

**TRANSITION
ADVISORY
GROUP**

**Universal Preschool Program -
Stakeholder Feedback**

Stakeholder Feedback: Application

- There should be a single application that is streamlined and easy to use for families and providers.
- There should be a one-stop eligibility form. Parents can apply for the program, list hours/days, and then eligibility and program placement are determined
 - Families should be able to access to all child care subsidies in one application
 - Families should be able to understand all their options, and availability of those options.
- There should be navigators or local support in each community who can assist families in filling out the application and spread awareness within the community.
 - The application process should also be accessible in multiple languages, with multilingual community navigators on hand to support families if needed
- Denver Indian Family Resource Center recently surveyed 100 clients who have applied for SNAP, WIC or CCAP. Found CCAP had the hardest application and lowest success. This was due to confusion on eligibility, long approval process and lack of spots available. The easiest programs were Medicaid and SNAP, so the new application should mirror these applications where possible.
- A desire stop treating CPP enrollment and application as independent from the larger birth to five system

Stakeholder Feedback: Funding Flow

- The burden of blending and braiding falls on providers and families because of the way that funding is currently distributed.
- State or local level should handle the coordination of funding so that it does not fall on families or providers.
- An intermediary organization charged with facilitating the necessary collaboration across systems/levels should be created.
- Funding should follow the child. Many children move from program to program for a variety of reasons
- Funding should flow to a local intermediary which understands the local context can ensure that money is distributed equitable.
 - If school districts manage money and distribute it to community partners, it can create power imbalances and result in a system that is not truly “mixed delivery”.
- Funding for the child needs to be blended and braided with other funding streams to support full days where needed.
- Strive to match the NIEER per-child funding average of \$12,500 annually.

Stakeholder Feedback: Local Partnerships

- An intermediary organization charged with facilitating the necessary collaboration across systems/levels should be created.
 - There should be a local intermediary (i.e., Councils, school districts, counties, special districts, or others) that serves in a coordinating role under a contract with DEC.
- Communities need implementation support tailored to the individual community and need help with accountability and cooperation across relevant entities.
 - There needs to be room for local communities to establish local structures that work for their community. One size will not fit all.
- Local examples of success should be elevated and scaled.
- Local representation should be diverse and take into consideration the perspective of districts and community based providers.
- Ensure new system doesn't lose access to local funds that school districts access.

Stakeholder Feedback: Mixed Delivery

- Local communities should be required to develop a vision for mixed delivery (that meets state standards) and that can nimbly move funding to programs where actual enrollment exceeds anticipated enrollment.
- There should be a local partner who represents both the school district and community providers who can facilitate the distribution of slots in a community and considers families' choices.
 - Concerns were expressed that the current structure perpetuated power imbalances among providers in the community.
- There should be greater accountability under the new preschool program to ensure that mixed delivery and regulations are actually being carried out in each local community.

Mixed Delivery & Special Education

- Special education services should be provided in a mixed delivery setting to allow for family choice.
 - School districts are concerned about SPED services being offered in mixed delivery because they are liable for compliance under IDEA Part B
 - Community based sites feel that local school systems have monopolized preschool SPED and that they are unable to serve students.

Stakeholder Feedback: Eligibility and Prioritization of Funding

- Need to ensure that at risk children are receiving targeted support while balancing the growth needed for universality
 - Discuss targeted universalism because many families will require much more than 10 hours of care
 - UPK should be available to all children before kindergarten and those with more risk factors for school failure should have extended services for full, day, extended hours and full year services.
- Providing additional hours for working parents who need it is imperative to the economic sustainability in Colorado.
- Prioritization of additional funding should be determined by family need.
 - Differing opinions on whether to use the current CPP criteria. Some said it was outdated and not comprehensive and others said it was effective and should be maintained. Many agreed risk factors need to be reviewed and updated.
 - Others recommended that prioritization criteria should be determined at the local level
- Implement a Cost of Care Model and ensure the CCCAP rate and UPK rate reflect the true cost of running a classroom, including maintenance.

Stakeholder Feedback: Special Education

- There should be a family consultant/concierge/service coordinator providing bridge to resources outside of the school district, health insurance navigation, parent training/education, financial services, support groups, communities of practice
- More supports should be offered for the challenging transitions from Part C to Part B, from home-based to school-based services.
- Families should have more options for education for their children with special needs.

Goals for UPK from Special Education Subgroup:

We believe that meaningful parent input should be included throughout this process.

We strive to unite as an EC community.

The needs of children and families and the professionals who serve them are at the center of our discussions and recommendations.

We value a strengths-based, high expectations approach for children.

We value all perspectives and work to understand across lines of difference.

We support linkages for service delivery across settings.

We endorse inclusive/least restrictive classrooms as appropriate to support the individual student's needs.

We focus on children receiving individualized support and programs.

We understand that funding be taken into consideration and that additional funding for children with special needs is needed to support mixed delivery.

We support the administration of special education services in mixed delivery settings - with the standard of care approval by the Educational Unit (Administration) locally.

Stakeholder Feedback: Quality and Evaluation

- There was strong agreement that classrooms should be rated with a high quality system.
 - Some stated that that CO Shines, the existing QRIS, should be maintained because it is effective.
 - Others stated that Shines should be modified because it currently does not measure true quality.
- Whether it is CO Shines or another system, stakeholders expressed the QRIS should:
 - Rate providers more frequently
 - Be consistent across the state
 - Include the quality of teacher–child interactions
 - Not be burdensome for provider
 - Include metrics for social emotional learning, physical, and mental health
 - Use an environmental rating tool
- There should be continuous evaluation of the extent to which the state’s approach is advancing mixed delivery, parental choice, and access to quality.
- Require ongoing, in–classroom coaching and ensure professional development is individualized and focused on teacher–child interactions, quality of instruction, and student outcomes Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation
- Developmentally appropriate, observation–based assessments must be consistently utilized to determine each child's strengths, interests, and instructional approaches to support continued growth.
- Program quality should influence funding, as well as aspects like the ability of the program to charge fees over and above the state funding.

Stakeholder Feedback: Alignment with other Programs

- The new preschool program should be mindful of its impact on infant and toddler care.
- There needs to be a greater degree of collaboration of between local entities, particularly the school system and community based providers.
- Each community should have a local plan that all programs are aligned with.
- Quality measures and standards should be consistent across programs.
- Consider opportunities for mixed aged classroom (3s&4s)
- There should be a greater focus on whole child and whole family care, with health and mental health being considered in all decisions.
- No funding stream is capable of providing all that children need and that blending and braiding of funds is necessary and should include non education specific funds to support the whole-child, private-pay, public and private funding.

Stakeholder Feedback: Workforce

- Pathways and credentials
 - Pathways should allow more movement and make it easy for the workforce to earn degrees with cumulative PD and college coursework.
 - The program should include an escalator to quality, so that teachers/providers can gain the necessary trainings and supports to meet the high standards
 - There should be a set of key competencies for the workforce rather than credentials.
 - Provide incentives to enter the field and scholarships for required college level coursework.
- Professional development
 - PD should be able to be stacked to create credits for continuing education and to help teachers move up, rather than PD just for the sake of PD.
 - Required trainings should be available on-demand and are made either affordable or free through PDIS.
 - Implement a high quality professional development/certification track. Higher preschool workforce that meet the standards (not require them to reach these standards while also working full time).
 - Require at least 15 hours of teacher training per year, individualized PD plan, and regular, in-person coaching
- Compensation
 - Workforce should be well compensated both in wages and benefits.
 - Compensation (beyond a livable minimum wage) should be aligned with experience and incentivizing childcare and workforce positions in childcare deserts
 - Keeping funding streams flexible enough to allow employers to offer incentives, bonuses, supports and other perks -- in addition to competitive pay.
 - Require a regionally-based recommended compensation target (for short term, consider setting a \$15 or \$20/hour minimum) for all providers and identify additional resources to incentivize providers to meet those targets.