

ECLC

Early Childhood Leadership Commission

Annual Report 2021



PRESENTED TO:

Governor Jared Polis, The Colorado General Assembly, Senate Education Committee, Senate Health & Human Services Committee, House Education Committee, House Health & Insurance Committee, and House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services Committee

Letter from the Governor



COLORADO
Governor Jared Polis

Dear Early Childhood Stakeholders,

This year brought new and unprecedented challenges to the lives of Coloradans. However - Coloradans continued to stand together and support one another, prioritizing the needs and experiences of our families and youngest children, and ensuring that even through unimaginable hardship, our state is the best place to raise a family.

Access to high-quality, early childhood care and education helps define the experiences and outcomes that children will have later in life, and I'm proud of the way Colorado continues forging ahead to create a system that will serve children in our state for generations to come. This year in particular, Coloradans and the rest of the country have also recognized the critical contribution of high-quality, early childhood care and education to maintaining a strong workforce and economy today.

Building on the success of the previous year, in which Colorado voters overwhelmingly supported Proposition EE providing dedicated funding to ensure all children can access preschool, stakeholders joined together to continue to champion the importance of supporting the social, emotional and academic needs of our youngest learners.

We worked with the General Assembly to pass HB21-1304, which created a new Department of Early Childhood as well as the foundation to develop and implement the new voluntary, universal preschool program that will save parents money and help our children thrive.

I am proud of the work led by the Early Childhood Leadership Commission to develop the recommendations that set a vision for equitable access to high-quality services for all children, centered on the needs of families, in a true mixed-delivery system that promotes parents' choice of early learning settings for their children.

As Colorado continues our road to economic recovery, we increasingly rely on having a stable, high-quality, and well-supported workforce of early childhood professionals. I am proud that our Administration is prioritizing opportunities to support the recruitment and retention of a high-quality workforce, and we will continue to work with the new Department of Early Childhood to ensure we remove barriers and increase access to resources to support these extraordinary professionals.

I look forward to continuing working with the Early Childhood Leadership Commission and early childhood stakeholders as we build back our economy, strengthen our communities, and ensure that all children, their families, and the professionals who serve them throughout our state can thrive.

Sincerely,

Jared Polis
Governor

Letter from the ECLC Co-Chairs

Dear Governor Polis, Lt. Governor Primavera, Cabinet Members and Colorado General Assembly,

The Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) is excited to present our tenth annual report and share our work to ensure that all of Colorado's children are valued, healthy, and thriving.

The ECLC serves as Colorado's federally-authorized state advisory council, working across sectors to improve outcomes for young children birth to age 8 and their families by advancing the alignment, coordination, and efficiency of early childhood programs and services.

As the COVID-19 global pandemic continued to impact the lives of children and families, early care and education providers came together to support the health and safety of our early childhood workforce. Organizations serving families' basic needs rose to meet the needs of their communities, providing food, housing, clothing, and physical and emotional health support as needed, particularly families and communities farthest from resources. The ongoing impacts of the pandemic re-emphasized what we already knew - the early care and education industry is critical to the health and well-being of our children, communities, and economy. We want to extend our gratitude to all of the early childhood professionals who worked tirelessly to provide services and resources for families and ensure safe, high-quality environments for children to grow and thrive.

2021 also brought tremendous opportunity to build on the success of the past and chart a course for an early childhood system that more equitably serves all children and families. HB21-1304 created a new Department of Early Childhood, set to launch in July 2022, to coordinate a unified early childhood system and ensure the equitable distribution of resources and programming, including the new voluntary, universal preschool program.

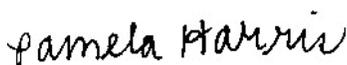
This legislation charged the Early Childhood Leadership Commission to coordinate engagement opportunities and guide the creation of a thoughtful and strategic transition plan, as well as develop recommendations for Colorado's new voluntary, universal preschool program. We are grateful to the hundreds of stakeholders who participated in meetings, listening sessions, and shared feedback to inform these important plans.

The ECLC strongly values equity, diversity, and the thoughtful inclusion of all voices and perspectives, and we are committed to grounding our work in these important guiding principles as we turn toward the next stages of this work together. Read on to learn more about these efforts and see how to stay engaged as the process moves forward.

We are grateful to Governor Polis, the General Assembly, and our state agency partners for working tirelessly to prioritize the needs of children and families across Colorado.

We deeply appreciate the valuable input stakeholders across Colorado have provided - your voices have truly shaped the vision for a more equitable, effective, high-quality early childhood system. We look forward to continuing our work together into the new year and beyond to ensure all children, their families, and the early childhood professionals who support them are valued, healthy, and thriving.

Sincerely,



Pamela Harris, PhD
ECLC Co-Chair



Tom Massey
ECLC Co-Chair



Susan Steele
ECLC Co-Chair



About the Early Childhood Leadership Commission

The ECLC was originally established by the Colorado Legislature in 2010 and was re-authorized until 2023 through House Bill 17-1106. The Commission is comprised of 20 individuals representing a full spectrum of early childhood champions, advocates and leaders. It includes parents, early childhood professionals, Head Start, school districts, local municipalities, foundations, nonprofits, businesses and five state departments: Education, Health Care Policy & Financing, Higher Education, Human Services, and Public Health and Environment. As Colorado's state advisory council for early childhood, the role of the Commission is to be a statewide leader, subject matter expert and advocate for best and promising practices throughout the state.

THE ECLC IS STATUTORILY CHARGED TO:

- Assist and monitor efforts to enhance alignment across programs and agencies that support young children and their families including collaboration among five state departments;
- Advise and make recommendations to the Governor's Office, the General Assembly and state departments; and
- Develop strategies and monitor efforts to increase the access, quality and equity of services and supports on behalf of pregnant women and children birth through age 8.

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2021 ECLC Accomplishments

- Worked with more than **100 partners** including businesses, nonprofits, advocacy organizations, early childhood councils, government agencies and philanthropic partners to align and strengthen Colorado’s early childhood systems on behalf of **pregnant women, children birth to eight and their families**
- Coordinated all engagement efforts with hundreds of early childhood stakeholders to develop the new **Department of Early Childhood Transition Plan** and **Colorado Universal Preschool Recommendations**
- Published the 2nd Annual **Continuing to Monitor and Measure Progress in Colorado’s Early Childhood Areas of Opportunity: 2021 Report** that provides ongoing information on key indicators for the three Areas of Opportunity identified by the Commission
- Added communications resources and continued to encourage early childhood professionals to share and align their work on the **Early Childhood Colorado Framework** website, an interactive platform providing Colorado with a tool to better understand how the state is making progress toward the outcomes in the *Framework*
- Committed to ensuring that **equity, diversity and inclusion** are central to the work of the Commission and its Subcommittees
- Continued to implement the **Early Childhood Workforce 2020 Plan**, Colorado’s early childhood professional development plan, through coordination with the Early Childhood Workforce Development Subcommittee and the numerous workforce initiatives around the state
- Advised the CDHS Office of Early Childhood on the **Colorado Shines Brighter, Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five – Renewal Grant**, supporting the state’s shared vision to ensure all children are ready for school when entering kindergarten
- Worked with the Office of Governor Jared Polis, the Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission, and the Colorado General Assembly to promote **best and promising practices related to early childhood policy**
- Served as the **State Advisory Council** that advised on federal grant applications related to pregnant women and children birth through age 8 and submitted letters of support required for Colorado to apply for those grants



Department of Early Childhood and Universal Preschool Planning Process

Over the past 30 years, Colorado has made significant advancements in improving the health, well-being, early care, and education experiences of young children and families.

Celebrating the monumental success of the implementation of full-day kindergarten, followed by the overwhelming support for Proposition EE to fund access to high-quality, universal preschool, stakeholders recognized the establishment of a unified department of early childhood would help ensure access to quality and comprehensive whole-child, whole-family experiences; advance equity; prioritize family and community engagement; and provide transparency and accountability.

Parents, families, providers, early childhood stakeholders, advocates, and policy makers united around this bold vision - and on June 23, 2021, the Anna Jo Garcia Haynes Early Childhood Act, [House Bill 21-1304](#), was signed into law. This monumental legislation set forth a path to create a new state Department of Early Childhood (DEC) to coordinate a unified early childhood system and ensure the equitable distribution of resources and programming, including the new universal, voluntary preschool program.

The Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) was designated to approve a Transition Plan to direct the creation of a new single state agency to deliver on the vision of a comprehensive early childhood

system for children, as well as develop a set of recommendations to guide the implementation of the new universal preschool program. In order to fulfill these responsibilities, the ECLC created numerous engagement opportunities during the planning process. Throughout 2021, hundreds of stakeholders participated in meetings, town halls, and listening sessions, and shared comments and feedback to advise and inform the planning efforts.

Stakeholders continuously grounded their work in the ECLC's Guiding Principles; this commitment to hold the children and families at the center of all discussions and decisions helped shape the recommendations and will continue to guide the work ahead.



Stakeholder Engagement Efforts

Recognizing the importance of stakeholder engagement in driving this historic opportunity, the Early Childhood Leadership Commission convened several opportunities for parents, families, members of the early childhood workforce, providers, school districts, human services leaders, Early Childhood Councils, Family Resource Centers, and other stakeholders to provide feedback and guidance on the recommendations for the DEC Transition Plan and the universal preschool program recommendations. Engagement efforts included the following:

» Transition Advisory Group (TAG)

56 TAG members, with the majority of participants representing parents, members of the early childhood workforce, under-resourced communities, and community- and school-based and private early childhood program providers, met 10 times throughout 2021 to provide guidance and insight on the recommendations.

Subgroups:

4 Subgroups held 38 meetings to discuss specific early childhood topics and provide guidance to TAG and other decisions makers:

- » Special Education Service Delivery
- » Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability
- » Universal Preschool Implementation
- » Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding

7

ECLC MEETINGS

6

MONTHLY TOWN HALLS

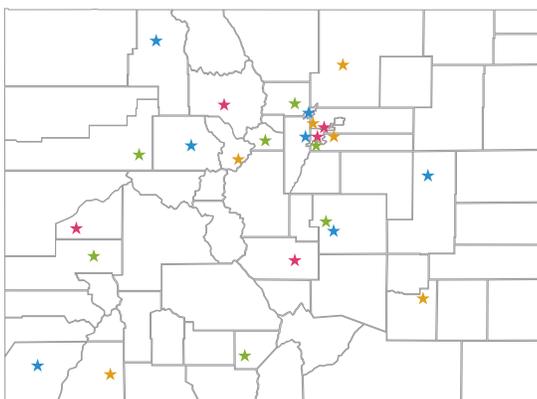
300+

PARTICIPANTS

IN

6

USER-CENTERED LISTENING SESSIONS



TAG Members represented communities across Colorado

15

STATEWIDE LISTENING TOUR SESSIONS

100s

OF COMMENTS

received from an online feedback form that was continuously shared with stakeholders and decision makers

Department of Early Childhood Transition Plan

Throughout Colorado's decades-long commitment to improving the early childhood experiences of young children and families, stakeholders have remained focused on all aspects of the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* by ensuring quality early development and learning experiences, prioritizing the health and well-being of all children, and providing support and education for families of young children.

Early childhood stakeholders came together in 2021 to build on an incredible opportunity to consolidate the various authorities, programs, and funding streams that currently exist across state agencies and elevate a unified vision of comprehensive early childhood service delivery for all children birth to 5+ and their families.

On November 10, 2021, the Early Childhood Leadership Commission unanimously approved the ***Department of Early Childhood Transition Plan***, establishing a bold vision to change the way families and children interact with government systems and ensuring a more equitable, accessible, and streamlined system that alleviates the burdens on families and providers.

Department of Early Childhood Transition Plan, Executive Summaries in:

» [English](#) » [Spanish](#) » [Arabic](#)

Universal Preschool Recommendations

Colorado's commitment to early childhood care and education is rooted in research that shows universal access to high-quality preschool can transform the lives of children, families, and communities.

The establishment of voluntary, universal preschool through Proposition EE positions Colorado as a nationwide leader in the early childhood sector. This program will build upon the successes of Colorado's existing programs and greatly expand access to high-quality services.

The ***Colorado Universal Preschool Recommendations***, which were unanimously approved by the Early Childhood Leadership Commission on January 11, 2022, offer a vision and guidance for the implementation of the new universal preschool program, and acknowledge that DEC must operationalize these recommendations. The ECLC is committed to continuing to champion this work and elevating a diverse set of voices from across the state. Colorado's bold vision to transform the early childhood system will be accomplished over time; however, the universal preschool recommendations set a clear and strategic path toward a future in which all Colorado children, families, and early childhood professionals are valued, healthy, and thriving.

Universal Preschool Recommendations, Executive Summaries in:

» [English](#) » [Spanish](#) » [Arabic](#)

Highlights from the ECLC Subcommittees

► COMMUNICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

Co-Chairs: Katie Facchinello and Tom Massey

The ECLC Communications Subcommittee is charged to work with parents, providers and stakeholders to advance appropriate, accessible, and timely communication efforts with parents and caregivers throughout Colorado.

After working hard over the past few years to analyze the amount and variety of parent and caregiver communication and engagement efforts in Colorado and provide recommendations for the field to better support and connect with parents and caregivers, the Subcommittee shifted its focus to a few key strategies to advance communication efforts at the local and state level.

The Subcommittee supported four mini-grants to early childhood programs and providers to utilize the Communication Guidelines located on the [Early Childhood Colorado Framework](#) website developed by

the Subcommittee; the projects supported by the four mini-grants will be completed by the end of the year, and the Subcommittee will work to continue to refine and promote the tools for use by the broader early childhood community.

With all of the changes occurring in the early childhood system over the year, the Subcommittee also worked to provide guidance to ensure that thoughtful, customer-focused and effective communication efforts could reach their intended audience. This included advising the development of the *Raising Colorado Kids Guide* website supported by the Preschool Development Grant, continuing to enhance the *Our Voice* newsletter which is now fully managed by the Early Childhood Leadership Commission, and supporting communication efforts regarding the transition to the new Department of Early Childhood.



Future Priorities

In 2022, the Communications Subcommittee will:

- Begin a strategic planning process to identify future tactics for the year which will be outlined in the annual Communications Plan;
- Continue to enhance and promote the communication resources on the [Early Childhood Colorado Framework](#) website;
- Enhance the *Our Voice* newsletter to ensure it continues to be viewed as a vital communication resource across early childhood stakeholders; and
- Support the communication efforts of the new Department of Early Childhood throughout the transition as well as the implementation of Universal Preschool and promote best practices among providers, organizations and programs for communicating about early childhood with parents and caregivers.

▶ DATA SUBCOMMITTEE

Co-Chairs: Whitney LeBoeuf, Kate Reinemund, and Susan Steele

The responsible use of data to drive priorities and inform decision making remains a critical foundation of the ECLC's work. The Data Subcommittee helps to advance this priority by ensuring the consistent and responsible use of relevant, reliable and secure data to better understand populations across the state, identify opportunities to create efficiencies within programs and across departments, and encourage sufficient public and private investments in the early childhood system. The Subcommittee continued its intentional focus on equity, diversity and inclusion by examining a variety of data and technology facets and how the interpretation and analysis of data can inform and impact decision making. This focus will continue in the future, as the Subcommittee works to include more diverse voices at the table and embed an equity lens into all of their work.

The creation of the new Department of Early Childhood provided an opportunity for the Data Subcommittee members to envision new, efficient methods of information gathering and sharing to create a truly unified early childhood system. Members participated in discussions within the Subcommittee meetings, as well as other venues through the transition planning process led by the ECLC, to help inform the recommendation that Colorado should prioritize safely collecting both qualitative and quantitative data that provides insight into the fundamental questions needed for policymakers and state leaders to address

gaps and better direct resources in the system. The Subcommittee also provided insight into the development of recommendations for the new universal preschool program, with a strong emphasis that any systems created must be well supported and easy to use for parents and families as well as early childhood professionals. Members will continue to guide this work as the state moves toward implementation of these new and exciting efforts in 2022.

The Data Subcommittee published the "[Continuing to Monitor and Measure Progress in Colorado's Early Childhood Areas of Opportunity: 2021 Report](#)" and encouraged partners to share how their work is advancing the priority areas determined by the Commission.

Finally, the Subcommittee supported partners and stakeholders in their research efforts throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and created a space for sharing and learning from one another.

The ECLC's Data Vision:

Reliable, relevant and secure data guides and informs early childhood decision-makers at all levels who are working to ensure all children are valued, healthy and thriving in Colorado.

Future Priorities

In 2022, the Data Subcommittee will:

- Guide and support the implementation of the new Department of Early Childhood and Universal Preschool Program recommendations, ensuring that strong, reliable and user-friendly data and technology systems are developed to provide the necessary information to guide future priorities and investments;
- Continue to implement an equity lens across their work to ensure the data used to drive decisions is collected and interpreted by the Commission and Subcommittees in a way that promotes equity, diversity and inclusion;
- Review and disseminate trusted, publicly available early childhood data resources and reports on the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* website; and
- Champion the use of reliable, relevant and secure data to drive decisions across all levels of early childhood practice.

▶ PROGRAM QUALITY & ALIGNMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

Co-Chairs: Anji Gallanos, Anna Jo Haynes, and Jeanne McQueeney

The ECLC is charged to identify opportunities for, and barriers to, the alignment of standards, rules, policies and procedures to ensure that children and families have access to the services and supports they need. As in the past, the Program Quality & Alignment (PQA) Subcommittee led the charge on this work by bringing together a diverse array of programs and perspectives to discuss opportunities to enhance the broad early childhood system. This year included an additional focus on equity, diversity and inclusion when the Subcommittee members identified a list of [Subcommittee Norms and Guiding Questions](#) to ensure that all members felt comfortable participating in discussions and that the group focused on understanding the impacts of the work on equity and alignment across the domains of the [Early Childhood Colorado Framework](#).

The Subcommittee continued to serve as the advisory body for the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) to guide implementation of the [Colorado Shines Brighter Statewide Birth through Five Strategic Plan](#).

The Subcommittee also continued to identify particular topics at each meeting to learn from various perspectives and identify opportunities to connect and align work. This created a shared space for learning as

well as an opportunity to hear from experts working at the local, regional and state level, including parent and family voices.

In addition, the Subcommittee created a space to discuss the creation of the new Department of Early Childhood and Universal Preschool Program recommendations and brought forward a call to ensure the work ahead centers on serving children and families in a holistic, whole-child approach that reaches across the domains of the [Early Childhood Colorado Framework](#): Health & Well-Being, Family Support & Education, and Learning & Development.

The Program Quality and Alignment Subcommittee supported two Working Groups this year:

- **Colorado Shines Brighter Working Group:** This Working Group was convened to develop recommendations to update the [Colorado Shines Brighter Statewide Birth through Five Strategic Plan](#). These recommendations align with the creation of the new Department of Early Childhood and were endorsed by the Commission in December 2021.
- **Home Visiting Investment Strategy Working Group:** In June 2021, this Working Group brought forward the [Home Visiting Investment Plan](#) to scale a continuum of home visiting services in Colorado and guide future investments; the Plan was unanimously approved by the ECLC. The Working Group and its subgroups will work to guide implementation of the Plan in 2022 and beyond.

Future Priorities

In 2022, the Program Quality and Alignment Subcommittee will:

- Support the creation of the new Department of Early Childhood and elevate opportunities for alignment from across the domains of the [Early Childhood Colorado Framework](#);
- Continue to guide and support the implementation of the [Colorado Shines Brighter Statewide Birth through Five Strategic Plan](#);
- Promote and enhance the [Early Childhood Colorado Framework](#) website resource to share program information and highlight progress that Colorado is making on the [Framework](#) outcomes for children and families; and
- Create a space for early childhood organizations across the state to connect with one another, learn from each other, and align programs, services and outcomes to strengthen early childhood in Colorado.

▶ EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Co-Chairs: Heather Craiglow, Jennifer O'Brien, Diana Schaack, Paula Smith, and Rebecca Kantor (former)

Throughout 2021, the Early Childhood Workforce Development (ECWD) Subcommittee continued to guide implementation of [Colorado's Early Childhood Workforce 2020 Plan](#). The Plan, which was endorsed by the Commission in June 2017, focuses on retention, recruitment and compensation for early childhood professionals and outlines specific strategies and objectives to elevate this workforce so young children have consistent, effective and caring educators.

The Subcommittee identified four priority areas to focus their work throughout the year:

- Identify opportunities to support the recruitment and retention of an effective, qualified, and diverse early childhood workforce;
- Promote efforts to support worthy and livable compensation for early childhood educators;
- Support Universal Preschool Planning with focus on workforce needs; and
- Regular Discussions and Updates and Opportunities for Engagement with PDG strategies and COVID-19 stimulus recovery strategies

Through regular meetings throughout the year, the Subcommittee created an environment where early

childhood workforce development stakeholders could share the successes and challenges of their current projects. A smaller group of members also participated in the Talent Equity Agenda technical assistance effort led by the Colorado Workforce Development Council and are planning to develop and distribute early childhood-specific equity, diversity and inclusion resources.

Following the passage of Proposition EE which will create a voluntary, universal preschool program for all children the year prior to entering kindergarten, the Subcommittee utilized several meetings to discuss the impacts of a universal program on the early childhood workforce and the need to recruit and retain teachers prior to the 2023-24 school year when the program will be implemented. The group also discussed ongoing needs to streamline the processes for meeting the appropriate qualifications to serve as early childhood professionals, and provided guidance on strategies to support the recruitment and retention of workforce with federal stimulus funds.

Finally, the Subcommittee welcomed two new co-chairs, ensuring that the group's leadership exhibits expertise from both higher education and direct service to families.

Future Priorities

In 2022 the Early Childhood Workforce Development Subcommittee will:

- Identify state and local opportunities to elevate the early childhood workforce, including federal funding opportunities and legislative development and implementation;
- Develop recommendations and resources to recruit, retain and support early childhood educators and leaders of color;
- Promote efforts to develop more coherent and streamlined educational pathways that build alignment across sectors; and
- Support the creation of the new Department of Early Childhood and implementation of Universal Preschool by guiding strategies and priorities related to ensuring a well-supported, high-quality early childhood workforce.



The ECLC Partners with State Agencies to Support Young Children and Their Families

Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing (HCPF)

HCPF administers Health First Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid program), Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+) and other health coverage programs for Coloradans who qualify.

The Department's mission is to improve health care equity, access and outcomes for the people we serve while saving Coloradans money on health care and driving value for Colorado. Health First Colorado is HCPF's largest program, covering approximately 1.5 million Coloradans. Children comprise approximately 39% of Health First Colorado members. Most Health First Colorado members are enrolled in the Accountable Care Collaborative, which seeks to improve member health and experience while improving

health care affordability. CHP+, which includes children and pregnant people, covered approximately 66,000 Coloradans in state fiscal year 2020-21. Approximately 43% of all babies born in Colorado in calendar year 2020 were born to Health First Colorado or CHP+ members. HCPF also works closely with other state agencies, stakeholders, and partners to improve the health and well-being of children in Colorado with a focus on the social determinants of health and maternal health.

LEARN MORE ABOUT HCPF AT [COLORADO.GOV/HCPF](https://colorado.gov/hcpf)

Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE)

CDPHE's virtual health inspection program to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in child care facilities received an award from the National Environmental Health Association and an honorable mention in the Journal of Environmental Health.

The Colorado Farm to ECE Coalition grew from 17 members and guests to more than 60. Thanks to nine Farm to ECE mini-grants over 500 children experienced eating locally grown foods in Colorado.

CDPHE nutrition services staff consulted with CDHS for a statewide breastfeeding recognition program and provided language to include community gardens and local foods in the child care Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) continued COVID-19 response efforts and implementation of USDA program waivers to support child care centers and homes in providing children in care with nutritious meals. The CACFP distributed \$1,847,418 to participating institutions as part of the USDA Emergency Operational Costs Reimbursement Program. The average daily participation for fiscal year 2021 was 50,726.

Colorado WIC began several projects to enhance the participation experience through client-informed digital transformation. WIC expanded allowable food options desired by clients, promoting equity and cultural appropriateness. WIC engaged clients to inform the program's pandemic response. Clients now have online access to updated nutrition education materials and digital services. Refugee populations can more easily participate in the program thanks to translated materials and information.

The Essentials for Childhood grant funded economic mobility efforts focused on local strategies to increase enrollment in WIC, SNAP, and CCCAP. The Maternal and Child Health Program implemented statewide strategies to expand access to tax credits for eligible families.

The CO MIECHV (Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting) state program and data team completed a home visiting needs assessment to inform strategic decision-making. (See the [data brief](#) or [full report](#).)

Cavity Free at Three trained 284 medical and dental staff and students via telehealth.

In 1,649 child care facilities in Colorado there is 95% immunization compliance rate among children.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CDPHE AT [COLORADO.GOV/CDPHE](https://colorado.gov/cdphe)



Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS)

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact families and service providers across Colorado. In 2021, CDHS remained committed to responding to the needs of our communities to support children and families to thrive.

The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) received historic investments through federal stimulus funding, including \$465 million through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act and \$119 million from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA). Funding from ARP and CRRSA is going towards addressing the child care crisis and rebuilding a stronger child care system.

The OEC continued to implement the \$33.5 million Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Renewal. Key milestones include rebuilding the Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System (PDIS), forming the state Early Childhood Family Voice Council, and finalizing the transition to kindergarten roadmap in partnership with the Colorado Department of Education P-3 Office.

Additional highlights include revision of the Quality Rating and Improvement System Framework to increase its focus

on interactions and to be more culturally responsive, and revision of the rules regulating child care centers, which became effective December 1, 2021.

In the Office of Children, Youth and Families, the Child Welfare team continues to support young children and their families with services to strengthen families' capacity to care for their children. Colorado has made great strides in serving children, keeping families together, and preventing child maltreatment. Since 2011, children and youth are served in more family-like settings when placed out of home with a 70% decrease in children being placed in congregate care - lowest ever in our history.

The Office of Economic Security continued intensive services to families during the pandemic, including programs to help address childhood poverty and strengthen families' economic stability through financial, food, employment, and child support services

LEARN MORE ABOUT CDHS AT [CDHS.COLORADO.GOV](https://cdhs.colorado.gov)

Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

CDE's P-3 Office, consisting of the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP), Preschool Special Education, Results Matter, Kindergarten School Readiness, and the READ Act, works together to support comprehensive early childhood alignment within the department.

Highlights for the year include:

- Supporting the transition planning process for the new Department of Early Childhood.
- Providing support to the 176 school districts that administer the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP), that accessed over \$102 million in local and state education funds to provide preschool to 18,636 at-risk children. CPP graduates are less likely to be identified with a significant reading deficiency and more likely to graduate from high school on time than like peers who did not participate in CPP. The CPP program has served over 440,000 children over its 33-year history.
- Earning national recognition as the state with the highest rate of inclusion for preschoolers with an Individualized Education Program. Over 92% of preschoolers receive their special education and related services in regular early childhood classrooms alongside typically developing peers.
- Continuing to administer the Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant, a five-year, \$16 million federal grant that supports literacy birth to grade 12. Funds help districts develop and implement local literacy plans to improve student learning outcomes by expanding early literacy initiatives for children birth to 5 years old.
- Providing no cost evidence-based training in teaching reading to Colorado's kindergarten through third grade teachers in support of the READ Act. Over 19,000 teachers have enrolled in and 6,000 have completed the training.
- Collaborating with the Office of Early Childhood on the Preschool Development Grant to support preschool to kindergarten transitions, including the development of a Colorado Transitions Roadmap and providing funding to support preschool teams to provide professional development in reading.
- Issuing 4,566 Early Childhood Professional Credentials
- Approving 390 clock hours of community-based training in the Professional Development Information System (PDIS).
- Supporting thousands of users through the PDIS Help Desk to enable early childhood educators to access supports and resources.
- Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce Development Subcommittee as it continues work on the EC Workforce 2020 Plan.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CDE AT [CDE.STATE.CO.US](https://cde.state.co.us)



Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE)

The Colorado Department of Higher Education's mission is to support students, advocate, and develop policies to maximize higher education opportunities for all. The Department is committed to partnering with institutions of higher education, state agencies, and stakeholders to recruit, prepare, and support a thriving early childhood workforce.

Highlights from the past year include:

- **The Early Educator Investment Collaborative (EEIC) Grant:** The University of Colorado Denver was one of six institutions nationally, out of 51 applicants, awarded a grant to transform Early Care and Education (ECE) teacher preparation by the national [Early Educator Investment Collaborative \(EEIC\)](#). In partnership with CU Denver, CDHE used grant funds to create a new position focused on ECE workforce policy. The Director of ECE Workforce Policy started in July and represented the Department in transition planning for the new Department of Early Childhood and universal preschool recommendations. Moving forward, this work will be focused on policies to increase access to early childhood degree pathways. The EEIC grant is also funding a consortium of institutions of higher education collaborating to implement a set of reforms to provide culturally-sustaining, affordable, accessible, and competency-based coursework and degree pathways, especially for historically marginalized degree seekers. The consortium includes the Colorado Community College System (CCCS) and four of the largest B.A.-granting institutions in the state: CU Denver; University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS); University of Northern Colorado (UNC); and Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU).
- **The Early Childhood Higher Education Partnership (ECHEP):** The Department regularly meets with ECHEP which includes 2-year and 4-year ECE faculty who collaborate across systems to plan, design, coordinate, and advocate for well-aligned higher education pathways that effectively prepare and advance early childhood professionals who improve outcomes for children and families in Colorado.
- **Teaching Career Pathway:** Through implementation of SB21-185 Supporting the Educator Workforce in Colorado legislation, CDHE is designing a teaching career pathway for individuals to enter the teaching profession, including ECE. The Department hired an Educator Preparation Pathways Specialist to lead this work and to work closely with the Director of ECE Workforce Policy on early childhood teacher pathways.
- **Diversifying the Workforce:** In partnership with CDE, CDHE began convening a workgroup to identify barriers to the recruitment, preparation, and retention of a workforce that more closely represents our student population, and to provide recommendations in 2022 on strategies. Additionally, the Department hosted a Colorado Educator Preparation Faculty Convening that included sessions focused on diversifying the workforce.
- **Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI):** [The Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance and Empowering Communities Globally](#) were awarded over \$1.2 million in [COSI Back to Work](#) grants to provide scholarships and support directly to individuals interested in becoming ECE teachers, including those who are recent immigrants.
- **ECE 101 and 103 Supports:** The Department partnered with the Office of Early Childhood to distribute federal stimulus funds to support students completing coursework toward meeting the minimum child care licensing qualification requirements for early childhood teacher positions.
- **TEACH Colorado:** The Department is partnering with TEACH Colorado to increase the number of subscribers who indicate an interest in pursuing preparation to be an early childhood educator.
- **By the Numbers:** Over 200 credentials in early childhood were completed at 4-year programs during the 2020-2021 school year, including 40 in Early Childhood Special Education, 56 in Early Childhood Special Education Specialist, and 140 in Early Childhood Education (birth to age 8).

LEARN MORE ABOUT CDHE AT [CDHE.COLORADO.GOV](https://cdhe.colorado.gov)

Our Strategies

In collaboration with our partners, we use the following STRATEGIES FOR ACTION to help guide all of our work across early childhood systems in Colorado.



**CONNECT AND
EMPOWER
FAMILIES**



**MAKE
DATA INFORMED
DECISIONS**



**ENCOURAGE
PUBLIC-PRIVATE
PARTNERSHIPS**



**BUILD CAPACITY
AND SUSTAINABLE
BUSINESS PRACTICES**



**PURSUE QUALITY
AND CONSUMER
AFFORDABILITY**



**PROMOTE AND
SHARE KNOWLEDGE**



**DEVELOP
AND RETAIN THE
WORKFORCE**



**VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR
ECLC RESOURCES &
PAST NOTABLE WORK**

earlychildhoodcolorado.org

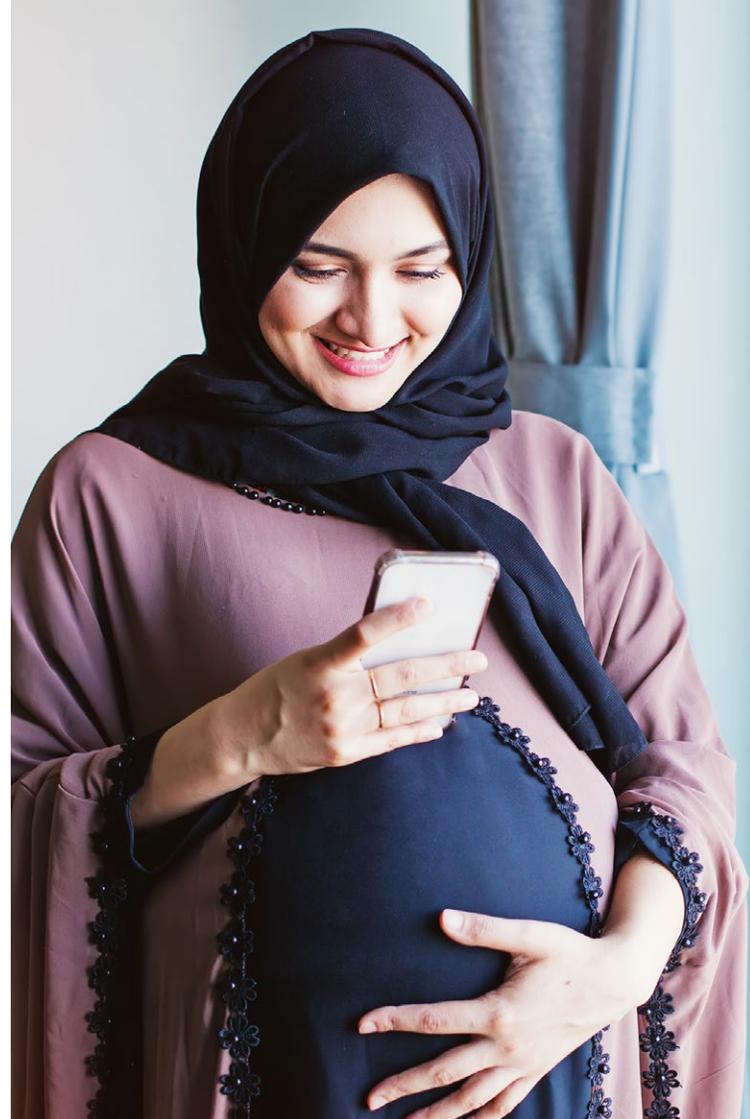
- [Universal Preschool Policy Discussion Guide](#)
- [ECLC Equity Statement](#)
- [Senate Bill 19-063 Infant and Family Child Care Home Action Plan Report](#)
- [ECLC Areas of Opportunity](#)
- [Early Childhood Colorado Framework Website](#)
- [Past ECLC Annual Reports, 2012 - 2020](#)
- [ECLC Early Childhood Communication Efforts in Colorado](#)
- [Member List](#)
- [Organizational Chart](#)
- [ECLC Bylaws](#)
- [Enabling Legislation](#)

Looking Forward

Colorado made incredible strides throughout 2021 toward a system of early childhood care and education that more equitably serves all children and families. While the global pandemic continued to change our day-to-day lives, it also highlighted the commitment of families, professionals, advocates and policymakers to work together to ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive. The collaboration between state and local entities across private and public domains is a testament to Colorado's long and unwavering commitment to ensuring that all children and families have the support they need to reach our shared vision: **all children are valued, healthy and thriving.**

In 2022, the Commission will:

- Advise the planning and creation of the new Department of Early Childhood, which will launch in July 2022
- Support the planning and engagement efforts to implement Colorado's Universal Preschool Program
- Promote the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* as a guide to ensure Colorado's early childhood system supports and enhances all three domains: Learning & Development, Health & Well-Being, and Family Support & Education
- Continue to elevate the early childhood workforce, emphasizing the importance of workforce development as the state moves toward universal preschool
- Serve as stewards of equity and stand united and steadfast with the early childhood community to promote diversity and inclusion
- Promote the "Communication Guidelines for Engaging with Parents and Caregivers" resource document to encourage parent and caregiver engagement and to share tools, resources and strategies through an online platform
- Collaborate on the implementation of the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five strategic plan to ensure all children are ready for school when entering kindergarten
- Champion the use of reliable, relevant and secure data to inform and guide future priorities and investments
- Develop stronger connections and collaborations across prenatal-to-3 services to ensure alignment of Colorado's early childhood and maternal and child health systems



The Commission is committed to working with Governor Polis, the Colorado General Assembly, state agencies, stakeholders, parents and families to build on the successes of our past and guide forward our vision that all children are valued, healthy and thriving.

We are grateful to all of Colorado's passionate and thoughtful early childhood stakeholders for your dedication, your innovation and your contributions to this important work. We look forward to partnering with you in 2022!

2021 Early Childhood Leadership Commission

2020-21 Co-Chairs

Pamela Harris, Ph.D. - President & CEO, Mile High Early Learning

Tom Massey - Deputy Executive Director, Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing

Susan Steele - President & CEO, Buell Foundation

2020-21 Commissioners

Ryan Beiser - Regional President, PNC Bank

K. Jehan Benton-Clark - Portfolio Director, Colorado Health Foundation

Anne-Marie Braga - Deputy Executive Director for Community Partnerships, Colorado Department of Human Services

Melissa Colman, Ph.D. - Associate Commissioner of Student Learning, Colorado Department of Education

Heather Craiglow - Head Start Collaboration Director, Office of Early Childhood, Colorado Department of Human Services

Happy Haynes - Executive Director, Denver Parks and Recreation, City and County of Denver

Rebecca Kantor, Ph.D. - Dean of the School of Education & Human Development, University of Colorado Denver

Adeeb Khan - Vice President of Corporate Social Responsibility, Delta Dental of Colorado; and Executive Director of the Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation

Jeff Kuhr, Ph.D. - Executive Director, Mesa County Health Department

Jeanne McQueeney - County Commissioner, Eagle County

Tracy Miller - Nutrition Services Branch Director, Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment

Angie Paccione, Ph.D. - Executive Director, Colorado Department of Higher Education

Kate Reinemund - Executive Director, Constellation Philanthropy

Sue Renner - Vice President of Philanthropy, Merage Foundations

Ida Rhodes - Director of Programs, Catholic Charities Diocese of Pueblo

Jai Scott - Parent Representative

George Welsh - Superintendent, Cañon City Schools

We Remember

Dr. Rebecca Kantor

An early childhood champion
who will be forever missed



New Commissioners in 2021

Lucinda Burns - Executive Director, Early Childhood Options

Minna Castillo Cohen - Director, Office of Children, Youth and Families, Colorado Department of Human Services

Rachel Hutson - Children, Youth and Families Branch Director, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

Leslie Nichols, Ed.D. - Superintendent, Gunnison Watershed School District

Heather O'Hayre - Director, Larimer County Department of Human Services

Jasmin Ramirez - Parent Representative & School Board Member, Roaring Fork School District

Jacob Williams - Executive Director, Healthier Colorado

Staff

Kristina Heyl - Director

Katy Palmer - Program Assistant

ECLC Annual Report Acronym Guide

ACC: Accountable Care Collaborative

CCCAP: Colorado Child Care Assistance Program

CDE: Colorado Department of Education

CDHE: Colorado Department of Higher Education

CDHS: Colorado Department of Human Services

CDPHE: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

CHP+: Child Health Plan Plus

CSB: Colorado Shines Brighter

DEC: Department of Early Childhood

ECCS: Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems

ECE: Early Care and Education

ECLC: Early Childhood Leadership Commission

ECWD: Early Childhood Workforce Development Subcommittee

HCPF: Health Care Policy & Financing

LAUNCH: Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children's Health

MIECHV: Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting

OEC: Office of Early Childhood

PDIS: Professional Development Information System

PDG: Preschool Development Grant

PQA: Program Quality and Alignment Subcommittee

QRIS: Quality Rating and Improvement System

TAG: Transition Advisory Group

TWG: Transition Working Group

Thank you to Early Connections Learning Centers, Mile High Early Learning, Take-A-Break, Inc., and the Office of Early Childhood, CDHS for donating the photography used in this report!

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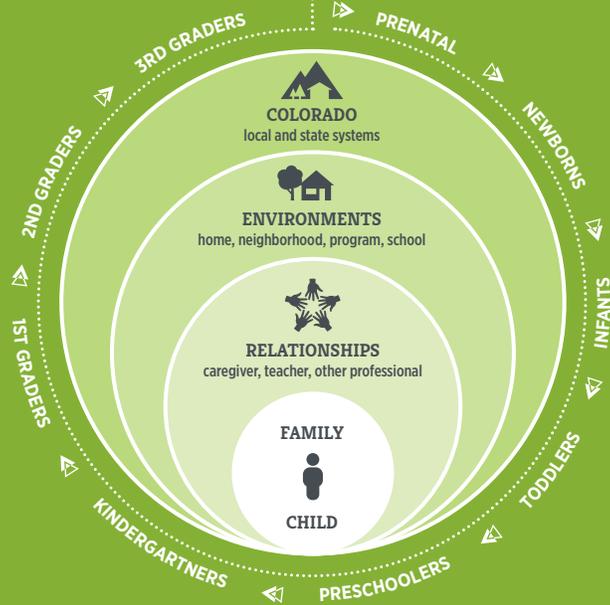
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Early Childhood Colorado Framework

all children are valued, healthy and thriving



Results



CHILD

Young children reach their developmental potential and are ready to succeed in school and in life



ENVIRONMENTS

Environments that impact children are safe, stable and supportive



RELATIONSHIPS

Adults are knowledgeable, responsive and interact effectively with and on behalf of children



COLORADO

Localities and the state attain economic and social benefits by prioritizing children and families

ECLC

Early Childhood Leadership Commission

For questions relating to the ECLC, please visit earlychildhoodcolorado.org