Illinois Home Visiting Compensation Report

A Review of IDHS-DEC Home Visitor and Supervisor Salaries FY26

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For
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Background

This brief outlines trends in salaries for home visitors and supervisors across the Illinois Department for Human Services Division of Early Childhood (IDHS-DEC) State-funded and Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)-funded home visiting programs. Beginning in FY23, IDHS-DEC implemented a new salary floor for home visitors – with an optional but recommended salary floor for supervisors – to raise minimum compensation as the State home visiting system works to improve the recruitment and retention of a highly qualified workforce (see Figure 1). This was prompted in part by recommendations from the Early Learning Council's Health and Home Visiting Committee, as well as prior cost modeling as part of the Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding ("Early Childhood Funding Commission") on the true cost of home visiting services.

In FY26, IDHS-DEC increased the salary floors for home visitors in all regions of the state and made the supervisor salary floor mandatory for positions that are at least 50% funded by IDHS-DEC grants. This represents a significant policy shift – FY26 is the first year in which both home visitor and supervisor positions were held to minimum salary thresholds.

Start Early previously conducted similar analyses in FY24 and FY25, and observed meaningful salary growth following the initial introduction of salary floors as programs made adjustments to meet the implementation deadline by FY25. However, growth slowed in FY25 after the majority of programs met the minimum threshold and floors were not increased, underscoring the importance of regularly adjusting minimum compensation benchmarks. As workforce challenges persist and inflation continues to affect the cost of living, the State has an interest in monitoring how salary floors, economic conditions and other external factors influence compensation trends over time.

This report continues the monitoring effort and examines FY26 budget data to assess changes in average, minimum and maximum salaries over time; the percentage of home visitors and supervisors meeting required salary floors; regional salary differences; and the extent to which recent policy changes are influencing compensation growth.

While salary floors represent a critical step toward stabilizing the home visiting workforce, they are one component of a broader compensation landscape that also includes benefits, workload expectations, career advancement pathways and overall livability. As the new Department of Early Childhood assumes responsibility for all of the state's home visiting funding and programming, there will be new opportunities to expand analysis across a wider range of programs as welk as assess the impact of compensation increases on workforce retention. Continued analysis will help ensure that compensation policies remain responsive to workforce needs and aligned with the true cost of delivering high-quality care and services to Illinois families.

Figure 1: FY26 IDHS-DEC Salary Floor

Position	FY23-FY25 Salary Floor	FY26 Salary Floor
Home Visitor (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties)	$46,800	$47,268
Home Visitor (Rest of State)	$37,485	$41,204
Supervisor (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties)	$59,598	$59,598*
Supervisor (Rest of State)	$48,058	$52,864*

**The salary floor for supervisors is required only for positions that are at least 50% funded by IDHS-DEC grants*

Methodology and data analysis

Data were analyzed by Start Early using 50 FY26 budgets across IDHS-DEC State and MIECHV grantees, as well as existing FY22-25 data from the first and second editions of this report.

Salary data was first extracted from PDF program budgets and converted to Excel to extract the personnel costs (N=424). Second, personnel data were cleaned to remove non-salary items, and for programs that reported employees who split time between multiple sites or were reported multiple times across IDHS-DEC State and MIECHV budgets, duplicates were removed (N=29). Third, salaries were sorted into categories: Home Visitor (N=208), Supervisor (N=59), Doula (N=20), Administrative (N=13), and Director or Executive (N=50), based on the titles listed in the program budgets. Some outliers that did not fit into the categories (such as maintenance employees, mental health specialists, or interpreters) were excluded (N=45). These categories were used to simplify the data and enable the analysis of Home Visitor and Supervisor salaries, which were subject to the required salary floors.

It should be noted that programs do not use shared terminology for their staff roles, so sorting positions into categories of supervisor and home visitor and others was a subjective exercise that required the use of best judgement. Start Early previously consulted with IDHS-DEC staff and the home visiting evaluation team at the Center for Prevention Research and Development during the development of the first edition of this report in FY24 to verify that categorizations were accurate, and those categories were used again on the FY25 and the FY26 data to ensure consistency.

IDHS-DEC State and MIECHV home visiting program data were aggregated to ensure no program data was identifiable (by increasing the total sample size). The data was then cleaned, and all salaries reported on monthly or hourly bases were converted to an annual sum.

To analyze adherence to regional recommendations, program budgets were sorted by region (Cook and collar counties inclusive of DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties, separate from the rest of the state) based primarily on program addresses. Program budgets list the grantee central office and do not necessarily reflect the program catchment area/area of service delivery, so due to discrepancies between areas of service and program addresses, there is a potential for some inaccuracies in the regional calculations.

Lastly, it should be noted that budgets are not expenditure data; rather, they reflect the anticipated personnel and additional costs for the program's grant year. Staff turnover may have impacted actual expenditures.

Key analysis and data visualization

Figure 2: Home Visitor Salaries FY23-FY26

Metric	2023	2024	2025	2026
Number of salaries in data set	174	180	197	208
Average	$43,570	$46,061	$47,070	$48,743
Minimum	$23,333	$29,120	$36,482	$27,930
Maximum	$66,347	$65,083	$66,165	$69,957
Percent change from previous year (average)	16.78%	5.72%	2.19%	3.55%
Inflation*	6.04%	2.90%	2.75%	2.77% (YTD)

Figure 3: Supervisor Salaries FY23-FY26

Metric	2023	2024	2025	2026
Number of salaries in data set	59	57	59	59
Average	$57,650	$60,197	$60,603	$64,404
Minimum	$38,771	$42,848	$44,954	$48,321
Maximum	$99,108	$106,954	$110,360	$110,157
Percent change from previous year (average)	8.45%	4.42%	0.67%	6.27%
Inflation*	6.04%	2.90%	2.75%	2.77% (YTD)

**Data source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index (CPI-U, all items in Midwest),12-month percentage change during July-June fiscal year. Inflation average for FY26 is calculated as year to date, inclusive only of July-January data.*

Figure 4: Salary Average, Minimum, and Maximum over Time

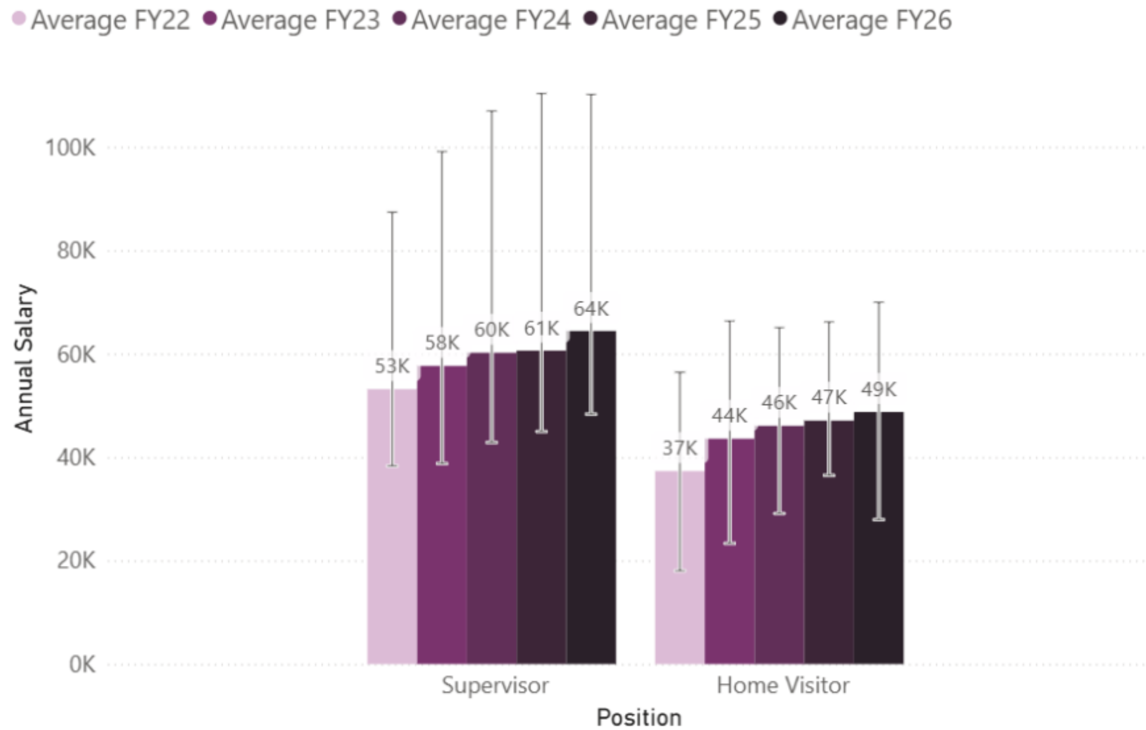
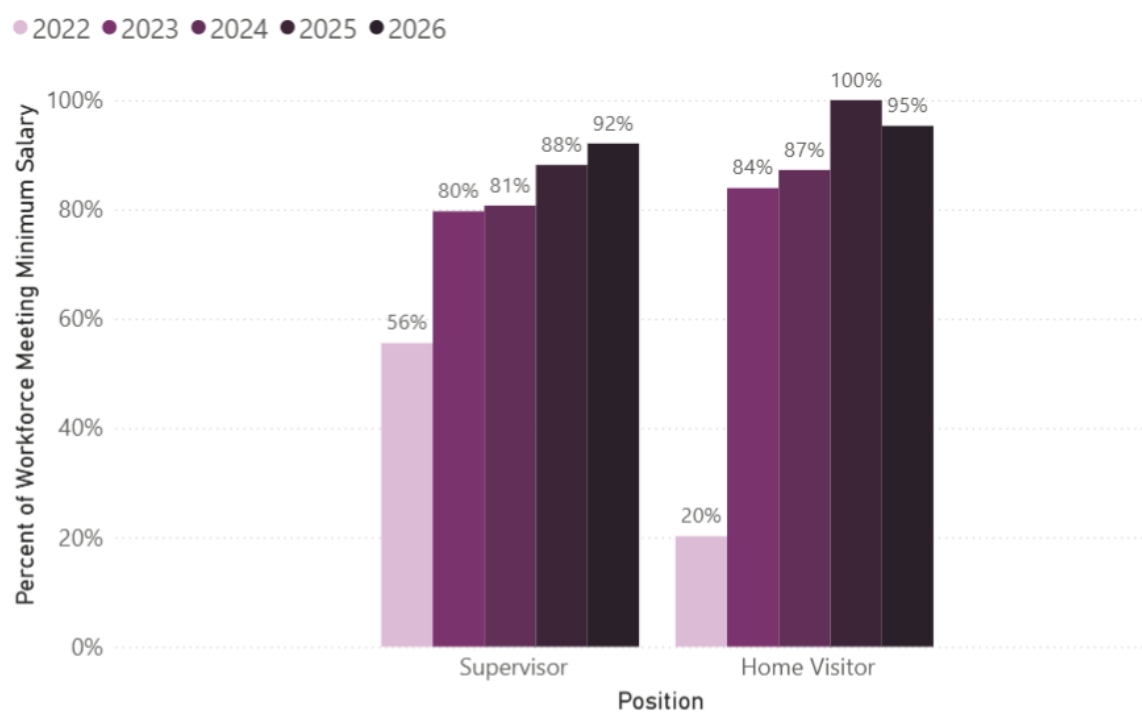


Figure 5: Percent of Supervisors and Home Visitors meeting IDHS-Recommended Minimum Salary Floors Over Time*



*The salary floor (Figure 1) was introduced in FY23 and required for home visitors and recommended for supervisors beginning in FY25. Starting in FY26, floors were increased and requirements were introduced, mandating that supervisors also meet the regional minimums.

Figure 6: Geographical Salary Differences FY26

Metric 2026	Supervisors	Home Visitors
Cook and Collar County Average	$65,624	$51,444
Rest of State Average	$63,224	$45,592
$ Difference Between Cook & Collar Counties and Rest of State Average	$2,399	$5,852
% Difference Between Cook & Collar Counties and Rest of State Average	4%	13%
Cook & Collar Counties % Meeting Salary Floor	86%	96%
Rest of State % Meeting Salary Floor	97%	95%

Key Findings

Average salaries for both home visitors and supervisors increased in FY2026, with growth outpacing inflation. The average home visitor salary increased by 3.55% from FY25 to FY26, compared to 2.77% inflation (YTD inflation as of February 2026), and the average supervisor salary also increased by 6.27% — the largest year-over-year growth since FY23. This stronger growth in FY26, particularly for supervisors, reflects the impact of raising salary floors and making the supervisor floor mandatory for the first time (for positions funded at least 50% by IDHS-DEC grants). When salary floors did not increase in FY25, salary growth considerably slowed. **These findings suggest that regularly adjusting salary floors is an effective lever for driving compensation increases across the home visiting system.**

FY26 also represents the first year of IDHS-DEC requiring supervisor salaries to meet floors and resulted in high compliance rates across Illinois; 86% of supervisors in Cook and collar counties currently meet the salary floor, joining 97% of supervisors throughout the rest of the state. This represents a milestone in strengthening compensation for leadership roles within the home visiting workforce, and while some programs were granted flexibility if they were unable to meet the floor in FY26 due to documented constraints, IDHS-DEC is monitoring them to ensure progress toward compliance.

Because salary floors were raised this year, the percentage of home visitors meeting the updated minimum decreased in some regions, reflecting the higher benchmark rather than a decline in compensation. Over time, continuing to adjust and monitor salary increases will be paramount to ensuring full compliance with the updated standards, and the floor should continue to rise over time.

Regional salary gaps narrowed between Chicago and the collar counties versus the rest of the state in FY26, with the average supervisor salary gap shrinking to a 4% difference and the home visitor salary gap narrowing slightly to 13%. While the differences in cost of living between Cook and collar counties and the rest of the state remain a factor, this data combined with the consistently high rates of employees meeting recommended salary floors in regions outside of Cook and collar counties may indicate a need for the state to consider raising downstate salary thresholds and decreasing the gap between regional recommendations. Future changes, including annual increases in the minimum wage for the city of Chicago, will warrant additional analysis and may require a different approach to regional salary floors.

Looking toward FY27

In FY27, home visiting programs will transition to the new Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC) and be administered alongside the Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) home visiting programs, which are also working toward strengthening compensation structures. As this governance shifts, it will be critical for IDEC to continue the close monitoring of salary trends and ensuring that minimum salary floors grow on pace with, or above, inflation.

To maintain momentum, salary floors must continue to grow; when salary floors increase, so does compensation, but when floors remain static, growth slows. It is especially important to raise floors above inflation to help preserve genuine wage increases and remain competitive within the state's other early childhood and human services sectors.

Compensation trends show meaningful improvement since FY23, but salary floors alone will not address and solve workforce stability issues, as they do not account for benefits, retirement planning, healthcare costs, paid leave, or workload demands. Total compensation packages should be continuously adjusted to remain competitive and livable to recruit and retain qualified staff over time. These workforce support strategies should be evaluated in the context of retention, which will require additional data collection across all home visiting funding streams; current data collection does not support real-time or year-over-year analysis of retention across all IDHS and ISBE home visiting programs.

Finally, as programs shift over to IDEC and the agency pursues strategies to align program standards, the state has a prime opportunity to standardize job titles across all home visiting grant applications to facilitate analysis of compensation and retention trends across roles. Standardized job titles across programs and initiatives could also improve the accuracy and comparability of future studies and data collection, and consistent terminology would strengthen workforce monitoring and policy decision-making. Future reporting should focus on gathering stronger data on workforce retention and turnover to create a more complete picture of how compensation policy influences workforce stability over time.

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