

Colorado Shines Brighter

Birth Through Five Strategic Plan 2020-2025

► AT-A-GLANCE

Revised December 2020

Goal 1: ALIGN AND COORDINATE SYSTEMS



OBJECTIVE 1.1: Make Data Informed Decisions



1.1.1 IT Solutions Roadmap. Implement the Office of Early Childhood's Information Technology Solutions Roadmap through a multi-phase plan that: supports collaboration and communication; standardizes design for accessibility and usability; and provides transparency and security for publicly available data.



1.1.2 Data-Driven Decision Making. Build a public-facing dashboard to support community-level information on the state of the local early childhood system and data-driven decisions.



1.1.3 Workforce Data System Modernization. Embark on data system modernization planning to address Office of Early Childhood business needs including stakeholder input, identification of needed improvements, quality assurance analyses, and the development of specific requirements for enhancement.



1.1.4 ECE Workforce LINC Project. Use connected data from the Colorado Department of Human Services, the Colorado Department of Higher Education, and the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment through the Linked Information Network of Colorado (LINC) to gain a comprehensive picture of the early care and education workforce. Develop a model to provide timely information on workforce demographics, turnover, wages, and educational pathways and disseminate to relevant local and state stakeholders.



1.1.5 Unique Child Identifier. Accelerate strategies to implement a unique child identifier (per Colorado House Bill 08-1364) to enable data-informed decisions concerning child outcomes. Coordinate across early childhood settings to explore existing or needed technologies and data-sharing agreements and unique child identifier implementation challenges.





1.1.6 Early Childhood Workforce Support. Improve efforts to recruit and retain a quality early childhood workforce, including home visitors, coaches, child health consultants, social workers, early intervention specialists, and early childhood mental health consultants. Ensure efforts are founded on diversity, equity and inclusivity and help to define professions within the sector.


OBJECTIVE 1.2: Ensure Coordinated Services





1.2.1 Coordinated Application & Local Navigation. Research existing national and local models of coordinated enrollment/application and service navigation and identify recommendations for local implementation.


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1.2.2 Medicaid Billing Manual. Develop and make updates to Medicaid billing process manuals for Child First, Healthy Steps, Early Intervention Colorado, Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, Nurse-Family Partnership, SafeCare Colorado and other state-funded home visiting programs. Provide training and technical assistance to support utilization.
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1.2.3 Health Promotion. Promote integrated preventative maternal and child physical, behavioral, oral, and environmental health services that are culturally responsive. Explore current models including Head Start and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment’s maternal and child health priorities such as increasing prosocial connection and social-emotional well-being.
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1.2.4 ECC and FRC Organizational Capacity. Review the 2019 Early Childhood Council (ECC) and Family Resource Center (FRC) organizational capacity study. Through stakeholder workgroups identify, prioritize, and implement recommendations to increase the capacity of ECCs and FRCs to enable the provision of early care and education and wraparound services to more underserved children and families. Expand the ECC triennial evaluation to include a cost analysis of the resources needed to fully fund the local system.
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1.2.5 Core Local Services. Determine the core early childhood and family and community support services to be made available in each county and create a plan to address local service gaps.
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1.2.6 State Organizational Alignment. Expand ongoing coordination and collaboration across state agencies including Colorado Department of Human Services, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Colorado Department of Education, Colorado Department of Higher Education, and Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing to improve child and family outcomes. Identify opportunities to address systems and administrative barriers.
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1.2.7 Local ECE Alignment. Support school district implementation of system coordination with community-based early care and education programs to improve children’s transitions to kindergarten and early elementary school grades.

OBJECTIVE 1.3: Promote and Share Knowledge

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1.3.1 Transitions Toolkit & Marketplace. Create a transition plan toolkit and online marketplace for early childhood professionals to communicate with families. Engage parents and caregivers to determine appropriate communication strategies for families.
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1.3.2 Transitions Roadmap. The Office of Early Childhood and the Preschool through Third Grade Office will develop a birth through five transitions roadmap and identify the needed local training and tools for implementation. The roadmap will encompass support for children, including those with special health or developmental needs, their families, and early care and education and K-3 professionals, as well as home visitors, early intervention, child health, and early childhood mental health professionals.

Goal 2: INNOVATE SERVICE DELIVERY





OBJECTIVE 2.1: Promote Mental Health and Well-Being Through Early Identification and Consultation




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2.1.1 Trauma-informed Care Training. Offer Roots™, Branches and Seedlings trauma-informed training to Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation professionals, community support providers, early care and education providers, and families.



-  **2.1.2 Home Visiting for ECE Home Providers.** Continue the Home Visiting for Child Care Homes Pilot Program through 2020. Evaluate outcomes to inform practice and future expansion.
-  **2.1.3 ECMHC Practices.** Complete an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation service delivery model evaluation to inform workforce standards, model-development and quality improvement.



OBJECTIVE 2.2: Promote Strong Relationships, Social and Emotional Development, Appropriate Nutrition and Physical Activity

-  **2.2.1 Quality Nutrition in ECE Settings.** Coordinate with the Colorado Department of Human Services, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and Colorado Department of Education to increase early care and education provider participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, National School Lunch Program, and the School Breakfast Program.
-  **2.2.2 ECMHC Warmline & Telehealth.** Create an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation warm-line and explore telehealth options for both families and early childhood education providers in rural communities.
-  **2.2.3 Physical Activity in ECE Settings.** Increase physical activity in early care and education settings.

Goal 3: MAXIMIZE FAMILY KNOWLEDGE, ENGAGEMENT, AND SUPPORT



OBJECTIVE 3.1: Connect and Empower Families Using Culturally Responsive Practices

-  **3.1.1 School Readiness Handbook.** Develop a school readiness handbook for families and informal child care providers to share best practices and resources to support children's learning and development. Implement a plan for dissemination and use including online and print distribution in multiple languages.
-  **3.1.2 Growing Readers Together.** Expand Growing Readers Together to increase quality in informal care environments and support early literacy for children not in formal (licensed) early care and education programs.
-  **3.1.3 Early Literacy Grants.** Expand the Comprehensive Early Literacy Grant Program to ensure the essential components of reading instruction are embedded into public preschool through third grade instruction including universal, targeted and intensive interventions. Increase focus on family knowledge and engagement.
-  **3.1.4 Information Hub.** Consolidate parent-facing websites into a single online resource that will connect parents to information about early care and education, developmental milestones, early screenings, and other programs and services to support young children and their families.
-  **3.1.5 No-Wrong-Door Campaign.** Support the continued implementation of the no-wrong-door strategy which ensures families can access information quickly, make timely connections, and receive support regardless of their initial entry point into the early childhood system.
-  **3.1.6 Early Learning & Development Guidelines.** Distribute the updated Colorado Early Learning & Development Guidelines print and online materials, including new videos on transitions and parents' experiences, to parents, caregivers, early care and education providers, and early childhood professionals.



- 3.1.7 Family Attitudes & Decision-Making.** Increase shared decision-making with families in the mixed-delivery system, incorporating family opinions, Colorado Shines ratings, and considerations of reputation, cost, and teacher qualifications on provider selection.

OBJECTIVE 3.2: Provide Opportunities For Education, Employment, Housing, Financial and Legal Support to Contribute to Family Economic Security



- 3.2.1 ECLC Strategic Plan Leadership.** The Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) will identify a leadership role for specific strategies and ensure voices from families and providers representing diverse races, ethnicities, languages spoken, and geographic regions are included.

OBJECTIVE 3.3. Provide Inclusive Opportunities For Family Engagement and Leadership



- 3.3.1 Parent & Stakeholder Engagement.** The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) will continue to engage with the CDHS Family Voice Council, Head Start Collaboration Office, Colorado Head Start Association, and state and local family and caregiver networks to support ongoing family engagement and leadership.



- 3.3.2 Local Family Engagement & Leadership.** Build capacity and identify points of collaboration with community-based organizations and Early Childhood Councils to engage family leaders, including consultation and engagement with local Family Resource Centers and Head Start programs, state-funded preschool, and school districts to ensure families are empowered to become community leaders.

Goal 4: INCREASE MEANINGFUL AND EQUITABLE ACCESS



OBJECTIVE 4.1: Build Community Capacity



- 4.1.1 Developmental Screenings.** Increase the availability of developmental screenings and referral processes in appropriate settings where children are served. Explore ways to ensure continuity of services once referrals are made and accessibility for all children and families regardless of systematic barriers.







- 4.1.2 Inclusion & Universal Design in ECE Settings.** Increase the ability of early care and education professionals and programs to care for and educate all children by providing coaching, training, and materials focused on universal design and inclusion.






- 4.1.3 CCCAP and QRIS Policy Research.** Study local Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) and Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) policies for their impact on early care and education providers and families, including how new reimbursement rate policies have impacted family participation and access to high-quality early care and education programs, and implement indicated changes.



- 4.1.4 Mixed-Delivery Access.** Explore opportunities to increase and ensure equitable access to a system of mixed-delivery early care and education programs with an emphasis on serving infants and toddlers.

-  **4.1.5 Policy Analysis Tool.** Develop a tool to analyze how programs and policies affect the availability and funding of infant and toddler child care and the equitable access for priority populations such as dual-language learners, families living in poverty, families living in rural areas, and families who have children with special needs. Explore processes to ensure relevant agencies and entities participate in a policy analysis review.
-  **4.1.6 Regulatory & Policy Cross-training.** Explore the potential for the Colorado Department of Human Services, Colorado Department of Education, Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade, Early Childhood Councils, school districts, local regulatory entities, and professional associations to cross-train on early care and education regulatory and policy changes to improve equitable access to services.
-  **4.1.7 Business Engagement.** Engage and equip local and state business leaders and business-support organizations with the resources and knowledge they need to support the availability of, and equitable access to, early care and education programs through public-private partnerships.
-  **4.1.8 Early Start Model Development.** Develop a model of direct service, care coordination, and parenting support to connect families of children up to age three who do not meet eligibility for IDEA Part C Early Intervention programs and services that can address children's developmental needs.




OBJECTIVE 4.2: Support Customer Affordability




-  **4.2.1 Contracted Slots.** Develop policies and processes to support county implementation of Colorado Child Care Assistance Program Contract for Slots to support an increase in local access to high-quality early care and education programs.
-  **4.2.2 Universal Preschool.** Implement a mixed-delivery high-quality universal preschool program for all Colorado four-year-olds that is coordinated with existing early care and education programs.
-  **4.2.3 Access Thresholds.** Analyze eligibility and family income thresholds across multiple early childhood and family support programs to reduce administrative burden and increase consistent and equitable access.

Goal 5: STRENGTHEN BUSINESS PRACTICES



OBJECTIVE 5.1: Advance Sustainable Business Practices






-  **5.1.1 Pre-Licensing & Start-Up.** Explore challenges to early care and education program pre-licensing and start-up activities, including license-exempt early care and education providers, such as friend, family and neighbor caregivers, and investigate how business consultants/navigators could support through technical assistance on launching and sustaining a financially sound, licensed early care and education program with livable wages.
-  **5.1.2 Business Practices.** Provide the “Strengthening Business Practices for Child Care Programs” training series to early care and education providers to strengthen foundational knowledge of sound fiscal management and business operations. Develop a business resource toolkit to accompany the training series.
-  **5.1.3 Financing Strategies.** Study and implement financing strategies to incentivize weekend and off-hours services and early care and education for children with special health or developmental needs.

-  **5.1.4 New & Expanding ECE Micro-grants.** Provide early care and education micro-grants to support start-up costs, targeting providers in child care deserts and those serving infants, toddlers, or children with special health or developmental needs.
-  **5.1.5 Integrated Financing.** Develop tools to inform and support the integration of early care and education funding streams including Colorado Child Care Assistance Program, Colorado Preschool Program, Head Start, and local subsidies, and provide guidance on blending and braiding funds.
-  **5.1.6 Local Regulations.** Study the effect of local regulations on the availability of infant and toddler child care and family child care homes. Identify regulations that might cause barriers to increase the availability of infant and toddler care.

Goal 6: IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION ENVIRONMENTS AND THE WORKFORCE









OBJECTIVE 6.1: Implement Quality Standards

-  **6.1.1 Colorado Shines Updates.** Continue to retool the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for the Environmental Rating Scale 3 and implement other tools. Support more ratings, including alternative pathways, through an increase in rating assessors. Incorporate stakeholder workgroup findings into the QRIS Framework, including an increased emphasis on cultural and linguistic responsiveness. Complete a validation study in 2022.
-  **6.1.2 Consultative Roles Alignment.** Review key consultative roles, including Expanding Quality in Infant Toddler Care Specialist Network, Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants, Colorado Shines QRIS Coaches, and Child Care Health Consultants, to ensure coordination and collaboration between roles. Identify qualifications and ongoing professional development supports to ensure individuals are equipped to support quality practices within licensed early care and education programs.
-  **6.1.3 LENA Grow.** Build infrastructure through public-private partnerships to support and coordinate LENA Grow implementation across the state.
-  **6.1.4 FIND Coaching.** Build relationships and infrastructure to pilot Filming Interactions to Nurture Development (FIND) Coaching, and explore opportunities to expand FIND through public-private partnerships.
-  **6.1.5 Informed and Effective ECE for Children with Delays or Disabilities.** Explore the development of local communities of practice to help formal (licensed) early care and education providers adopt inclusive practices and connect to early childhood mental health services and other resources in their community.



OBJECTIVE 6.2: Develop And Retain The Workforce

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6.2.1 Professional Development Information System. Re-platform the Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System to improve user experience, enhance data collection, and enable transcreation of the site into Spanish. Add 24 eLearning course hours based on identified needs.
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6.2.2 CDA Credential. Provide Child Development Associate (CDA) scholarships to 250 early care and education professionals, targeting areas with known workforce shortages. Add CDA professional development specialists to support implementation.
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6.2.3 Coaching. Pilot a state early care and education coaching model including Colorado Shines Quality Rating Improvement System and Expanding Quality in Infant Toddler Care. Increase staff to meet the needs of known coaching deserts and provide additional meetings and formal supports for coaches. Update courses, transcreate coaching materials, and explore a telehealth approach to coaching.
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6.2.4 Reciprocity. Consider developing a framework to explore reciprocity in credentials and licensure across states (starting with Region VIII) and countries (starting with countries with the highest migration to Colorado), and provide supports for review of transcripts and other approval processes.
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6.2.5 ECE Competencies. Enhance the training alignment process to increase the number of trainings aligned with Colorado Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators.
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6.2.6 Compensation. Explore strategies to ensure worthy and livable compensation for early care and education professionals. Work to enhance compensation, including benefits, and create compensation parity across settings, sectors, and age of children served.

The Colorado Shines Brighter Strategic Plan includes goals, objectives and strategies.

The goals and objectives are aligned with the Early Childhood Colorado Framework. This alignment is indicated by the following Framework system icons:




State and Local Systems




Environment



Relationships

The strategic plan includes strategies that will be implemented under the state’s three-year Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) renewal grant. These strategies are indicated by the  symbol.

The strategic plan also includes strategies that were identified by the needs assessment and stakeholder outreach that are critical components of a robust early childhood system. These strategies are indicated by the  symbol. These strategies will not be addressed by the PDG B-5 renewal grant, and will need to be championed by state and local partners.

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