

Colorado Shines Brighter

Birth Through Five Strategic Plan 2020-2025

► AT-A-GLANCE

Revised January 2022

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. Develop a strategic plan to inform implementation of an early childhood integrated data system to support state- and community-level information on the 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 application, eligibility and enrollment and service navigation and identify recommendations for a Colorado model. Review early childhood program applications to improve accessibility and usability.



1.2.2 Medicaid Billing Guides. Develop and make updates to Medicaid billing process guides 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.



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.



1.2.4 ECC and FRC Organizational Capacity. Partner with Early Childhood Councils (ECCs), Family Resource Centers (FRCs) and leadership organizations to identify, prioritize and implement recommendations to strengthen local collaboration and increase the capacity of ECCs and FRCs to provide services to children and families. Develop and pilot shared data measures for ECCs. Formulate recommendations to improve the 2022 ECC triennial evaluation and include a cost analysis in the 2025 evaluation.



1.2.5 Core Local Services. Document the core early childhood, family and community support services in each county and implement a plan to address local service gaps.



1.2.6 State Organizational Alignment. Expand ongoing coordination and collaboration across state agencies including CDHS, CDPHE, Colorado Department of Education (CDE), Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE), Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) and Department of Early Childhood (DEC) to improve child and family outcomes. Identify and address systems and administrative barriers within and across the agencies.



1.2.7 Local ECE Alignment. Support early care and education service providers in the implementation of systemic coordination to improve families' and children's transitions to kindergarten.

OBJECTIVE 1.3: Promote and Share Knowledge



1.3.1 Transitions Toolkit. Create a transition plan toolkit for early childhood professionals to communicate with families. Engage parents and caregivers to determine appropriate communication strategies.



1.3.2 Transitions Roadmap. Develop and disseminate a kindergarten transitions roadmap and training and tools for implementation. The roadmap should 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



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. Disseminate the Home Visiting for Child Care Homes Pilot Program case study to share outcomes, inform practice and identify opportunities for expansion.



- 2.1.3 ECMHC Practices.** Develop a Colorado model of Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Consultation that responsively meets the needs of children, families and providers, while also being adopted by practitioners, implemented to fidelity and subject to evaluation. Align and coordinate the larger ECMH field to facilitate statewide implementation.

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



- 2.2.1 Quality Nutrition in ECE Settings.** The Colorado Department of Human Services, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and Colorado Department of Education will coordinate to reduce barriers and increase early care and education provider participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.



- 2.2.2 ECMHC Support Line & Teleconsultation.** Create a statewide Early Childhood Mental Health Support Line, strengthen teleconsultation practices and encourage use of teleconsultation to serve families and early childhood education providers in rural communities.



- 2.2.3 Physical Activity in ECE Settings.** Promote moderate to vigorous physical activity that is developmentally appropriate and carried out in a variety of modalities and 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.** Disseminate The PLAYbook to families and informal child care providers to inform best practices and resources to support children's learning and development. Translate The PLAYBook into 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 Approach.** Support the continued implementation of no-wrong-door strategies to ensure 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 Decision-Making.** Engage families in shared decision-making with early care and education service providers through a process that incorporates information on key considerations for selecting programs and providers.

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, OEC Family Voice Council, Head Start Collaboration Office, Colorado Head Start Association, Family Leadership Network and state and local family and caregiver networks to support ongoing family engagement and leadership. Develop and disseminate a statewide Family Engagement Framework.



- 3.3.2 Local Family Engagement & Leadership.** Build capacity and identify points of collaboration with early care and education service providers to empower and engage families in a variety of leadership and advocacy roles.

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. Develop strategies for CDPHE, CDHS, CDE, DEC, ECCs, school districts, local regulatory entities, the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT) and professional associations to cross-train on ECE 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 Implementation. Identify resources to implement 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 but have identified delays or risk factors to 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. Partner with early care and education providers to address pre-licensing and start-up challenges, and connect them to resources to support sustainability and financially sound business practices, including how to achieve livable wages.



5.1.2 Business Practices. Partner with OEDIT, Small Business Development Center Network and Early Childhood Councils to provide business training and individualized consultation to strengthen early care and education providers' foundational knowledge of sound fiscal management and business operations.




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 Microgrants.** 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 Child Care Business Guides.** Develop and disseminate business guides to early care and education providers to support connections to resources and the adoption of best practices including the blending and braiding of funding streams, budgeting, regulatory compliance and other operational functions of a small business.
-  **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.** Implement the new Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Framework and the Environmental Rating Scale 3. Complete a validation study of the Framework in 2023.
-  **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.** Continue to build infrastructure that empowers local implementation partners to expand access to LENA Grow 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.** Develop state-level infrastructure to pilot and sustain community implementation teams promoting the adoption of inclusive practices in early care and education programs.



OBJECTIVE 6.2: Develop and Retain The Workforce

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6.2.1 Professional Development Information System. Support user access to, and participation in, the updated Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System (PDIS). Add new eLearning course hours in English and Spanish based on identified needs.
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6.2.2 CDA Credential. Provide Child Development Associate (CDA) scholarships to 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. Utilize regional coaches to increase data collection and provide data-informed training and formal supports for coaches including reflective supervision. Update courses, transcreate coaching materials and utilize a telehealth approach to coaching.
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6.2.4 Reciprocity. Consider a framework to address 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’s Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Professionals.
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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.
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6.2.7 Recruitment and Retention. Update the Early Childhood Workforce 2020 plan to support the recruitment and retention of early care and education professionals who are from diverse backgrounds and speak the language and reflect the cultures of children in care.
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6.2.8 Pipeline Opportunities. Explore and expand access to early childhood apprenticeship and peer mentoring programs, including providing concurrent enrollment apprenticeship opportunities for high school students to gain work experience in early care and education settings.

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.