

**Colorado Revised Statutes**  
**Title 26.5 Early Childhood Programs and Services**

**Early Childhood Leadership Commission**  
**[effective date: July 1, 2022]**

**§ 26.5-1-301. Legislative declaration**

(1) The general assembly hereby finds that:

(a) Public investments for pregnant women and young children from birth to eight years of age and their families fall behind investments for older Colorado children and lag behind national trends;

(b) For the state's early childhood system to operate effectively, the efforts of the public and private agencies that compose the system must be efficiently coordinated, aligned to state and federal standards, and made accountable across state systems; and

(c) While there are several planning efforts related to early childhood services and collaborative bodies within state and local governments, there is no single venue to allow high-level decision-making among policy makers, to collectively study recommendations, to facilitate cross-agency collaboration among state agencies, and to make joint policy and funding recommendations.

(2) The general assembly further finds that:

(a) A commission to assist in coordinating services and supports for pregnant women and young children from birth to eight years of age and their families will improve the delivery of those services and improve the educational, health, emotional and mental health, child welfare, and employment outcomes for these children and their families; and

(b) A commission to assist in coordinating the delivery of services and supports for pregnant women and young children and their families will also significantly improve Colorado's workforce and economic development by:

(I) Helping to ensure a healthy, well-educated workforce far into the future;

(II) Supporting those persons who currently provide early childhood services and supports and creating additional employment opportunities;

(III) Supporting parents of young children who need dependable, high-quality child care and supportive services in order to be fully engaged and productive in their jobs; and

(IV) Supporting the market in early childhood services and products as a vibrant element of the state's economy.

(3) The general assembly finds, therefore, that it is essential to create a high-level, interagency, public-private leadership commission to identify opportunities for, and address barriers to, the coordination of federal and state early childhood policies and procedures in order to promote access to programs and services that affect the health and well-being of Colorado's children.

**§ 26.5-1-302. Early childhood leadership commission – created – mission – funding.**

(1) There is created in the department the early childhood leadership commission, referred to in this part 3 as the "commission". The commission is a type 2 entity, as defined in section 24-1-105, and exercises its powers and performs its duties and functions under the department of early childhood. The purpose of the commission is to ensure and advance a comprehensive service delivery system for pregnant women and children from birth to eight years of age using data to improve decision-making, alignment, and coordination among federally funded and state-funded services and programs for pregnant women and young children and their families. At a minimum, the comprehensive service delivery system for pregnant women and children and their families must include services in the areas of prenatal health, child health, child mental health, early care and education, and family support and parent education.

(2) The commission consists of up to twenty-one members as follows:

(a) The executive directors of each of the following agencies or their designees:

- (I) The state department of human services;
- (II) The department of public health and environment;
- (III) The department of health care policy and financing;
- (IV) The department of higher education; and
- (V) The department of early childhood;

(b) The commissioner of education or the commissioner's designee;

(c) The head start collaboration office director for Colorado; and

(d) No more than fourteen persons appointed by the governor, which persons collectively have the following expertise, affiliations, or backgrounds:

- (I) Representatives of local government groups;
- (II) Representatives of school districts;
- (III) Providers of early childhood supports and services;
- (IV) Representatives of head start agencies;
- (V) Persons whose families receive early childhood supports or services;

(VI) Representatives of statewide foundations and nonprofit organizations involved in early childhood issues;

(VII) Members of the business community; and

(VIII) Representatives of the local public health community.

(3) (a) In appointing persons to the commission, the governor shall ensure that the appointed persons reflect the gender balance and ethnic diversity in the state and provide representation from throughout the state and that the commission includes representation of persons with disabilities and those who represent language diversity or support families and children who are dual language learners.

(b) The persons appointed to the commission pursuant to subsection (2)(d) of this section:

(I) Serve at the pleasure of the governor; and

(II) Serve without compensation but may receive reimbursement for reasonable expenses incurred in fulfilling their duties on the commission.

(c) If a vacancy occurs in the positions appointed pursuant to subsection (2)(d) of this section, the governor shall appoint a person to fill the vacancy.

(4) The governor shall appoint three persons from among the members of the commission, one representing business interests, one representing private, nonprofit entities, and one representing public entities, to serve as co-chairs of the commission. The commission shall meet regularly at the direction of the co-chairs and as often as necessary to fulfill its duties. The co-chairs may appoint working groups and subcommittees to assist the commission in its work or to address specific issues. The working groups and subcommittees, at the discretion of the co-chairs, may consist of any combination of members of the commission and other persons from the community.

(5) The commission, in collaboration with the executive director of the department, may appoint a director to assist the commission in fulfilling its duties pursuant to this part 3. The director may appoint such additional persons as may be necessary to assist the commission.

(6) The governor's office, the department, and the other agencies represented on the commission may, at the request of the commission and within existing appropriations, provide necessary support to the commission, including but not limited to administrative support, data, and other analytical information. In addition, the commission may seek, accept, and expend gifts, grants, or donations from public or private sources to the extent necessary to cover the expenses of the commission.

### **§ 26.5-1-303. Early childhood leadership commission – duties**

(1) In addition to any other duties specified in law, the commission has the following duties:

(a) 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 recommend to the appropriate committees of reference of the general assembly pursuant to part 2 of article 7 of title 2 and to government and nonprofit agencies and policy boards changes to enhance the alignment and provision of services and supports for pregnant women and young children and their families;

(b) To advise and make recommendations to the department and to other relevant early childhood entities concerning implementation of the early childhood Colorado framework;

(c) To assist public and private agencies in coordinating efforts on behalf of pregnant women and children and their families, including securing funding and additional investments for services, programs, and access to these services and programs for children and their families;

(d) To consider and recommend waivers from state regulations on behalf of early childhood councils as provided in section 26.5-2-207;

(e) To monitor the ongoing development, promotion, and implementation of:

(I) A quality, cohesive professional development and career advancement system;

(II) High-quality, comprehensive early learning standards; and

(III) The sharing and use of common data for planning and accountability among early childhood programs;

(f) To develop strategies and monitor efforts concerning:

(I) Increasing children's school readiness;

(II) Increasing participation in and access to child care and early education programs; and

(III) Promoting family and community engagement in children's early education and development.

(2) In fulfilling its duties, the commission shall collaborate, at a minimum, with:

(a) Members of the early childhood councils established pursuant to section 26.5-2-203; and

(b) Any other boards, commissions, and councils that address services and supports for pregnant women and young children.

**§ 26.5-1-304. Repeal of part.**

This part 3 is repealed, effective September 1, 2025. Before its repeal, the commission is subject to review in accordance with section 2-3-1203.