

# ECLC

*Early Childhood Leadership Commission*

## Annual Report 2022



### **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,

Building on years of advocacy and planning, in 2022, we celebrated the official launch of the new Colorado Department of Early Childhood and began preparation for universal preschool, maintaining our uncompromising commitment to ensure all Colorado children have access to high-quality early care and education. I am proud of Colorado for pioneering an innovative, outcomes-driven, equitable early childhood system, serving as an example for the country and setting the standard for the future.

I am thrilled to have worked alongside the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) and Colorado's early childhood champions to pass HB22-1295, which established the duties and Executive Director of the Department of Early Childhood and created the Colorado Universal Preschool Program based on the recommendations of the ECLC and stakeholders across the state for delivery of equitable access to early childhood programs and services that prioritize the needs of children, families, and communities. We know preschool is foundational to the success of children as they grow, and I'm proud to say our Universal Preschool Program will save families thousands of dollars each year starting this fall, promote healthy learning and development for our youngest Coloradans, and contribute to making Colorado the best place to raise a family.

As our state continues to grow and thrive, we recognize the importance of a strong, dependable, highly-qualified early childhood workforce to the success of our economy and communities. Our administration is dedicated to continuing to elevate the field of early childhood by supporting career and education pathways and increasing resources to support the professionals who serve Colorado's young children and families.

I am eager to continue partnering with the ECLC and all early childhood stakeholders across our state to promote a robust and successful early childhood system in Colorado.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jared Polis".

**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 pleased to present our eleventh annual report. The ECLC serves as Colorado's federally-authorized state advisory council and works in partnership with our statewide early childhood community to ensure successful outcomes for children birth to age eight and their families by advancing the alignment, coordination, and efficiency of early childhood programs and services across Colorado.

After leading extensive, in-depth stakeholder engagement, guiding the development of the Department of Early Childhood Transition Plan and Universal Preschool Recommendations, and championing transformative legislation in HB21-1304 and HB22-1295, in 2022 we were thrilled to celebrate the launch of the new Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) to oversee a high-quality and equitable early childhood system that supports the care, education, and well-being of all Colorado's young children, families, and early childhood professionals, including coordination of the new Universal Preschool Program (UPK) which will launch in August 2023.

Since its inception, CDEC has worked diligently to prepare for the start of universal preschool including approving and training Local Coordinating Organizations; launching a robust, statewide communications campaign; developing a comprehensive UPK application; and beginning work on comprehensive early learning quality standards. Additionally, the department seated a Rules Advisory Council; completed a strategic planning process; was awarded a new \$3.9 million Preschool Development Planning Grant; and continues to provide numerous grants, incentives, resources, and programs to improve access to high-quality early care and education, increase early childhood career pathways, and strengthen opportunities for families and caregivers.

To continue to support the new department and universal preschool, the ECLC is looking forward to refocusing on the Commission's three core functions of Alignment, Advocacy and Accountability. The ECLC will continue to take a systems-level approach to elevating needs and implementing strategies across the Early Childhood Colorado Framework domains of Family Support and Education, Health and Well-Being, and Learning and Development.

We wish to thank Governor Polis, Lt. Governor Primavera, the General Assembly, our state agency partners, and the many early childhood advocates for your steadfast commitment to ensuring all Colorado's young children, their families, and early childhood professionals are valued, healthy, and thriving.

Sincerely,



**Tamara Hiler**  
ECLC Co-Chair



**Sue Renner**  
ECLC Co-Chair



**Susan Steele**  
ECLC Co-Chair



# About the Early Childhood Leadership Commission

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The ECLC was originally established by the Colorado Legislature in 2010 and was re-authorized until 2025 through House Bill 22-1295. The Commission is comprised of 21 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 six state departments: Education, Health Care Policy & Financing, Higher Education, Human Services, Public Health and Environment, and the newly formed Colorado Department of Early Childhood. 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 eight.

# 2022 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**
- Developed and advocated for the vision outlined in the ***Department of Early Childhood Transition Plan*** and ***Colorado Universal Preschool Recommendations*** which resulted in groundbreaking legislation to create the new Colorado Department of Early Childhood
- Advocated for the development of an efficient, comprehensive evaluation system for Colorado’s Universal Preschool Program
- 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 intentional inclusion of diverse professionals who serve children and families across the early childhood spectrum
- Advised the state 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 eight and submitted letters of support required for Colorado to apply for those grants

# New Department of Early Childhood

Colorado has long been dedicated to enhancing early childhood programs and services for young children and families. Guided by the [Early Childhood Colorado Framework](#), our state has consistently been a leader in promoting family support and education, health and well-being, and learning and development opportunities for all children, families, and caregivers. In 2022, Colorado took unprecedented steps to strengthen the state's early childhood system and ensure access to high-quality, mixed delivery early childhood supports and services.



After overwhelming voter support in 2020 for Proposition EE to fund a statewide universal preschool program (UPK), HB21-1304 charged the ECLC with guiding the development of recommendations for both UPK and a cabinet-level department dedicated to elevating, aligning, and supporting the state's early childhood programs. In November 2021, the ECLC unanimously approved the [Department of Early Childhood Transition Plan](#) and the following January approved the [Colorado Universal Preschool Recommendations](#). These two reports outlined an innovative vision for an equitable, accessible, and streamlined early childhood system as well as guidance for the implementation of the new universal preschool program.

Early childhood advocates again rallied in support of HB22-1295, which Governor Polis signed into law on April 24, 2022. This bill outlined the roles and responsibilities of the Colorado Department of Early Childhood and its executive director, relocated

programs to the new department, and officially created the Colorado Universal Preschool Program.

Over the past two years, the ECLC has led tremendous [stakeholder engagement](#) efforts to support the development of plans related to the new department and UPK, including a Transition Advisory Group and subgroups, numerous statewide stakeholder listening sessions and presentations, a week-long statewide listening tour, a transition newsletter, feedback forms, FAQs, and monthly informational town halls. This process has elevated the voices of families, caregivers, members of the early childhood workforce, providers, school districts, human services leaders, Early Childhood Councils, Family Resource Centers, and other stakeholders to steer this long-awaited and critical work.

On July 1, 2022, our state celebrated the launch of the Colorado Department of Early Childhood. The ECLC was thrilled to support the work leading to this monumental milestone and will continue to be a partner and provide guidance to ensure that the department and its programs are advancing the vision set forth by the ECLC that all Colorado children, families, and early childhood professionals are valued, healthy, and thriving.

Coloradans have continuously shown an unwavering enthusiasm and commitment to improving the health, well-being, early care, and education experiences of young children and families, and we are grateful for their continued involvement and support. Congratulations to everyone who participated in these efforts. We look forward to working alongside you in 2023!



# 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](http://earlychildhoodcolorado.org)

- [Message from the ECLC](#)
- [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 - 2021](#)
- [ECLC Early Childhood Communication Efforts in Colorado](#)
- [Member List](#)
- [Organizational Chart](#)
- [ECLC Bylaws](#)
- [Enabling Legislation](#)

# Highlights from the ECLC Subcommittees

## ► COMMUNICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

**Co-Chairs: Andrew Keating, Tom Massey, and Katie Facchinello (former)**

Throughout the year, the need to communicate information to parents, families, stakeholders, and everyone working within the early childhood system was a critical priority to ensure transparency and awareness of opportunities and changes as the new Department of Early Childhood was created.

The ECLC Communications Subcommittee supported these efforts in a variety of ways including providing guidance and recommendations on resources for parents, offering direct feedback on marketing and awareness efforts, and recommending methods for building trust and alignment with local communities. 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 managed by the Early Childhood Leadership Commission, providing feedback on marketing campaigns such as access to COVID-19

vaccines for families of young children, and supporting communication efforts regarding the transition to the new Department of Early Childhood.

The Subcommittee also completed four mini-grants to early childhood programs and providers who utilized the [Communication Guidelines](#) located on the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* website developed by the Subcommittee. Members discussed the lessons learned from the mini-grant recipients and continued to add resources to the website.

Members of the Communications Subcommittee continue to provide feedback and guidance to state and local partners through an equity lens that promotes inclusion and diversity and consistently strive to ensure that families and those who support them are able to receive the information they need in a thoughtful, customer-focused way.



## Future Priorities

In 2023, the Communications Subcommittee will:

- Guide the communication efforts of the new Colorado Department of Early Childhood as well as the implementation of the Universal Preschool Program and promote best practices for communicating about early childhood with parents and caregivers;
- Utilize the *Our Voice* newsletter and ensure that it continues to serve as a vital communication resource across early childhood stakeholders; and
- Continue to enhance and promote the communication resources on the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* website.

## ▶ DATA SUBCOMMITTEE

Co-Chairs: Whitney LeBoeuf and Susan Steele

With a significant focus throughout 2022 on working toward implementation of the new Colorado Department of Early Childhood, the responsible use of data to drive priorities and inform decision making was a critical factor across the work of the ECLC and the early childhood community. The Data Subcommittee helped advance these efforts by reinforcing the need for 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 Data Subcommittee members worked to provide recommendations on new, efficient methods of information gathering and sharing to create a truly unified early childhood system. Members participated in discussions with leadership from the new Department to advocate that Colorado prioritize safely collecting both

qualitative and quantitative data that can provide 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 (UPK), 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. This included providing guidance on the [Review of UPK Evaluation Strategies and Recommendations for Colorado](#) by Dr. Alissa Rausch to inform the creation of an efficient, effective evaluation system for UPK. The subcommittee informed a follow-up [memo of high-priority UPK evaluation recommendations](#) that resulted in an increase in the UPK evaluation budget from \$350,000 to \$1 million per year. Members will continue to guide this work as the state moves toward implementation of these new and exciting efforts in 2023.

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 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 2023, the Data Subcommittee will:

- Guide the implementation and evaluation of the new Department of Early Childhood and Universal Preschool Program, ensuring that strong, reliable, and user-friendly data and technology systems are developed to provide the necessary information to guide future priorities and investments;
- Support family health and economic security by informing data collection and evaluation related to public assistance program usage;
- Review and disseminate trusted, publicly available early childhood data resources and reports on the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* website; and
- Elevate the early childhood workforce by elevating data and technology needs and informing the creation of Colorado's new comprehensive early childhood workforce plan.

## ► PROGRAM QUALITY & ALIGNMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

**Co-Chairs: Floyd Cobb, Anna Jo Haynes, Jeanne McQueeney, and Anji Gallanos (former)**

The ECLC Program Quality and Alignment Subcommittee (PQA) is charged to identify opportunities for, and barriers to, the alignment of standards, rules, policies, and procedures across programs and agencies that support young children and to enhance the alignment and provision of services and supports for young children. This important work was even more critical over the past year as the state developed the new Colorado Department of Early Childhood with the goals of streamlining and aligning services to ensure that children and families have access to the supports they need.

Throughout 2022, the Subcommittee brought together a diverse group of individuals representing programs and perspectives to guide and provide feedback on various initiatives to enhance the broad early childhood system. This included guidance on the Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework as well as a Pre-Kindergarten to Kindergarten Assessment Alignment effort. The members also discussed mental health awareness opportunities and learned about local and statewide efforts to support the well-being of children, families, and the providers who serve them.

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*. In 2022, the members provided guidance on a new Preschool Development Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Planning Grant Application, which Colorado was successfully awarded for 2023.

Finally, the Subcommittee continued to support the creation of the new Colorado Department of Early Childhood and Universal Preschool Program, ensuring that service delivery to children and families remains at the center of the work.

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

- **Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Working Group:** This working group was created to guide the state's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant, a newly awarded federal grant to promote health integration across prenatal-to-three systems. The group has begun work to advance the infrastructure,

capacity, equity, and sustainability of Colorado's maternal and early childhood systems of care and will be implemented collaboratively by key agencies and partners comprising Colorado's infrastructure for the delivery and coordination of prenatal-to-three (P-3) services.

- **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 Colorado Department of Early Childhood priorities and were endorsed by the Commission in December 2022.
- **Home Visiting Investment Strategy Working Group:** In August 2022, the Working Group presented the [Home Visiting Investment Plan Progress Report](#), which outlined the action steps accomplished to implement the state's Home Visiting Investment Plan along with recommendations for ongoing implementation to best meet the needs of families in Colorado.

## Future Priorities

In 2023, the Program Quality and Alignment Subcommittee will:

- Continue to guide the implementation of the Colorado Department of Early Childhood and elevate opportunities for alignment from across the domains of the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework*;
- Promote alignment and implementation of the *Colorado Shines Brighter Statewide Birth through Five Strategic Plan*;
- Provide guidance on the refresh of the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* resource to ensure the *Framework* continues to guide the state's early childhood system; and
- Increase the engagement of stakeholders and partners to align early childhood and maternal child health systems and advance health equity across services and supports for children and families.

## ▶ EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

Co-Chairs: Heather Craiglow, Jennifer O'Brien, Diana Schaack, and Paula Smith

Elevating the early childhood workforce has continued to remain a priority throughout Colorado's early childhood system. In 2022, the Early Childhood Workforce Development (ECWD) Subcommittee supported these efforts by monitoring progress and providing recommendations that guided the work of state and local partners and drove investments that impacted the day-to-day lives of the professionals who provide services to support young children birth through age eight and their families. The Subcommittee also continued to guide the implementation of [Colorado's Early Childhood Workforce 2020 Plan](#) and provided insights and guidance on how to begin to develop Colorado's new comprehensive early childhood workforce development plan. This new comprehensive plan, which is required to be developed by the Colorado Department of Early Childhood in partnership with the Early Childhood Leadership Commission, will continue to build on Colorado's commitment to our early childhood workforce while ensuring a broad, comprehensive set of strategies and supports to elevate this workforce so that young children have consistent, effective, diverse, and supported educators and early childhood professionals in their lives.

Throughout the year, members of the Subcommittee were briefed on early childhood workforce development activities, enabling them to provide feedback and align their own work where appropriate. This subcommittee focused efforts on professions beyond early childhood education settings such as early intervention, home visiting, and early childhood mental health consultation. Members provided consistent feedback

on the development of the new Universal Preschool Program (UPK) implementation planning as well as the importance of alignment across the requirements and qualifications for educators to participate in the program. The Subcommittee also monitored the creation of the Compensation and Benefits Task Force report to ensure that Colorado is working toward policies to increase compensation and improve access to affordable benefits for the early childhood workforce.

Finally, the group provided guidance regarding Colorado's federal stimulus funding in order to direct and focus investments on strategies that had meaningful impacts on early childhood professionals. These investments will have far-reaching outcomes for the workforce, and the Subcommittee will continue to monitor progress and evaluate strategies to guide future investments in the state's early childhood system.

**Vision for Early Childhood Workforce:**  
Colorado's professional development system ensures positive outcomes for young children birth through age eight and their families by recruiting, preparing, and supporting highly-effective, caring, and diverse professionals, with a specific focus on race and ethnicity, in a variety of early childhood settings. Colorado's professional development system is accountable, innovative, accessible, inclusive, aligned, well-financed, and collaborative.

## Future Priorities

In 2023 the Early Childhood Workforce Development Subcommittee will:

- Elevate state and local opportunities to support and strengthen the early childhood workforce, including funding opportunities and legislative development and implementation;
- Develop recommendations and resources to recruit, retain, and support early childhood educators and leaders of color;
- Advise on the implementation of the new Department of Early Childhood and UPK program by aligning strategies and priorities related to ensuring a well supported, high-quality early childhood workforce; and
- Provide guidance and recommendations to inform the state's new comprehensive early childhood workforce development plan.

# 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.

HCPF'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 37% 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 47,000 Coloradans in state fiscal year 2022-23.

Approximately 43% of all babies born in Colorado in calendar year 2021 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)

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's mission is to advance Colorado's health and protect the places where we live, learn, work, and play.

This year's early childhood highlights include:

- The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) partnered with Blueprint to End Hunger, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), and food security advocates to develop a GIS [Story Map](#) describing areas with insufficient access to nutritious food in Colorado. The map is used by partners throughout Colorado to describe needs and to explore opportunities to expand CACFP and sites/sponsors.
- CACFP launched a participation [dashboard](#) on their website. The participation data is shared by fiscal year and by program type.

- Breastfeeding staff worked with community partners, including local public health agencies and the Colorado Breastfeeding Coalition, to develop, pilot, and implement three statewide lactation-friendly recognition programs for workplaces, child care providers, and medical offices. All of these programs include resources such as [toolkits](#) and online trainings, as well as statewide recognition from the Coalition. Since 2016, over 600 worksites (serving over 100,000 employees), over 180 child care programs/providers, and 16 medical offices have been supported and achieved lactation-friendly recognition.
- CDPHE continued to co-lead the Farm to Child Collaborative. In coordination with stakeholders, the Farm to Colorado Specialist finalized the Farm to Child Roadmap ([English](#); [Spanish](#)).
- Health eMoms, CDPHE's longitudinal postpartum survey program, received dedicated and sustained funding under HB 22-1289. The Health eMoms, now re-branded as Baby and You, relaunched in April 2023.
- Throughout 2022, the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Program supported a developmental screening and e-Referral pilot. Within seven months of launching the pilot in 2022, the referral rate doubled to more than 100 successful closed loop referrals. Phase two will launch in 2023 with a larger health system.
- MCH continued to implement statewide strategies to expand access to tax credits for eligible families for the 2022 and 2023 tax seasons. More information is available through the [GetAheadColorado website](#).

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





## Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS)

As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and the national health emergency ends, CDHS is committed to being flexible and maintaining the ability to pivot in how we continue to provide high-level services to those we serve.

Highlights for the year include:

- The Office of Child and Family Services (OCYF) led the charge on HB22-1374 that strengthened educational attainment for youth who are (or have been) in foster care and built evidence around this promising intervention.
- The number of children and youth in residential congregate care settings was reduced from 711 at the beginning of the Polis Administration to approximately 240 today, a decrease of over 66 percent. The number of Colorado's children living in foster care was reduced from 4.1 per 1,000 to 3.0 per 1,000, a decrease of 26.8 percent.
- The number of funded programs delivered by community-based organizations for prevention and intervention programs via the Tony Grampas Youth Services Programs for children, youth, and their families working to prevent youth crime and violence; youth alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use; student dropout; and child abuse and neglect increased from 86 to 91, and the number of children and youth served increased by over 50 percent from 30,328 to 46,203.
- While 2,555 hours of services were provided to 142 parents paying child support to help them overcome barriers to employment, child support payments that were on hold were reduced by 53 percent from October 2020 to August 2022.
- Signed the first Local Food Procurement agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture in the nation

to purchase millions of dollars of Colorado grown food from socially disadvantaged farmers to be distributed to underserved communities.

- Provided \$600 million to over 500,000 children for school and child care meals missed due to the pandemic through the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer program.
- Provided approximately \$1.6 billion in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to 265,785 households and 520,186 individuals in 2021, which is the highest number of clients served by the Program in its history.



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

## Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

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The Colorado Department of Education's Elementary Literacy and School Readiness Office works together to support comprehensive early childhood alignment within the department.

Highlights for the year include:

- Supporting the transition of state funded preschool from CDE to the new Department of Early Childhood.
- Providing support to 176 school districts that administered the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) in its final year. CPP graduates are less likely to be identified with a significant reading deficiency and more likely to graduate from high school on time than peers who did not participate in CPP. The CPP program served more than 500,000 children over its 34-year history.
- Continuing to be nationally recognized as the state with the highest rate of preschoolers with an Individualized Education Program served in inclusive early childhood programs. More than 92% of preschoolers receive their special education and related services in classrooms with a majority of typically developing students.
- 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 five 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 27,000 teachers have enrolled in and 6,000 have completed the training.
- Provided career navigation information to over 1,200 individuals.
- Provided international transcript evaluation to 50 individuals from 23 countries.
- Coordinated a monthly community of practice with members from over 30 different organizations throughout Colorado.
- Continued to co-chair the Early Childhood Workforce Development Subcommittee.

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. In 2022, CDHE continued its partnership with CU Denver and the Early Educator Investment Collaborative (EEIC) to fund the Director, ECE Workforce Policy housed at CDHE. The purpose of this dedicated staffing is to strengthen connections between higher education and the early childhood system in Colorado.

Highlights from the past year include:

- CDHE partnered with CDEC to distribute almost \$5 million toward students completing ECE 1011 and ECE 1031 and just over \$7 million for scholarships more broadly and provide almost 300 ECE teachers with funds for student loan forgiveness.
- CDHE facilitated strategic planning for the Universal Preschool Program workforce with CDEC, CDE, and the Governor's Office.
- The General Education Council of the Colorado Commission of Higher Education approved the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential to be recognized for three credits in all public two-year and four-year institutions of higher education with early childhood education programs.
- Through the implementation of Senate Bill 22-192 Opportunities For Credential Attainment, CDHE launched a collaborative process to create two stackable credential pathways in five different industries by January of 2025. The Education Leadership Team convened for this work is focusing on early childhood and K-12 pathways.
- IHEs issued the following certificates and degrees:
  - Child Development
    - 143 certificates
    - 11 bachelor's degrees
  - Early Childhood Education
    - 610 certificates
    - 66 associate degrees
    - 61 bachelor's degrees
    - 91 master's degrees
  - Early Childhood Special Education
    - 9 master's degrees
- Over 150 licensure credentials in early childhood were completed at 4-year programs during the 2021-2022 school year, including 28 in Early Childhood Special Education, 14 in Early Childhood Special Education Specialist, and 130 in Early Childhood Education (birth to age 8).
- CDHE convened the community college system and Deans of Education to consider innovative ways to increase access to credit-bearing pathways, including potential options for credit for prior learning at little to no cost to the student.

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

## Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC)

The Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC), Colorado's final state agency, officially launched on July 1, 2022 and has been working to build the functions and operations of a new department while continuing to serve children and families across the state.

CDEC's vision is that all Colorado children, families, and early childhood professionals are valued, healthy, and thriving. CDEC's mission is to ensure the delivery of an inclusive, community-centered, data-driven, high-quality, and equitable early childhood system that supports the care, education, and well-being of Colorado's young children, their caregivers, and early childhood professionals in all settings.

Highlights from the year include:

- All the work of standing up an agency, such as hiring a senior executive team; establishing State Memorandums of Understanding (MOU); developing the CDEC organizational structure; hiring and onboarding new staff; developing a strategic plan; moving to a new office location; and developing an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion assessment.
- The creation of the Rules Advisory Council (RAC), which provides feedback on proposed rules/amendments to the Executive Director for consideration before promulgating new or revised rules. To implement this process, RAC members were recruited, appointed, drafted bylaws, and engaged in various training sessions. To support the RAC's work and functions, staff created several rulemaking resources and a standard operating procedure (SOP) for CDEC's overall rulemaking process.
- The selection of 32 Local Coordinating Organizations (LCOs) that are responsible for supporting local access and equitable delivery of early childhood and family support programs and serve as a liaison between families, the local early childhood system, and the state.
- Launching the UPK Colorado program, including provider enrollment, a user-friendly family application, and the establishment of and initial work on the three phases of Quality Standards.
- The creation of the Compensation and Benefits Task Force in order to explore opportunities to increase compensation and access to affordable benefits for Colorado's early childhood workforce and the completion of the research and engagement phases to create a new Comprehensive Early Childhood Workforce Plan, which will build off of the accomplishments of the Early Childhood Workforce 2020 Plan.
- The creation of the Colorado Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (CO-ECCS) Working Group to advance the infrastructure, capacity, equity, and sustainability of Colorado's maternal and early childhood systems of care. This group completed a System Asset & Gap Analysis (SAGA), integrated ECCS-specific strategies into the *Colorado Shines Brighter Birth through Five*

*Strategic Plan*, and launched three implementation teams focused on Coordinated Intake and Referral Systems, Early Childhood and Health Care Partnerships, and Early Childhood Equity Planning.

- The continuation of the Family Voice Council, a diverse group of parents and caregivers of children from across Colorado who provide input to optimize the design and delivery of early childhood programs and services. The CDEC leverages the experience and expertise of the Family Voice Council to improve child and family outcomes by incorporating their actionable and strategic feedback.
- CDEC received over \$700 million in federal and state stimulus funding to address pandemic recovery needs and advance efforts to strengthen and grow Colorado's early childhood sector. Stimulus funds are being distributed by CDEC to early care and education programs, early childhood professionals, families, and others. Multiple, high-quality evaluations are being conducted to ensure the goals of the funds are met and to identify opportunities for ongoing learning, scalability, and sustainability.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CDE AT [CDEC.COLORADO.GOV](https://CDEC.COLORADO.GOV)



# Looking Forward

2022 was a transformational year for Colorado's early childhood system. Great strides were made to strategically and effectively align work at the state and local level to more equitably serve all of Colorado's children and families. The collaboration across state and local partners is even more critical to ensuring we continue Colorado's long and unwavering commitment that **all children are valued, healthy, and thriving.**

In 2023, the Commission will:

- Guide and support the implementation of the new Colorado Department of Early Childhood
- Support the planning and engagement efforts to implement Colorado's Universal Preschool Program
- Lead a robust stakeholder engagement process to update the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* so it continues to guide Colorado's early childhood system
- Develop and champion a new comprehensive early childhood workforce development plan
- 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
- Provide guidance 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-three services to ensure alignment of Colorado's early childhood and maternal and child health systems



The creation of the new Colorado Department of Early Childhood along with an intentional focus on coordination and collaboration across state agencies presents an opportunity to reimagine how services are delivered to meet the needs of families and children in every corner of our state. We look forward to working alongside the Governor, Colorado General Assembly, state agencies, stakeholders, parents, and families to build on these exciting opportunities throughout 2023!

# 2022 Early Childhood Leadership Commission

## 2021-22 Co-Chairs

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**Tamara Hiler** - Special Advisor for Early Childhood and K-12 Policy for Governor Jared Polis

**Sue Renner** - Vice President of Philanthropy, Merage Foundations

**Susan Steele** - President & CEO, Buell Foundation

**Pamela Harris, Ph.D** - President & CEO, Mile High Early Learning (former Co-Chair)

**Tom Massey** - Deputy Executive Director, Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing (former Co-Chair)

## 2021-22 Commissioners

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**Ryan Beiser** - Regional President, PNC Bank

**Lucinda Burns** - Executive Director, Early Childhood Options

**Minna Castillo Cohen** - Director, Office of Children, Youth and Families

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

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

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

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

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

**Jeanne McQueeney** - County Commissioner, Eagle County

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

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

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

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

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

**Jake Williams** - Executive Director, Healthier Colorado

## New Commissioners in 2022

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**Floyd Cobb, Ph.D** - Associate Commissioner, Student Learning, Colorado Department of Education

**Whitney LeBoeuf, Ph.D** - Director of Data Integration and Analytics, Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab

**Sondra Ranum** - Director, ECE Workforce Policy, Colorado Department of Higher Education

**Nicole Riehl** - President & CEO, Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC)

**Maria Tarajano Rodman** - Executive Director, Valley Settlement

**Lisa Roy, Ed.D** - Executive Director, Colorado Department of Early Childhood

**Robert Werthwein, Ph.D** - Senior Advisor for Behavioral Health, Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing (ex-officio member)

## Staff

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**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

**CDEC:** Colorado Department of Early Childhood

**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

**ECCS:** Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems

**ECE:** Early Care and Education

**ECLC:** Early Childhood Leadership Commission

**ECWD:** Early Childhood Workforce Development Subcommittee

**HCPEF:** 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

Thank you to all of the early childhood professionals, stakeholders, and champions who work every day to ensure all children are valued, healthy, and thriving!

## Sources

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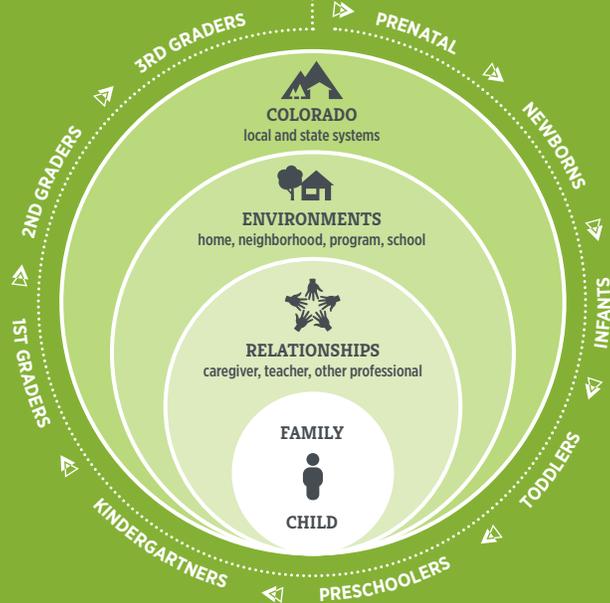
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# Early Childhood Colorado Framework

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](http://earlychildhoodcolorado.org)