

ECLC

Early Childhood Leadership Commission

Annual Report 2016



PRESENTED TO:

Governor John Hickenlooper, Senate Education Committee, Senate Health and Human Services Committee, House Education Committee, House Public Health Care and Human Services Committee, and House Health, Insurance and Environment Committee

Letter from the ECLC Co-Chairs

Dear Governor Hickenlooper and Members of the Colorado General Assembly,

The Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) is proud to present our fifth Annual Report. We are excited to share our work across early childhood systems to ensure that all children are healthy, valued and thriving.

The ECLC serves as the trusted and proactive early childhood champion for high quality, outcome-focused learning and development, health and well-being, and family support and education. We support pregnant women, young children and their families by bridging services offered through programs and agencies, including the collaboration of five state departments.

We have worked over the course of the year to identify opportunities for, and barriers to, the coordination of early childhood policies and programs. In 2016, some of our successes included:

- Leading a statewide public/private partnership that examined communication efforts from the perspective of parents and caregivers. From this, recommendations were developed to more effectively reach those providing care to our youngest Coloradans;
- Providing leadership and guidance to the Office of Early Childhood, Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) on potential early childhood policy and federal grant opportunities;
- Securing resources and establishing a collaborative public/private partnership to guide the implementation of the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework*; and
- Beginning a statewide initiative to update Colorado's Early Childhood Professional Development Plan, the state's next multi-year plan including implementation strategies for recruitment, retention and compensation of an effective, supported and diverse early learning workforce.

State Advisory Councils on early childhood, of which the ECLC fulfills the federal requirement in Colorado, play a critical role in advising and aligning early childhood systems that ultimately lead to better outcomes for children and families. In 2017, the Commission plans to work with members of the General Assembly to extend the Commission's work until 2023, and we ask for your support in approving the ECLC to continue its important role supporting Colorado's youngest residents.

This report reflects the ECLC's work and accomplishments over 2016, as well as our priorities and commitments to all of Colorado's young children and their families. We will continue to develop partnerships with public and private early childhood organizations in collaboration with families, providers, stakeholders and advocates across the state.

We are grateful to all of you for your support and commitment to all of Colorado's children and families. We look forward to continuing our work together to ensure children have the services and supports they need to be healthy, valued and thriving.

Sincerely,



Lt. Governor Donna Lynne
ECLC Co-Chair



Anna Jo Hayes
ECLC Co-Chair



Barbara Grogan
ECLC Co-Chair

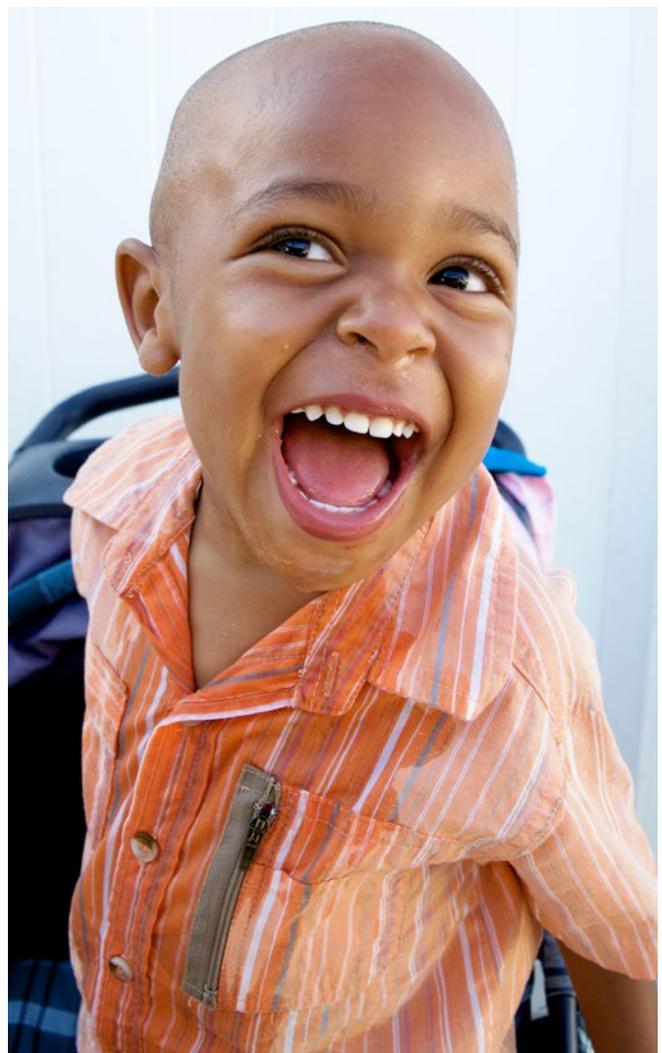


About the Early Childhood Leadership Commission

The ECLC was originally established in 2010 and reauthorized in 2013 for five years through HB 13-1117. The composition of the Commission is twenty 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 and Financing, Higher Education, Human Services and Public Health and Environment. Federally recognized 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, which includes collaboration among five state departments.
- Advise and make recommendations to policy makers and the Office of Early Childhood, CDHS.
- 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.



2016 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
- Secured resources and began development of an *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* online tool that will be used by early childhood professionals to share and align their work, providing Colorado with a tool to better understand how the state is making progress toward the outcomes in the *Framework*
- Led a communications mapping project, gathering information from nearly 400 early childhood providers on the scope and reach of their messages aimed at parents and caregivers
- Advised the Office of Early Childhood, CDHS on future opportunities for quality investments and implementation and evaluation of Colorado Shines
- Led a public/private partnership of stakeholders to understand how to better reach those caring for children in informal settings and published recommendations determined to strengthen parent and caregiver awareness and engagement efforts across the state
- Served as a champion for continued implementation of kindergarten readiness assessments as outlined in CAP4K
- Advised the Early Childhood School Readiness Legislative Commission on best and promising practices related to early childhood policy as outlined in HB 13-1007
- Served as the federally recognized state advisory council by advising on federal grant applications related to pregnant women and children birth through age eight and submitting letters of support required to apply for those grants
- Supported the Young Child Wellness Council to guide implementation of Project LAUNCH, including the addition of four new Colorado LAUNCH communities that received federal funding
- Reviewed and made recommendations to the Office of Early Childhood, CDHS on the Child Care Development Block Grant State Plan

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

Outcomes: Access, Quality and Equity

Our work leads to improved access, quality and equity across three domains of Family Support & Education, Learning & Development, and Health & Well-Being.



ACCESS

- Family engagement and leadership opportunities exist within programs, schools and communities
- Services and supports promote the well-being and resiliency of parents and caregivers
- Family friendly policies and practices exist in the workplace
- Comprehensive health coverage and services are consistently utilized by pregnant women and children
- Integrated and preventive maternal and child physical, behavioral and oral health services are available
- All settings promote mental health and well-being through early identification, consultation and treatment
- Education, coaching and ongoing training exist for caregivers, teachers and other professionals
- Learning experiences and environments are high quality, developmentally appropriate and affordable

QUALITY

- Family knowledge and capacity support children's healthy development and learning
- Families advocate for high quality comprehensive services and supports that lead to future success
- All health care providers, including mental health, deliver coordinated, family focused care
- Settings and practices promote strong relationships, social and emotional development, appropriate nutrition and physical activity
- Formal and informal care environments and education practices reach the highest levels of quality
- Adults understand and support children's learning and development, including social and emotional
- All settings provide effective transitions across and within programs, schools and systems

EQUITY

- Education, employment, housing, financial and legal supports contribute to family economic security
- Families, including those with high needs, experience timely and coordinated services and supports
- Families have the ability to plan the number and timing of their children
- All environments are safe, free of toxins, have affordable foods and offer physical activity
- Children with special health, behavioral or developmental needs receive individualized services and supports
- All children are ready for school and achieving by 3rd grade regardless of ability, race, place, income, language and culture
- Children, including those with high needs, receive timely, comprehensive and affordable academic services and transition supports

Investing in Early Childhood Education is an Essential Priority



83% of Coloradans surveyed in 2016 support expanding Colorado's ability to provide more young children with the opportunity to participate in voluntary, early learning classes throughout the state.



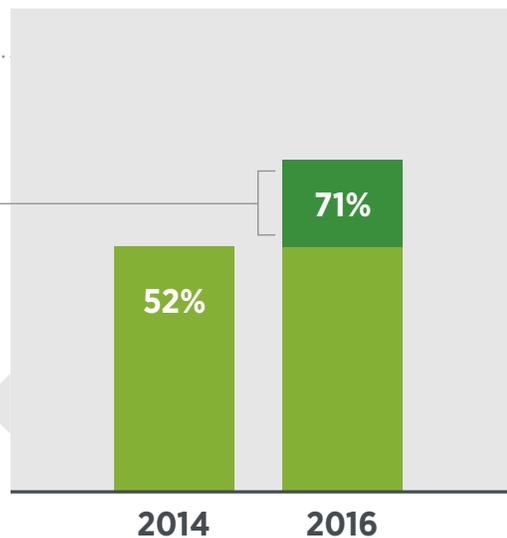
80% of Coloradans believe that making sure our children get a strong start in life through quality early childhood education is **EXTREMELY** or **VERY IMPORTANT**.



After learning about early childhood professional wages, 79% of Colorado voters believe early childhood educators are paid too little for the work they are performing.



Between 2014 and 2016, support rose 19% among Colorado voters who believe we should be doing more for young children's education.



Highlights from the ECLC Committees

PROGRAM QUALITY AND ALIGNMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

- The ECLC believes that the coordination and alignment of early childhood programs is critical to increasing access, quality and equity to services and supports for pregnant mothers and their children birth through age eight. As such, the **Program Quality and Alignment Subcommittee** identifies opportunities for, and barriers to, the alignment of standards, rules, policies and procedures across early childhood systems throughout Colorado. This emphasis on alignment continues to guide the Commission's work to ensure efficient and effective service delivery across the three domains of the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* - Learning & Development, Health & Well-Being, and Family Support & Education.

In 2015, the ECLC led the process to update the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* originally created in 2008. The *Framework* has been embraced by local and statewide service providers across the state as early childhood professionals use the *Framework* to guide planning, mobilize partnerships and align efforts in their communities. In 2016, the ECLC appointed a Working Group to develop a web-based, interactive tool centered around the strategies, domains and outcomes outlined in the *Framework*. This innovative tool will allow early childhood service providers to share their work across systems and provide a holistic view of how Colorado is working together to ensure all children are healthy, valued and thriving. More information can be found at www.earlychildhoodframework.org.

The Program Quality and Alignment Subcommittee oversees several Working Groups:

- **Young Child Wellness Council** led a public/private partnership – the first of its kind – to allow four additional communities in Colorado to participate in Project LAUNCH. This work focuses on ensuring all children entering school have the social, emotional, cognitive and physical skills they need to succeed.
- **Colorado Shines Pathways for Public Schools Working Group** works to remove duplication across early learning center quality ratings and provides opportunities for public schools to fully participate in Colorado Shines, Colorado's quality rating system.
- **Early Childhood Professional Development Advisory Committee** is leading the update to Colorado's Early Learning Professional Development System Plan. Building on the successes of the Professional Development Information System (PDIS), an online learning management system for providers, future work will focus on retention, recruitment and compensation for early childhood professionals. The commission strongly believes that a high quality, supported, early childhood work force will lead to better outcomes for children.
- **Framework Working Group** is leading the development of a web-based, interactive tool that will allow organizations to share programs and best practices and align their work under the domains and outcomes of the *Framework*.

Future Priorities

In 2017, the Program Quality and Alignment Subcommittee commits to:

- Supporting all six communities in Colorado participating in Project LAUNCH to ensure all children entering school have the social, emotional, cognitive and physical skills to succeed;
- Developing a web-based, interactive *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* tool to allow for alignment of early childhood services and supports across Colorado; and
- Updating the Colorado Early Learning Professional Development System Plan originally created in 2010 to complement the *Framework* and providing guidance to the ECLC on policies supporting recruitment, retention and compensation of early childhood professionals.

EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNICATION COLLABORATIVE

Parents and caregivers are a young child’s first and most important teacher. Interactions between children and these adults lay the foundation for a host of developmental outcomes including cognitive, social-emotional and physical health. Ensuring parents and caregivers are aware of their important roles and have the tools they need to support a child’s development is critical for Colorado’s future.

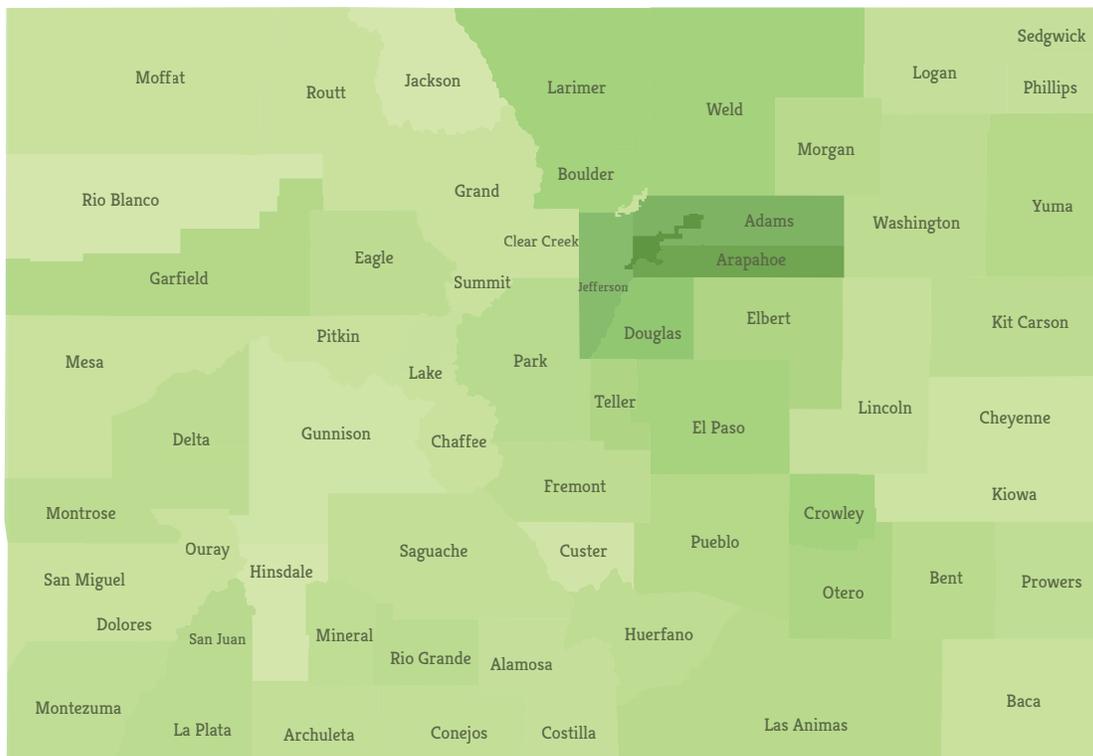
In 2015, the ECLC established the **Early Childhood Communication Collaborative** to identify and coordinate existing and emerging parent and caregiver awareness and engagement efforts in Colorado.

The goals of the Early Childhood Communication Collaborative were to:

- Raise awareness of the important role parents and caregivers have on child development.
- Highlight the number and variety of parent and caregiver engagement efforts.
- Connect parents and caregivers to a range of existing resources and tools.
- Enhance parent and caregiver understanding and appreciation of their critical roles in child development.

The effort included a statewide survey of communication efforts aimed at reaching parents and caregivers with information or resources regarding early childhood and focus groups of parents and caregivers in communities

Despite the vast array of communications efforts that reach every county in the state, parents and caregivers indicate they do not have the resources and supports they need at the times they need them.



Of the 380 organizations surveyed in Colorado, only one percent indicate they are targeting families that are English Language Learners (two efforts) or specifically Spanish speaking families (three efforts).

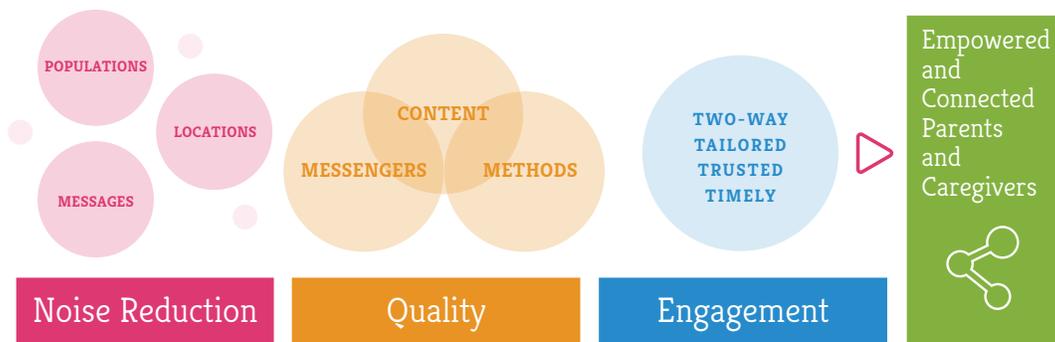
across Colorado. This work found that despite the vast array of communications efforts that reach every county in the state, parents and caregivers indicate they do not have the resources and supports they need at the times they need them.

Eleven recommendations were offered in the report and are organized within three major areas for improvement:

- Reduce communication “noise” resulting from inconsistencies or duplicate efforts that are unevenly targeted to families and caregivers in regions with different communication needs.
- Increase the quality of communication, including the use of effective content, enhanced communication training for trusted messengers that connect with parents and caregivers, and a heightened focus on effective tactics.

- Provide greater emphasis on the two-way, responsive engagement of parents and caregivers that will generate more positive outcomes for children’s cognitive and social development.

The ECLC strongly believes that in order to move this work forward and make an impact on parent and caregiver awareness and engagement efforts, the Commission must continue to engage in a public/private partnership that includes businesses, state and local government, foundations, direct service providers and most importantly, the parents and caregivers at the center of this work. We are committed to working together to implement the recommendations developed in this report and garner commitment from leaders across early childhood systems to ensure children and families benefit from this collaborative communication effort in Colorado.



Future Priorities

In 2017, the Early Childhood Leadership Commission will:

- Promote the recommendations for effective communication with parents and caregivers to stakeholders throughout Colorado;
- Convene leaders at all levels to provide guidance and input on the effort;
- Create a mechanism to promote the continued sharing of tools, resources and strategies to improve the coordination of communication efforts within Colorado; and
- Encourage all who connect with new parents to incorporate parent and caregiver engagement strategies and messages into their programs and outreach.

DATA SUBCOMMITTEE

The ECLC strongly believes in the consistent 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** encourages appropriately collected data analyzed in aggregate with proper confidentiality safeguards. When made available, data informs strategic planning and evaluation by early childhood partners working in a variety of capacities and settings.

Since 2013, the ECLC has supported the Office of Early Childhood, CDHS in building the infrastructure and data systems necessary to support the development and sustainability of early childhood programs, services and supports for families.

Following Colorado's enormous successes rolling out both the Professional Development Information System (PDIS) and Colorado Shines – the state's Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), the ECLC will continue to support efforts to evaluate how these systems promote quality programs and ultimately lead to better outcomes for the children in care.

The Data Subcommittee recently engaged in an environmental scan to understand the array of private and public early childhood data collection and reporting tools throughout the state. The group will continue to discuss the opportunities for efficiencies in data collection and use, as well as make recommendations for ongoing alignment and collaboration among state agencies.

Child Trends, the national vendor awarded a contract by the Office of Early Childhood (OEC), is scheduled to complete its evaluation of Colorado Shines, the state's Quality Rating Improvement System, in 2017. The ECLC looks forward to reviewing the results of this study and providing recommendations to the OEC concerning ongoing sustainability.

Finally, the ECLC has been working with CDE and the Colorado State Board of Education to address challenges and promote the full implementation of the kindergarten readiness assessment across Colorado.



Future Priorities

In 2017, the Data Committee plans to address the following:

- Promote consistent use of relevant, reliable and secure data when making decisions across all levels of early childhood practice;
- Advocate for the importance of kindergarten readiness assessments as a way to support children's school success;
- Continue to evaluate, in coordination with the Framework Working Group, what data are available to measure progress toward the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* outcomes; and
- Develop a Data Vision Statement for the ECLC and all of its subcommittees to incorporate effective use of data as an essential component in all early childhood conversations and decisions.

▶ US Secretary of Education Recognizes Colorado Early Childhood Successes

In August 2016, U.S. Secretary of Education John King visited Colorado to meet with local and state early childhood professionals and to acknowledge the remarkable implementation of systems and programs under the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant.

“We heard about the incredible collaboration across agencies,” Secretary King said on his first visit to a state to celebrate successes of Race to the Top. He noted the strong collaboration among center-based providers, family providers and school districts as well as partnerships between the public and private sectors in Colorado.



Secretary King interacts with children during his visit to Colorado.

“I’m thrilled to be here and celebrate the good work being done in Colorado,” he said, “Colorado is clearly using their funding well.”

Of particular interest to Secretary King was the partnership between the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) in the development of the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). Launched in February 2015, this system provides quality ratings for all of Colorado’s early learning programs, connects families with services and helps programs improve their level of quality.

Secretary King also highlighted the creation of the Professional Development Information System (PDIS), an online learning system that allows early childhood educators the opportunity to improve their early childhood knowledge and track their professional development. At the time of his visit, 19,664 early learning professionals were enrolled in PDIS with more than 81,465 courses completed.

Many members of the Early Childhood Leadership Commission participated in the visit to celebrate the cross-system collaboration in Colorado that will ultimately improve the quality of early learning programs, leading to better outcomes for children.

The ECLC Recognizes and Encourages State Department Efforts to Support Young Children and Their Families

- Research demonstrates that well-trained and well-educated professionals are key indicators of quality early learning programming. The Professional Development Information System (PDIS) at the **Colorado Department of Education (CDE)** is the workforce registry that provides an online learning system and career development supports for Colorado's early childhood professionals.



By partnering with Colorado Shines, the Early Childhood Councils, Institutions of Higher Education and other state and national professional development partners, the PDIS is providing new supports to educators. To date, over 28,329 professionals have registered and completed 120,347 online courses aligned with research-based early childhood competencies. Over 8,636 professionals have completed Colorado's new Early Childhood Credential which strengthens the workforce by recognizing formal education, ongoing professional development, experience and competence. Colorado continues its commitment to helping young children thrive by investing in the Early Childhood workforce.

- In 2015, one of the "Wildly Important Goals" of the **Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS)** was to increase the number of children, under five years old, who utilize Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) and are enrolled in a child care facility rated as Levels 3-5 in Colorado Shines. The

Department met and exceeded its goal of 39.0%, reaching 45.0% in December, 2016. This year, CDHS is focusing on ensuring high quality facilities rated Levels 3-5 who utilize CCCAP are available to communities throughout the state, particularly serving rural and frontier counties. Their goal is to ensure over a third of ALL Colorado communities have access to subsidized care in a high quality environment.



CDHS recently received a \$950,000 innovation grant to use a two-generation approach to create a bridge out of poverty for families enrolled in federally funded home visiting programs in the San Luis Valley. The program is designed to increase parent's education and earning capacity while concurrently supporting their children's development through parenting support and high quality child care.

- **The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE)** launched a public awareness campaign (<http://www.postpartum.net/colorado/>) in October 2016 to improve the awareness and knowledge of pregnancy-related depression and anxiety among pregnant and postpartum women and their informal support networks, with the goal of increasing the number of women who seek treatment. The campaign website garnered 5,171 unique page views within the first month of the campaign. The Department promotes breastfeeding as a strategy to prevent early childhood obesity. Over

the last year, the Colorado Baby-Friendly Hospital Collaborative successfully helped six hospitals achieve Baby-Friendly designation, bringing the state to nine certified hospitals representing over 20% of live births in Colorado. Once the 14 additional hospitals in the collaborative receive Baby-Friendly designation, over 60% of all live births will occur at a designated facility.

Together with Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC) and Health Links, the Colorado Essentials for Childhood project developed a family-friendly workplace toolkit (www.bit.ly/fftoolkitco) and family-friendly workplace assessment (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/familyfriendlywork>) to better understand and strengthen family-friendly employment practices.

- The **Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF)** administers health insurance programs for low income Coloradans that qualify such as Health First

Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid Program) and the Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+). As of October 31, 2016, Health First Colorado covered 535,570 children, which make up approximately 42% of the caseload. Approximately 43% of all births in Colorado are to moms on Health First Colorado. The majority of Health First Colorado members are enrolled in the Accountable Care Collaborative program which promotes improved health for members by delivering care in an increasingly seamless way while making smarter use of every dollar spent. In addition, prenatal care rates for members in the Accountable Care Collaborative have increased 23.6% over the past five years.

As of October 31, 2016, the CHP+ served 60,738 children and 648 pregnant women. The Department continues to focus on improving health and encouraging prevention; last year the percentage of children in CHP+ seeing a dentist increased.



Benefits of a Comprehensive Early Childhood Approach

Children are impacted by the world around them from the moment they are born; therefore it is vital that early childhood professionals focus on supporting and aligning services across all realms in a child's life. With the child and family at the center of this work, the Commission has a unique role to support, guide and advocate for practices and policies across all levels, or “spheres of influence.”

Like no other time in history, state agencies supporting early childhood have aligned policies and practice to work across silos for the betterment of children and families in Colorado. Two projects that exhibit this remarkable coordination include:

- CDE is leading substantial stakeholder engagement efforts to ensure stakeholder feedback as Colorado develops the implementation plan for the **Every Student Succeeds Act**. The department has hosted early childhood work sessions and invited early learning professionals to be engaged throughout the process.
- The **Colorado Opportunity Project** brings together state agencies and local partners to help connect families to community services and supports using evidence-based and community-based promising practices so that everyone will have the opportunity to reach and maintain their full potential.



Looking Forward

While much progress has been made, there is still work to be done to ensure Colorado's early childhood systems support families in a seamless, comprehensive manner. The Commission will concentrate its efforts around three key focus areas in the coming years to advance this work: EXPANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD AWARENESS; ALIGNING EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS; AND ELEVATING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE.

We are grateful to all of the 100+ organizations we work with in Colorado for your dedication, your innovation, and your contributions to this important work.

2016 Early Childhood Leadership Commission

2015-16 Commissioners

Anne Anderson, Senior Program Officer of Family-Directed Giving –
Walton Family Foundation

Letty Bass, Executive Director – Chambers Family Fund

Charlotte Brantley, President/CEO – Clayton Early Learning

Charlotte Ciano, Superintendent of Schools – Mapleton Public Schools

Doug Clements, Executive Director – Marsico Institute for Early Learning and Literacy

Melissa Colman, Executive Director of the Teaching and Learning Unit –
Department of Education

Heather Craiglow, Head Start Collaboration Director - Department of Human Services

Thomas Davidson, Commissioner – Summit County

Lt. Governor Joseph A. Garcia, Executive Director – Department of Higher Education and
former ECLC co-chair

Richard Garcia, Executive Director – Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition

Anna Jo Haynes, CEO/President Emeritus – Mile High Early Learning Centers

Gerri Gomez Howard, Principal – Gomez Howard Group

Barbara Grogan, Retired Founder and CEO – Western Industrial Contractors

Elsa Holguín, Senior Program Officer – Rose Community Foundation

Julie Krow, Deputy Executive Director For Community Partnerships –
Department of Human Services

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

Anna Robinson, Parent Representative

Susan Steele, Executive Director – Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation

Karen Trierweiler, Maternal Child Health and Deputy Director Prevention Services Division
– Department of Public Health and Environment

Amy Wineland, Director – Summit County Public Health

Mary Anne Snyder, Director – Office of Early Childhood, Department of Human Services,
Ex-Officio Member

New Commissioners in 2016

Lt. Governor Donna Lynne, Interim Executive Director – Department of Higher Education

Jeff Kuhr, Executive Director – Mesa County Health Department

Jeanne McQueeney, Commissioner – Eagle County

Lydia Prado, Vice President of Child and Family Services – Mental Health Center of Denver

Cindy Schulz, Executive Director – Cydney and Tom Marsico Family Foundation

George Welsh, Superintendent – Cañon City Schools

The ECLC Extends our Sincere Appreciation to our Co-Chairs...

ECLC Co-Chairs

Lt. Governor Donna Lynne
Barbara Grogan
Anna Jo Haynes

Subcommittee and Working Group Co-Chairs

Letty Bass
Charlotte Brantley
Ann Bruce
Melissa Colman
Lt. Governor Joseph A. Garcia
Barbara Grogan
Pamela Harris

Anna Jo Haynes
Elsa Holguín
Rebecca Kantor
Nancie Linville
Tom Massey
Phuonglan Nguyen
Susan Steele

...And to those who work to ensure all children in Colorado are healthy, valued and thriving.



Colorado's Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators, Version 6.29.16

Early Childhood Leadership Commission. 2016. *Early Childhood Communication Efforts in Colorado*. <http://www.earlychildhoodcolorado.org/early-childhood-communication-collaborative/>.

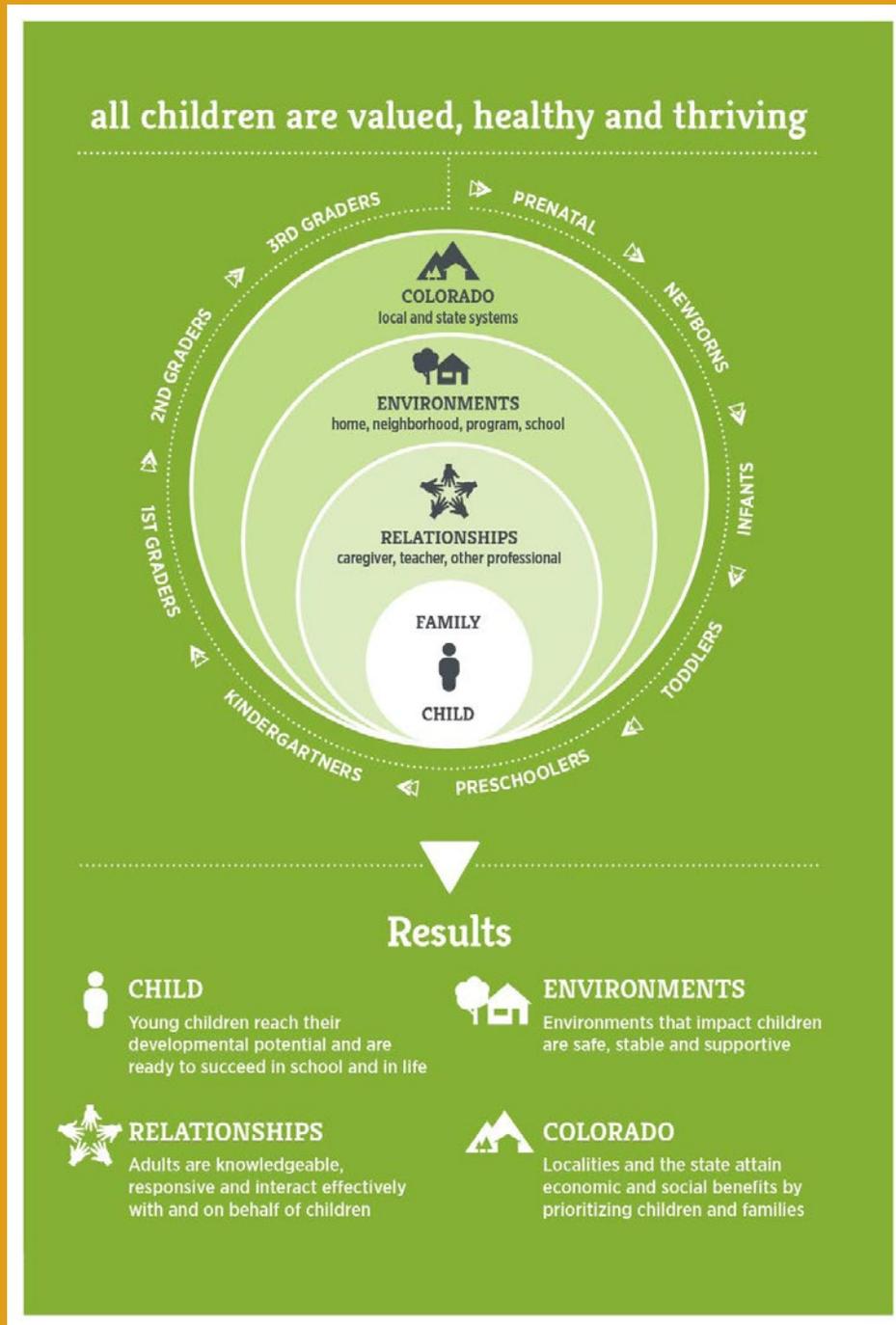
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Early Childhood Colorado Framework



ECLC

Early Childhood Leadership Commission

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