood best practices to help with retention.

Create

- **Activity 2.3.4.** HHSC ECI will include staff retention as one of the topics that meets the mandatory training requirement for ECI subrecipient program directors. Beginning in fiscal year 2027, ECI subrecipient program directors must complete 20 hours of continuing education every two years.

Goal 3: Improve how programs communicate — with each other AND with families

Strategy 3.1: Bridge communication and coordination across early childhood programs, agencies, and families

Continue

- **Activity 3.1.1.** TWC and TEA will expand prekindergarten and child care partnerships by supporting the development of up to 375 additional partnerships by 2030, increasing access to high-quality early learning opportunities, subject to the impact of House Bill 2 (89th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2025) and other related factors.
- **Activity 3.1.2.** Governor-appointed members from TEA, TWC, and HHSC will maintain active participation in the Texas Early Learning Council and Early Childhood Intervention Advisory Committee throughout 2026-2030 and leverage those forums to advance strategies in this plan as appropriate.
- **Activity 3.1.3.** TEA, TWC, and HHSC will continue to participate in the Early Childhood Interagency Workgroup (ECIW) by maintaining active representation on the Workgroup and participating in monthly meetings and workgroup initiatives throughout 2026-2030.

Create

- **Activity 3.1.4.** TEA, in collaboration with HHSC ECI, will offer 60 in-person training opportunities for ECI program managers and service coordinators, as well as ECSE leadership, administrators, and evaluation teams focused on transition compliance, coordinated transition practices, and family-centered communication to support effective early childhood transitions by September 1, 2030.
- **Activity 3.1.5.** TEA will propose language in 19 TAC 89.1040(c)(13) to revise developmental delay provisions and ensure consideration of ECI evaluation data to support continuity of services during transitions by September 1, 2027.

Strategy 3.2: Improve transition planning and support so children maintain services and families are meaningfully involved at every step

Continue

- **Activity 3.2.1.** HHSC ECI will continue to promote transition technical assistance materials including: the recorded presentation, *From First Steps to Next Steps: Navigating Transitions from Early Childhood Intervention to Early Childhood Special Education*, transition flow charts, a transition Q and A, and sample forms (LEA notification form, parental "opt out" form, and transition steps and services form). Between September 1, 2026, and August 31, 2030, at least 75 attendees will watch the recorded presentation.

Create

- **Activity 3.2.2.** TEA, in collaboration with HHSC ECI, will publish at least three guidance documents to support ECI to ECSE transition for LEA staff and ECI program managers and service coordinators on the Texas SPED Support website by October 31, 2027.

- **Activity 3.2.3.** HHSC ECI will update their existing transition publication, *Beyond ECI: Next Steps for Your Child* with input from parents by August 31, 2029.

Explore

- **Activity 3.2.4.** TEA and HHSC ECI will explore the creation of Communities of Practice (CoP) for ECI providers and LEA ECSE leadership teams to increase collaboration and understanding of cross system roles and enhance local transition collaboration for children moving from ECI to ECSE services by August 30, 2030.

- **Activity 3.2.5.** TEA and HHSC ECI will explore opportunities to improve transition planning and services by analyzing regional variation in transition outcomes using data from the ECIDS, once available, and no later than August 31, 2030.

Strategy 3.3: Build shared data, policies, and practices across agencies to track inclusion outcomes and drive continuous improvement

Create

- **Activity 3.3.1.** TEA, HHSC, and TWC will establish formal cross-agency structures to support ongoing coordination and use of early childhood data, as measured by quarterly interagency meetings, joint action planning, and shared accountability measures.
- **Activity 3.3.2.** TEA will develop and implement an ECIDS to better inform state level policy decisions and that will include publicly accessible elements to improve visibility into early childhood services (including inclusive programing, service access, and early childhood transitions), and support families, LEAs, and partners in identifying options and service gaps, with progress measured by increased system use, between May 31, 2026, and September 1, 2030.
- **Activity 3.3.3.** TEA, in collaboration with HHSC ECI, will expand early childhood transition training (see 3.1) for ECI and ECSE staff by incorporating additional guidance regarding the different purposes of Developmental Delay eligibility criteria across Part C and Part B programs to support greater continuity of services for young children with disabilities, by September 1, 2028.

Plan Communications & Sustainability

This plan, along with the individual entities that provide early childhood services in the state, is subject to state infrastructure, governance, policies, standards, regulations, and statutes, which may require adjustments to the plan throughout the plan period. To track progress, TEA will develop and manage a work plan and make it accessible to HHSC and TWC. This work plan will include the strategic plan's goals, strategies, and activities and will track progress throughout the 4 years. Each activity will be assigned a due date and a progress indicator (e.g., Not Started, In Progress, Blocked, Complete). Changes to planned activities will be documented and reported in the next Texas Early Childhood Inclusion Strategic Plan.

A temporary workgroup of representatives from TEA, HHSC, and TWC was formed to develop this plan. Most of these representatives also serve on the Early Childhood Interagency Workgroup (ECIW). The ECIW, a long-standing workgroup, meets monthly to discuss interagency initiatives in early childhood. The ECIW will periodically update the workplan to reflect each agency's progress and the overall progress toward the plan's goals. TEA will lead tracking of the plan's progress.

The ECIW will coordinate opportunities to update stakeholders on the plan's progress and will regularly consult with the Texas Early Learning Council (TELC), the Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Education and Care, and the Texas Quad Agency Child Care Initiative. Members of the ECIW will update relevant stakeholder groups on plan activities and progress at regularly scheduled meetings, as appropriate.

Throughout the plan timeline, TEA will provide quarterly updates on the Texas Early Childhood Inclusion Plan at public meetings of the TELC and the ECI Advisory Committee. Stakeholders may provide public comment at these meetings to offer feedback on the Texas Inclusion Plan. For both meetings, members of the public must pre-register and submit their comments by 5 p.m. the day before the meeting. Please visit earlylearningtexas.org and the HHSC website to learn more.

References

1. Texas Education Code. 2025. § 29.0091.

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3. Texas Early Learning Council. 2024. *Texas Early Learning Strategic Plan 2024–2026*. Austin: Texas Workforce Commission. https://www.twc.texas.gov/sites/default/files/ccel/docs/texas-early-learning-strategic-plan-2024-2026-final-accessible.pdf.

4. Texas Education Agency. 2022. *Agency Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2023 to 2027*. Austin: Texas Education Agency. https://tea.texas.gov/system/files/2023-2027-TEA-Strategic-Plan_0.pdf.

5. Texas Health and Human Services Commission. 2024. *Health and Human Services Commission Strategic Plan for 2025–2029, Part I*. Austin: Texas Health and Human Services Commission. https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/hhsc-strategic-plan-2025-2029-part-1.pdf.

6. Texas Workforce Commission. 2024. *Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2025–2029*. Austin: Texas Workforce Commission. https://www.twc.texas.gov/sites/default/files/enterprise/docs/strategic-plan-fy-2025-2029-twc.pdf.

7. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education. 2023. *Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs*. Updated November 2023. https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/policy-statement-inclusion-of-children-with-disabilities-in-early-childhood-programs/

Texas Education Agency

TEXAS Health and Human Services

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