

Integrated Policy Plan for Early Childhood Services and Cost Estimates in Colorado

The *Cradle to Kindergarten* team will be engaging with a range of stakeholders in Colorado to develop a strategic set of priorities aimed at advancing the well-being of Colorado's children and families. These priorities will span key Birth-to-5 services and interventions, and offer recommendations on how to enhance what currently exists and what additional interventions would further improve conditions for young children's educational development and success. The range of interventions includes, but are not limited to: child care, preschool education, home visiting, as well as the workforce considerations related to expanding and improving those services.

The key project components include:

1. Develop a proposal, estimate the cost, and define the timeframe for establishing high-quality Universal Preschool.
2. Provide estimates to respond to the needs assessment and strategic plan developed by the Office of Early Childhood as part of the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) funding and year 2 application.
3. Develop a proposal, estimate the cost, and define the timeframe for a Child Care Assistance expansion/guarantee to low- and moderate income working families with children birth-to-five.
4. Analysis of Integrated Birth-to-Five Policy: Define and provide cost estimates for a series of policy options for an integrated plan that takes into account young children ages 0-5 including child care subsidy, state funded pre-kindergarten and other birth-to-three program services.
5. Contribute policy ideas and funding needs for further expansion in home visitation and potentially additional birth-to-three program services, such as parent education programs and resource referral services.
6. Support Colorado policy leadership and strategically and regularly engage with advocates/providers, philanthropy, policymakers, and early childhood stakeholders to build support towards developing shared consensus on the level and stages of investment needed to build a comprehensive birth-to-five policy framework.

Primary Deliverable –

Integrated Birth-to-Five Plan document and cost estimates by March 31, 2020.

- In addition to interim deliverables, including related to the Preschool Development Grant needs assessment/ strategic plan and outlining options for preschool expansion and improvement for deliberation across stakeholders, we will develop and share an *Integrated Birth-to-Five Plan*. This plan will identify and cost out a series of potential near-term policy options for child care and preschool services with specific cost estimates that can be shared with policy leaders and stakeholders to inform the 2020 legislative and budget process, the PDG and/or a statewide ballot measure that includes pre-kindergarten expansion.

[Cradle to Kindergarten: A New Plan to Combat Inequality](#)

Ajay Chaudry, Taryn Morrissey, Christina Weiland & Hirokazu Yoshikawa

Inequality begins early. Most of the disparities in children's development and achievement levels are present well before children first set foot in kindergarten.¹ Income disparities in cognitive, health, and behavioral measures have been identified as early as 9 months, and these disparities have widened over time.² There is now strong evidence from neuroscience and other fields showing the importance of early childhood for lifelong educational and economic outcomes, and that access to high-quality early childhood services can improve children's outcomes and reduce these disparities.³

At the same time, *the proportion of children living in homes in which all parents work has grown dramatically.* Parents need paid time off from work to care for newborns, but just 16% of private sector workers have access to paid family leave, with even such limited access highly skewed by employee's incomes.⁴ Once parents return to work, they require non-parental care and education to support their children's growth and development. In 2017, 12.5 million children under age five (61%) regularly attended non-parental care each week,⁵ triple the number of young children in any type of care in 1965.⁶ However, high-quality early care and education is difficult to find, particularly for infants and toddlers. And when found, it is expensive for families at nearly all income levels, especially those with low- or moderate incomes. Families with income below 200% of the federal poverty level (approximately \$50,000 for a family of four) spend an average of 22% of their family income on child care.⁷

Cradle to Kindergarten argues for a restructuring of early care and education in the United States to better support children's learning and behavioral development from birth to school entry, recognizing families' work, economic, and caregiving realities. Specifically, we propose four interconnected policies to support children and parents from birth to school entry:

- **A federal paid parental leave system**, building upon the existing Social Security infrastructure, would guarantee families with working parents up to 16 weeks of partially paid, job-protected leave at the birth or adoption of a child. The proposed wage replacement levels (67-80% of income for the first \$75,000 in individual earnings) would have progressive "bend points". These benefits would offer support to low-wage workers using leave and encourage middle- and higher-income working parents to participate, but are capped to target benefits efficiently. This paid leave benefit would augment the existing 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave available through the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).
- **A reformed early care and education subsidy system**, Assuring Care and Education for Young Children (ACE) subsidies would guarantee progressive, income-based financial assistance for high-quality, licensed early learning opportunities to young children in low- and moderate-income working families. In addition, we propose **expanding the existing Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC)**, increasing the cap (to \$6,000 for one and \$9,000 for more than one dependent under age five) and making it refundable, to support a wide range of care options such as relative or informal care. When fully implemented, these programs would replace the current Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Dependent Care Assistance Accounts (DCAPs) programs. Together, the ACE subsidies and expanded CDCTC promotes children's development and family economic security,

while preserving families' choice of child care. The federal government would bare 80% of new subsidy costs and all of the tax credit.

- Full-day **universal preschool** available to 3 and 4 year old children will support school readiness. States would receive federal support (50% match, phasing down to 25%), but states would be the primary agents in funding, developing, and implementing universal early education, as with K-12. By age 3, most children are ready and benefit from a group learning experience and the majority of parents prefer high-quality, affordable center-based preschool. States and localities could choose to provide early education in public school and community-based settings, but all settings would adhere consistent quality standards. A well-qualified workforce would be supported with professional development and classroom coaching to provide developmentally appropriate preschool instruction focused on fundamental or broad-based skills such as vocabulary, shown to promote long-lasting, beneficial effects of preschool.⁸
- A **re-imagined Head Start** program would provide comprehensive services to children and families in very disadvantaged circumstances. As a major anti-poverty program, Head Start has an infrastructure across the country in areas of concentrated disadvantage and a history of providing services to children from early in life, but reaches only a fraction of those eligible, and often enrolls children at ages 3 or 4, arguably too late to combat some of the negative effects of poverty and early adverse experiences. With the availability of universal preschool, Head Start would shift toward serving more infants and toddlers, providing the youngest children in areas of concentrated poverty and those facing significant adversity with early learning, health services, home visiting, and other family supports, and serve as hubs to promote quality in other early childhood services in the community. Existing federal funding sources for home visiting would be integrated into this new Head Start program.

Our proposal would jointly promote children's development and families' economic security during a period vital both for children's development and family economic stability. While children from families of all income levels benefit from expanding high-quality early care and education, those from lower-income families can benefit more – representing a key opportunity to advance universal supports all children need and benefit from, while disproportionately supporting children from lower income families and help to reduce disparities in skills development and school readiness at kindergarten entry.

Together, these policies would help to level the playing field, helping the most vulnerable and reducing school readiness and subsequent disparities, but also would help more parents to support their families with increased and more stable employment, and to provide relief to the millions of middle-income families struggling to make ends meet.

¹ Reardon 2011; Reardon and Portilla 2016

² Halle et al. 2009; Fernald et al. 2013; Reardon 2011

³ Cunha and Heckman 2007; Duncan et al. 2007; Duncan and Magnuson 2011

⁴ <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2018/ownership/private/table32a.pdf>

⁵ 2016/17 National Child Health Survey.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau 1982.

⁷ Laughlin 2013.

⁸ Yoshikawa et al., 2016.

Cradle to Kindergarten Team and Brief Biographies

Ajay Chaudry is a Senior Fellow and Visiting Scholar at NYU's Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service and the Institute for Human Development and Social Change. He conducts policy research and analysis on child poverty, child well-being and development, the social safety net, and the early childhood care and education. He is the author of *Putting Children First: How low-wage working mothers manage child care*, and a co-author of *Cradle to Kindergarten*. Ajay served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Services Policy at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2012-15) in the administration of President Barack Obama. He was a Senior Fellow & Director of the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population at the Urban Institute (2007-12) and Deputy Commissioner for Early Childhood Development at the NYC Administration for Children Services (2004-06).

Christina Weiland is an associate professor at the University of Michigan. Her research focuses on the effects of early childhood interventions and public policies on children's development, especially on children from low-income families. She is particularly interested in the active ingredients that drive children's gains in successful, at-scale public preschool programs. Since 2007, she has served as one of the Boston Public Schools Department of Early Childhood's key research partners, and has conducted several studies of Boston's prekindergarten program. Her work also includes studies of Head Start and of a professional development program for teachers in Santiago Chile. She is a co-author of *Cradle to Kindergarten: A New Plan to Combat Inequality*. Weiland holds a doctorate in Quantitative Policy Analysis in Education the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a B.A. from Dartmouth College.

Taryn Morrissey is an Associate Professor of Public Policy in the School of Public Affairs at American University, and a co-author of *Cradle to Kindergarten*. Her work focuses on examining and improving public policies for vulnerable children, including early care and education, nutrition assistance, and public health. From 2013 to 2015, she was Senior Advisor in Human Services Policy in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) at the U.S. DHHS, working primarily on President Obama's Early Learning Initiative, including Early Head Start and child care. From 2008 to 2010, Dr. Morrissey served as Health Policy Advisor for the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, first for Chairman Edward Kennedy and then Chairman Tom Harkin, where she worked on the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and other public health issues. She began her career in policy as a Society for Research in Child Development Congressional Fellow. She received her Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from Cornell University, and her B.S. from Tufts University.

Sara Schnitzer has 8 years of experience working as a math educator in schools serving families from low-income and urban areas. Sara received her Master of Public Policy (MPP) degree from the Harvard Kennedy School, with a specific focus on domestic education policy. She has used this training to work at the intersection of research and practice, collecting and analyzing data for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association. Most recently, Sara has been working in the field of early childhood, translating academic research on early math development to a practitioner audience and coordinating dissemination efforts for the DREME project grant.