

System Asset and Gap Analysis

Colorado Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (CO-ECCS): Health Integration Prenatal to Three Project

Executive Summary

The Colorado Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems: Health Integration Prenatal to Three (CO-ECCS) Project was funded through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in 2021 to advance the infrastructure, capacity, equity and sustainability of Colorado's maternal and early childhood systems of care. Colorado faces persistent challenges, such as disparate early developmental, health and wellbeing outcomes and access to prenatal-to-three (P-3) services. CO-ECCS provides the opportunity to advance comprehensive P-3 services by disrupting persistent patterns of inequity rooted in historic and current systemic racism and discrimination to support the vision that "All children are valued, healthy and thriving and have equal access to services, supports and resources." The five-year CO-ECCS Project has three goals to increase the engagement of new stakeholders, align early childhood and maternal child health systems and advance health equity.

Leveraging existing state-level needs assessments, the CO-ECCS Project Team and Advisory Group conducted a system asset and gap analysis amongst the main domains of the federal HRSA ECCS Program focus: Infrastructure Development, Advancing a Common Vision, Health System Transformation, Policy and Financing, and Equity. By amassing current knowledge, reflecting on findings to identify gaps, and translate them into opportunities, the CO-ECCS Project Team and Advisory Group created a shared understanding of the current and envisioned early childhood ecosystem.

Integration between the early childhood systems (ECS) and the health sector has been strongest in ensuring coordinated services for prenatal-3 (P-3) population in Colorado. Current work to improve access for families through coordinated intake and referral systems and best practices for health and ECS partners to promote early developmental health and family well-being in local communities can be supported by CO-ECCS. The availability of early childhood data to inform system transformation is improving and was used to inform this System Asset and Gap Analysis. Improvements, especially the ability to disaggregate data, should be made in Colorado to address the specific needs in the P-3 population, especially Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals.

The CO-ECCS Project will address the key opportunities below through planning and implementation:

Infrastructure Development: Increase state-level infrastructure and capacity to develop and/or strengthen statewide maternal and early childhood systems of care.

Capacity of Early Childhood System Leaders

- Advocate for health and well-being initiatives for early childhood.
- Leverage Title V Maternal Child Health Program (MCH) connections to strengthen relationships and representation of health system partners in CO-ECCS Project implementation.

Existing Structure to Advance Goals

- Complete a landscape analysis of local data systems to gain additional insight on ways to support statewide data sharing and integration efforts.
- Develop data use cases to improve data sharing to and from Early Intervention (EI) Colorado, which would also improve the referral process.

Workforce Development

- Ensure the P-3 early childhood workforce that make up the wraparound supports for children and families are included in the update of *Colorado's Early Childhood Workforce 2020 Plan*.
- Include workforce considerations in the P-3 Early Childhood Equity Action Plan to build a workforce that is representative of Colorado's families.

Advancing a Common Vision: Increase coordination and alignment between maternal and child health (MCH) and other statewide systems that impact young children and families to advance a common vision for early developmental health and family well-being.

Sharing Strategic Plan

- Ensure coordination and alignment of CO-ECCS work with MCH and Colorado's Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5), and expand the *Colorado Shines Brighter Birth through Five Strategic Plan* to include child and maternal health priorities and strategies.
- Update Raise Colorado Coalition's policy agenda through additional listening sessions and engagements with families and implement recommended policies.

Advisory Council Structure

- Build health systems partnership and address missing representation through existing connections to CO-ECCS Advisory Group members and stakeholders and other groups the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) convenes.

Strengthening Partnerships

- Implement the PARTNER tool to conduct a social network analysis that provides a baseline understanding of key partners' relationships, especially those between early childhood and healthcare.

Health System Transformation: Increase the capacity of health systems to deliver and effectively connect families to a continuum of services that promote early developmental health and family well-being, beginning prenatally.

Models for Health Integration

- Identify and assess other existing data-sharing pilot projects and models.
- Create a resource for groups and communities considering instituting data-sharing models to improve coordinated intake and referral for P-3.

Statewide Early Childhood System and Health Sector Linkages

- Engage with healthcare providers and community partners to understand where and why there are still knowledge gaps regarding developmental screenings, referrals, and resources.
- Conduct a comprehensive landscape scan of local efforts throughout the state to identify successes of early childhood and healthcare partnering to create coordinated intake and referral systems.

Coordinated Intake and Referral Systems

- Support the development of trainings for communities interested in implementing e-referral pilot programs for coordinated intake and referral to P-3 services and programs.
- Evaluate the impact of e-referrals in improving equity as EI Colorado’s e-referral pilot expands to other healthcare centers.

Policy and Financing: Identify and implement policy and financing strategies that support the funding and sustainability of multigenerational, preventive services and systems for the P–3 population.

Policy

- Review the recommended P-3 policies from partners’ policy agendas and prioritize policies to champion as part of CO-ECCS work.

Financing

- Complete a financial mapping of P-3 services and programs to identify existing best practices and future opportunities, including opportunities to blend and braid federal or private funding with state funds.
- Learn how local organizations, like Early Childhood Councils (ECCs), have funded efforts to improve referral processes for early childhood and integrate healthcare providers and systems into these efforts.

Medicaid Partnerships

- Partner with the Colorado Department of Healthcare Policy and Financing (HCPF) to leverage their Medicaid expertise to support the P-3 Early Childhood Equity Action Plan and support EI Colorado’s coordinated intake and referral systems.

Equity: Increase state-level capacity to advance equitable and improved access to services for underserved P–3 populations.

Family Leadership

- Develop relationships with established family voice groups such as the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) Family Voice Council (FVC), the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) Community Advisory Board (CAB), and the Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families (CPTF) Family and Caregiver Space (FCS) to collaborate and gather diverse feedback on CO-ECCS activities.

State-Community Coordination

- Use established state-community coordinating processes through Family Resource Centers (FRCs), ECCs and local MCH sites to improve wraparound P-3 service provision.

Equitable Systems

- Partner with the ECLC Data Subcommittee to advance data equity and understand the specific needs of Colorado’s BIPOC P-3 population.
- Align and coordinate with CDPHE and CDPHE Equity Plan activities related to CO-ECCS goals in the P-3 Early Childhood Equity Action Plan.
- Use the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* to expand understanding of equity in Colorado’s comprehensive early childhood systems.