



Creating Systems Improvement through collaboration and connection

CHALLENGE

Navigating the complex and fragmented systems of services and supports can be overwhelming and exhausting. No one agency—or small group of agencies—at the community level has the responsibility, expertise, or capacity to meet all the needs of children birth to five and their parents/caregivers.

SOLUTION

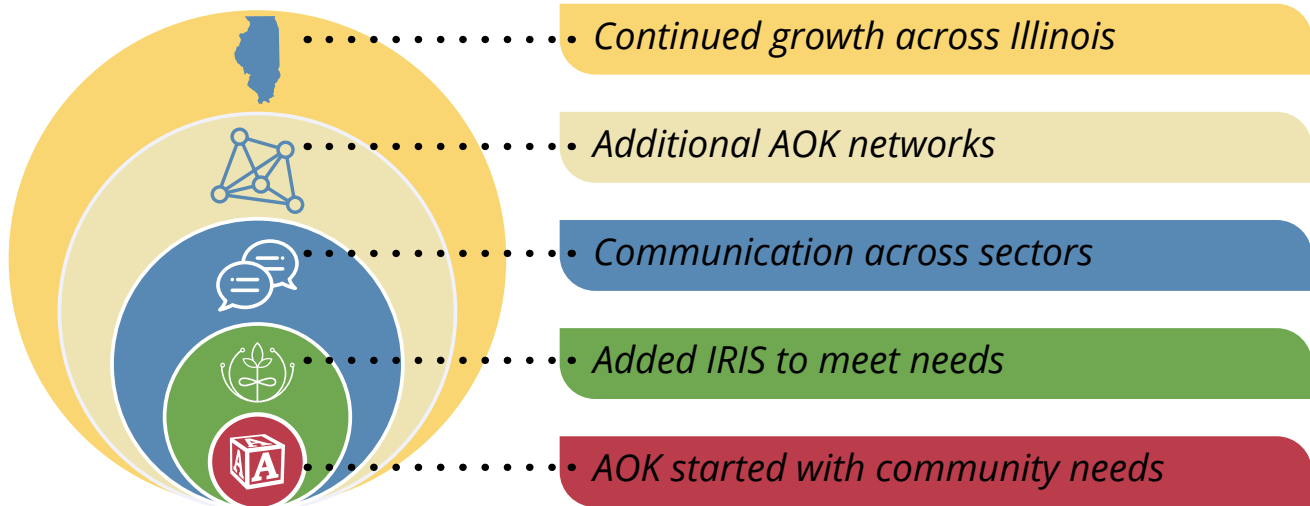
AOK Networks provide the means for local champions and stakeholders from across service sectors to work together for the common good. AOK Networks systematically learn about their community's current communication and referral practices and engage service providers and local stakeholders in building a more connected and coordinated system. Establishing a system-wide referral process assures families get the services they need.



IRIS

Currently, all AOK Networks promote and maintain a referral process using IRIS, a web-based information, referral, and intake application. IRIS supports warm hand-offs for families, closes the communication loop for referring organizations, and provides a clear data driven picture of partner capacity to continually improve the process over time, and track outcomes. By working together, AOK Networks improve families' access to a more holistic, coordinated, and accessible system of services and supports, which in turn leads to enhanced child and family outcomes.

"We had been working on developing information and referral practices that would close the loop and provide data on gaps in service. As soon as I saw how IRIS worked, I said, this is it. This is exactly what we need and what I had envisioned. So, I directed my efforts to make IRIS available to all the AOK Networks communities and championed the expansion of IRIS into other communities across Illinois." –Ana Maria Accove



IMPACT

The diversity of the AOK Networks spans from multi-county regions to neighborhoods in the City of Chicago. AOK Networks will continue their support of local systems improvement efforts to transform the family experience through the implementation of IRIS. Providing state and local level entities access to data, streamlining referrals through connection and collaboration, and connecting families and children with services AOK Networks create a more holistic approach for all families and children to thrive.

AOK NETWORKS

The All Our Kids Early Childhood Networks initiative (AOK Networks) was launched in 1999 to support collaboration across service sectors to improve outcomes for babies, young children, and their families/caregivers through a systems approach. This initiative is a collaborative effort between the Illinois Department of Human Services' Division of Early Childhood (IDHS/DEC), Illinois State Board of Education, local health departments, and local agencies serving pregnant women, children birth to five and their parent/caregivers. It is the most comprehensive, long-standing, community-based systems development initiative in the State of Illinois.

ANA MARIA ACCOVE

The AOK Networks initiative's State Administrator at IDHS/DEC is leading the mission to transform the family experience in communities across Illinois.

"Our mission is to convene local partners, to provide them with space to have conversations about the strengths and challenges of their community and build their collaborative capacity to take on local priority issues more fully. By pooling their resources and expertise, they execute more holistic, comprehensive, and coordinated strategies that can result in greater outcomes for young children."