



Early Childhood in Colorado

A Shared Commitment to Children and Families

2021

Continuing to Monitor and Measure
Progress in Colorado's
Early Childhood
Areas of Opportunity



CONTINUING TO MONITOR AND MEASURE PROGRESS IN COLORADO'S EARLY CHILDHOOD AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

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INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was developed as a technical resource on the indicators selected to measure progress on the Colorado Early Childhood Leadership Commission's (ECLC) Areas of Opportunity, 2018. It includes the methods, selected indicators, data gaps, and data trends for each of the Areas of Opportunity. The ECLC wishes to express gratitude to members of the Data Subcommittee and other partners who supported this process.

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BACKGROUND

COLORADO'S EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERSHIP COMMISSION

The ECLC is Colorado's statutorily recognized state advisory council for early childhood. The role of the ECLC is to be a statewide leader, subject matter expert and champion of best and promising practices throughout the state. The ECLC is comprised of 20 individuals representing parents, business, five state departments, school districts, local municipalities, foundations, nonprofits, and other important early childhood stakeholders. The ECLC serves as the trusted and proactive early childhood champion for high-quality, outcome-focused learning and development, health and well-being, and family support and education for pregnant women and children birth through age eight and their families. The ECLC:

- Develops strategies to monitor and align efforts that increase the access, quality, and equity of services through the Early Childhood Colorado Framework;
- Assists in the development of public-private partnerships to coordinate and enhance services and supports and;
- Champions the use of relevant data and makes recommendations to the Governor's Office, the General Assembly and state agencies.

ECLC DATA SUBCOMMITTEE

The purpose of the ECLC Data Subcommittee is to promote the sharing and use of common data for planning and accountability by state programs and agencies that support young children. The Subcommittee works to ensure the interagency data system infrastructure allows for statewide needs assessments concerning the quality and availability of early childhood services. The Subcommittee also monitors progress across early childhood systems, supports continued collection of data, and evaluates progress on the ECLC's strategic priorities to leverage and connect existing data efforts and encourage effective data use in decision-making.

ECLC AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

While Colorado has experienced progress in the early childhood sector, there are still challenges that must be addressed at the local and state level to ensure everyone has access to the services and supports that optimize the well-being of their child and family. Further, with a new Colorado administration, the ECLC sought to unite Colorado's early childhood community around priorities that could be readily communicated and represent the areas most ready for implementation and continued investment. The ECLC encourages efforts to support and enhance the following three Areas of Opportunity (Areas):

► IMPROVE ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION FOR ALL FAMILIES

High quality early care and education environments provide a stable place for children to grow and thrive, allowing them to build the strong foundation of cognitive and social-emotional skills they need to be prepared to succeed in school and develop life-long positive outcomes. Unfortunately, the availability of high quality services is severely lacking and poses a significant expense to families. Additional investments are needed to deliver services through a combination of programs, providers and settings, including licensed family and center-based child care programs, public schools, informal family/friend/neighbor care and other community-based organizations. This mixed delivery system provides early childhood care and education options that ensure wherever children are cared for, they are in high quality, supportive environments. Particular attention should be paid to infant and toddler care, which is significantly more difficult for families to access and afford.

► ELEVATE THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE TO ENSURE COORDINATED CAREER PATHWAYS AND APPROPRIATE COMPENSATION

Early childhood educators provide the critical foundation for children in out-of-home care to develop the literacy and social-emotional skills they need to succeed in school. The early care and education sector is a cornerstone of local and state economic health, enabling parents to work and provide for their families while employing a large workforce of educators. However, as professional development opportunities and expectations for these educators have increased, compensation lags behind most other industries, and communities throughout Colorado are facing significant challenges recruiting and retaining a stable early childhood workforce. Ensuring that Colorado has a qualified, consistent and diverse early childhood workforce is critical to supporting the healthy development of children and maintaining a thriving economy.

► SUPPORT IMPROVED FAMILY HEALTH AND ECONOMIC SECURITY THROUGH A TWO-GENERATION APPROACH

Parents are their children's first and most important teachers. Ensuring that parents have the health and economic supports they need to provide a nurturing home environment and meet their children's basic needs is essential for a child's healthy development. Children who are cared for in stable environments with access to health services, nutritious foods, safe water, stable housing and high quality learning environments are better able to develop the skills they need to succeed in school and thrive in their communities. Unfortunately, many children are living in environments without these basic supports, which research suggests can lead to poor mental and physical health, less success at school and work, and lower socioeconomic status in adulthood. Colorado should continue to support family health and economic security through state and local programs and ensure that interventions provide opportunities for both children and caregivers.

IDENTIFYING THE INDICATORS

PURPOSE

After identifying the three Areas of Opportunity, the ECLC committed to identifying a process to explicitly track progress over the next four years. This task was entrusted to the ECLC Data Subcommittee, which simultaneously identified data gaps, specifically related to each of the Areas.

METHODS

The ECLC Data Subcommittee spent three months with the support of a consultant during 2018-2019 identifying indicators that would best measure progress on each of the Areas in four years. The process began by developing an initial list of available indicators for each of the Areas. This involved accessing an indicator inventory that had been previously developed by the Early Childhood Colorado Partnership in their Shared Data Agenda. The process continued through several key informant interviews with subject matter experts in early care and education, early education workforce, health and well-being, and economic security. The resulting list of indicators were reviewed by the Data Subcommittee and assessed for relevance and robustness of information that could be gleaned from the indicator.

Following that process, the Data Subcommittee requested greater definition of the Areas from the ECLC in order to be more precise in the selection of indicators. The consultant worked with the ECLC and stakeholders to identify desired outcomes for each of the Areas, drawing many from the Early Childhood Colorado Framework, while others were derived from relevant current Colorado efforts.

ECLC OUTCOMES BY AREA OF OPPORTUNITY

<p><i>Improve access to high quality early care and education for all families.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A supported, funded mixed-delivery system exists to meet family needs. • Adults understand and support children's learning and development, including social and emotional. • Early care and education options meet the needs, expectations of families. • Families, including those with high needs, experience timely and coordinated services and supports. • Families have affordable child care options. • Family engagement and leadership opportunities exist within programs, schools, and communities. • Families advocate for high quality comprehensive services and supports that lead to future success.
<p><i>Elevate the early childhood workforce to ensure coordinated career pathways and appropriate compensation.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early care and learning providers have higher compensation across all early childhood settings. • Early childhood educators obtain higher levels of training and professional development, measured through formal education and the Professional Development Information System. • Education, coaching and ongoing training exist for caregivers, teachers and other professionals (aligned with Colorado's early childhood competencies). • Clear, consistent qualifications and career pathways exist for individuals in the early childhood profession. • Early care and education providers of color and of diverse cultures are actively recruited/encouraged/incentivized to become early care and education professionals.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnover rates among early learning and education providers across all formal care settings are reduced.
Support improved family health and economic security through a Two-Generation approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family engagement and leadership opportunities exist within programs, schools, and communities. • Family knowledge and capacity support children's healthy development and learning. • Families advocate for high quality comprehensive services and supports that lead to future success. • Education, employment, housing, financial and legal supports contribute to family economic security. • Families, including those with high needs, experience timely and coordinated services and supports. • Family-friendly policies and practices exist in the workplace. • Economic policies positively impacting families are enhanced or maintained (example: Earned Income Tax Credit). • Services and supports promote the well-being and resiliency of parents and caregivers and children. • Settings and practices promote strong relationships, social and emotional development, appropriate nutrition and physical activity.

Next, building upon the outcomes, a small group of Data Subcommittee members and additional subject matter experts worked together to develop themes in the outcomes. The themes were used to develop a comprehensive list of existing indicators. The indicators in the comprehensive lists were then critiqued by the full Data Subcommittee using Results Based Accountability criteria in order to identify three to five indicators per Area.

RESULTS BASED ACCOUNTABILITY CRITERIA

Proxy Power: Does the indicator say something of central importance to the result?

Communication Power: Does the indicator communicate to a broad range of audiences?

Data Power: Is quality data available on a timely, consistent, reliable basis?

While the Areas related to early care and education (ECE) and workforce were narrower in focus and more concrete, the third Area related to family health and economic security through a Two-Generation approach was more complex and required a different approach. For example, the initial, comprehensive lists of indicators for ECE and workforce included 8-10 indicators; while the comprehensive list for health and Two-Generation approach included approximately 25 indicators. In order to recognize and communicate the complexity of this Area without including too many indicators, the Data Subcommittee chose to use an existing, related index, which incorporates multiple factors into one measurement. The Data Subcommittee members committed to continuing to explore this area based on more discussion and guidance from the ECLC to identify future process or qualitative indicators.

UPDATES TO INDICATORS IN 2021: FAMILY HEALTH AND ECONOMIC SECURITY

In 2019, the Data Subcommittee determined that the Opportunity Index¹, produced through Child Trends and Opportunity Nation, incorporated indicators similar to those that were identified during their selection process. The use of an index provided a simpler means of communication while maintaining an authentic measure of the complexity. The Opportunity Index measures across “four dimensions of community well-being”: economy, education, health, and community. A complete list of indicators for the Opportunity Index can be found in Appendix A of this report. A comparison of Colorado and National scores for 2017 and 2019 can be found in Appendix B.

While the Opportunity Index served as a good starting point for measuring the Area of Opportunity on family health and economic security, the Subcommittee continued to develop a set of key indicators that would allow more meaningful analysis of Colorado’s efforts. The final selected indicators for the 2021 report are listed, below.

¹ <https://opportunityindex.org/>

SELECTED INDICATORS BY AREA OF OPPORTUNITY, INCLUDING SOURCE

<p>Improve access to high quality early care and education for all families.</p>	<p>Accessibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of eligible children age three to five who were able to participate in Head Start or Colorado Preschool Program by region (Colorado Department of Education & Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Early Childhood) Number of licensed child care slots compared to Colorado children up to 12 months, 1-2 year olds, 3-5 year olds by region (include child care deserts map) (Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Early Childhood) <p>Affordability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of children in low income homes able to participate in Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Early Childhood) <p>Meeting Needs of Families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of families that quit a job, did not take a job, or changed a job because of problems with child care (Colorado Department of Labor and Employment) <p>Quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of licensed providers attaining a level 3-5 in Colorado Shines (Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Early Childhood)
<p>Elevate the early childhood workforce to ensure coordinated career pathways and appropriate compensation.</p>	<p>Compensation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child care worker wage increase when adjusted for inflation (Bureau of Labor Statistics) Percent of ECE professionals who received public benefits for low income families (Colorado Workforce Survey) <p>Workforce Diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECE worker diversity across roles compared to children in care (American Community Survey, Colorado Workforce Survey)
<p>Support improved family health and economic security through a Two-Generation approach.</p>	<p>Affordability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of Colorado families that quit a job, did not take a job, or changed a job because of problems with child care. (Colorado Child Health Survey; Last report: 2012-2016) <p>Well-Being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of pregnant people reporting stressors during pregnancy (PRAMS) % of infants born weighing less than 5.5 pounds. (Birth Certificate) % of respondents reporting poor mental health. (Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey) <p>Accessibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child food insecurity rate; % food insecure children in households with income <185% FPL (Feeding America)

DATA REPORT 2021

CONTEXT FOR THE 2021 DATA REPORT

During a typical year, the context surrounding data is critical and complex, influencing its collection, management, interpretation, and more. The context surrounding this data report is even more complicated than usual due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and federal and state policy changes. Many Colorado data sources are slow to demonstrate these impacts due to timing of analysis and release or data collection methods and timing (e.g., school year). We will likely see more of the impacts in the 2022 report as more 2020 and 2021 data become available. However, it is critical to bear these contextual factors in mind when developing meaning from the 2021 data.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted families in enormous ways. The data for the indicators in this report are still being collected, therefore the true impact on families will likely be seen more clearly in subsequent reports. However, throughout this report, an effort has still been made to call out the impact of economic security and stressors on family resources and family well-being, and, ultimately, on child development. While most families have struggled during the pandemic, it is well documented that hardships often exacerbate the challenges of families who already have been struggling the most. The pandemic has created employment instability for many families either due to limited access to jobs or child care. It has also socially isolated families from both formal and informal supports. This will exacerbate concerns with family housing, nutrition, child care, healthcare, and other important factors that are protective of family well-being and child development. Further, these impacts will be disproportionately experienced by children of color in Colorado communities due to long-standing, institutional factors.² Families of children with special needs have also been significantly impacted.

For additional data and understanding on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Colorado families and children, please consult these resources:

- [Impact of COVID-19 on Colorado Families, COVID-19 EC Research Partnership \(January 2021\)](#)³
- [Parent Voices: COVID-19 & Pre-K Through Elementary Education, Early Milestones \(December 2020\)](#)⁴
- [A Pandemic within a Pandemic: How Coronavirus and Systemic Racism Are Harming Infants and Toddlers of Color, CLASP \(September 2020\)](#)⁵

² The Center for Law and Social Policy. (2020). A Pandemic within a Pandemic: How Coronavirus and Systemic Racism Are Harming Infants and Toddlers of Color. <https://www.clasp.org/publications/report/brief/pandemic-within-pandemic-how-coronavirus-and-systemic-racism-are-harming>

³ <https://earlymilestones.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/COVID-EC-Research-Family-Brief.pdf>

⁴ <https://earlymilestones.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Parent-Voices--December-2020.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.clasp.org/publications/report/brief/pandemic-within-pandemic-how-coronavirus-and-systemic-racism-are-harming>

POLICY CHANGE

Federal and state policy changes have impacted families with young children in many ways since the first report was developed in 2018-2019. Here are a few that have likely impacted this report's data. Once again, the impact of these policies may be observed to a greater degree in subsequent reports due to lag time in data collection and analysis.

- *Universal Full-Day Kindergarten (Colorado)* – At the end of 2019, Colorado implemented access to full day kindergarten for all. State funds that were previously used by school districts to support full-day kindergarten could then be used to support pre-kindergarten programming.
- *Expansion of Public Charge Rules (Federal)* – Previously, federal public charge rules were defined to exclude those who were primarily dependent on government programs for their subsistence from having their green card application approved. In 2019, this rule's definition was expanded and essential programs such as Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Federal Housing programs were included. Due to court battles, full implementation of the rule was delayed until early 2020. However, many providers reported its effects on families in need of housing, nutrition, or healthcare assistance, but who were reluctant to apply for fear of this rule impacting their immigration status.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY: IMPROVE ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION FOR ALL FAMILIES

High quality ECE environments provide a stable place for children to grow and thrive, allowing them to build the strong foundation of cognitive and social-emotional skills they need to be prepared to succeed in school and develop life-long positive outcomes. Unfortunately, the availability of high-quality services is severely lacking and poses a significant expense to families, creating barriers to stable employment. Additional investments are needed to deliver ECE services through a combination of programs, providers and settings, including licensed family and center-based child care programs, public schools, informal family/friend/neighbor care and other community-based organizations. This combination, frequently referred to as a mixed delivery system, provides early childhood care and education options that ensure wherever children are cared for, they are in high quality, supportive environments. Particular attention should be paid to infant and toddler care availability, which is significantly more difficult for families to access and afford.

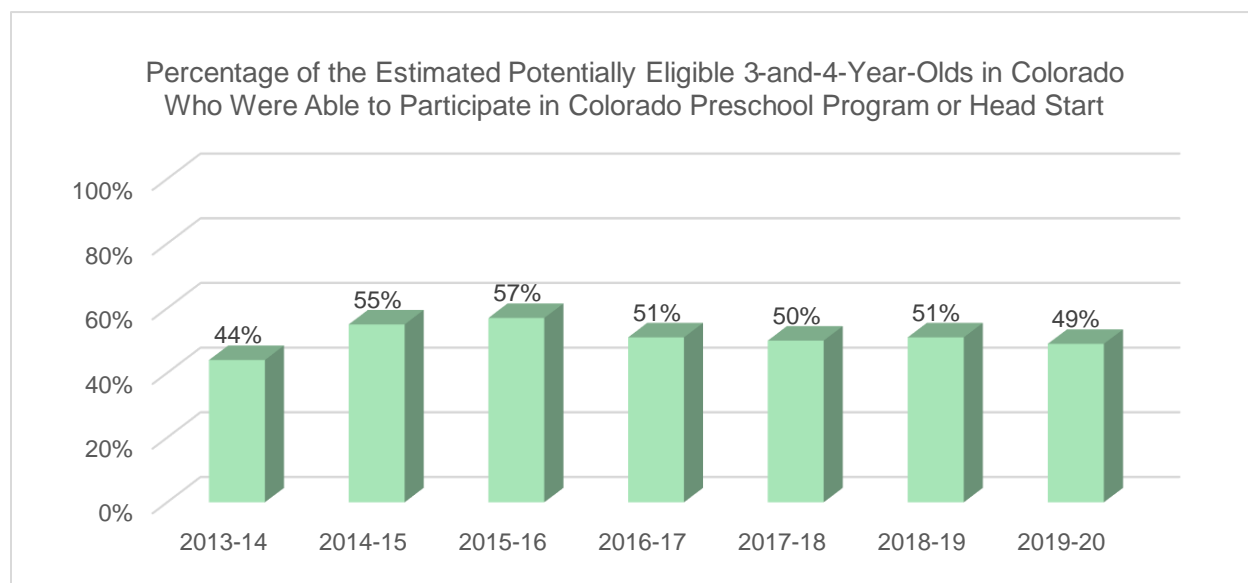
ACCESSIBILITY

One way to assess accessibility to quality ECE environments is to measure the degree to which eligible children can attend known, high-quality programs such as Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) and Head Start. As shown in figure 1, for the 2019-2020 school year, approximately 49% of eligible three-and-four-

year-old children statewide were able to access these programs.⁶ This is consistent with the trend since 2016, though is about 8% lower than the rate for the 2015-2016 school year. The map in figure 2 with county-level access to CPP and Head Start shows significant differences across counties, though estimates in rural counties are difficult to determine with certainty.⁷ The model used for this analysis assumes that all CPP positions are used maximally to serve the greatest possible number of preschoolers (1 slot per child). However, actual preschool enrollment through CPP is lower due to the flexibility to serve some children in full-day preschool using two positions. If only preschool headcounts were considered, the overall indicator percentages would be lower. This model also assumes 20% of Head Start-funded children are dually enrolled in CPP, using data from a recent pilot project that matched enrollment records from select Head Start grantees with CPP enrollment records.

With the implementation of funding for full-day kindergarten, positions that had been previously utilized to support kindergarten were reverted to preschool for the 2019-2020 school year. In spite of this, there is not an overall increase in access for this population. This may be due to a change in calculation of access to Head Start since this is cumulative across both programs.

Figure 1: Access to Colorado Preschool Program and Head Start for Eligible 3-and-4-Year-Olds in Colorado, 2013-2020

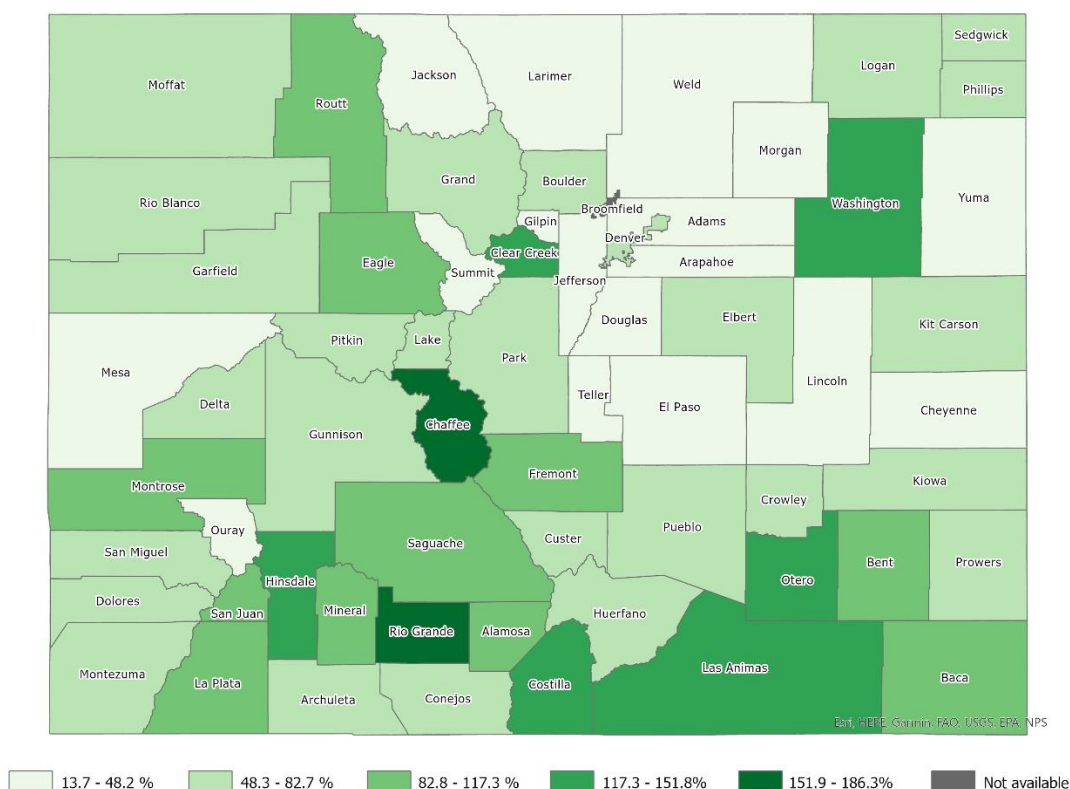


⁶ In this model, Head Start enrollment reflects funded enrollment (i.e., the number of Head Start positions available at any given point in time) versus the total cumulative enrollment (i.e., the cumulative total number of children served in a year). This is a deviation from the last iteration of the report, due to the impact of COVID-19 on Head Start data reporting requirements. The reporting requirement that would result in total cumulative enrollment was paused in 2019-20 due to COVID-19. Also, funded enrollment was utilized in estimating Head Start counts versus total cumulative enrollment previously utilized. This was due to the suspension of a Head Start reporting requirement. The number of children enrolled in funded positions was captured in October 2020. This number can fluctuate daily, while number of funded positions remains constant based on grant funding. Also, due to COVID-19, not all districts submitted complete reports on the operations of their CPP programs. This affects one of the calculations for determining the number of children who qualified for CPP through the free and reduced lunch eligibility. To accommodate this change, a three-year average was utilized for those districts.

⁷ Estimates of children who may qualify for CPP and Head Start become less stable in rural communities with fewer children. >100% capacity is because CDE and CDHS estimate access and do not have access to verifiable data on the true population of children who may qualify for CPP and Head Start based on all combined eligibility factors.

Figure 2: Access to CPP and Head Start Programs by County, 2019 (Colorado Department of Education, Colorado Department of Human Services)⁸

Percentage of the Estimated Potentially Eligible Three- and Four-Year-Olds in Colorado Who were Able to Participate in CPP and Head Start, 2019



Access to ECE programs can also be assessed through local licensed capacity compared to the local child population. While there are significant limitations to this approach since it does not consider demand for services, mapping of child care ‘deserts’ can provide a visual assessment of where access may be limited. Figures 3, 4, and 5 show child care deserts for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, respectively.⁹ While we cannot determine the demand for care through these estimates, there are likely broad deficits in infant and toddler care. This is consistent with observations from child care desert maps in the 2019 report and with national trends¹⁰. Child care modeling developed for the Colorado Preschool

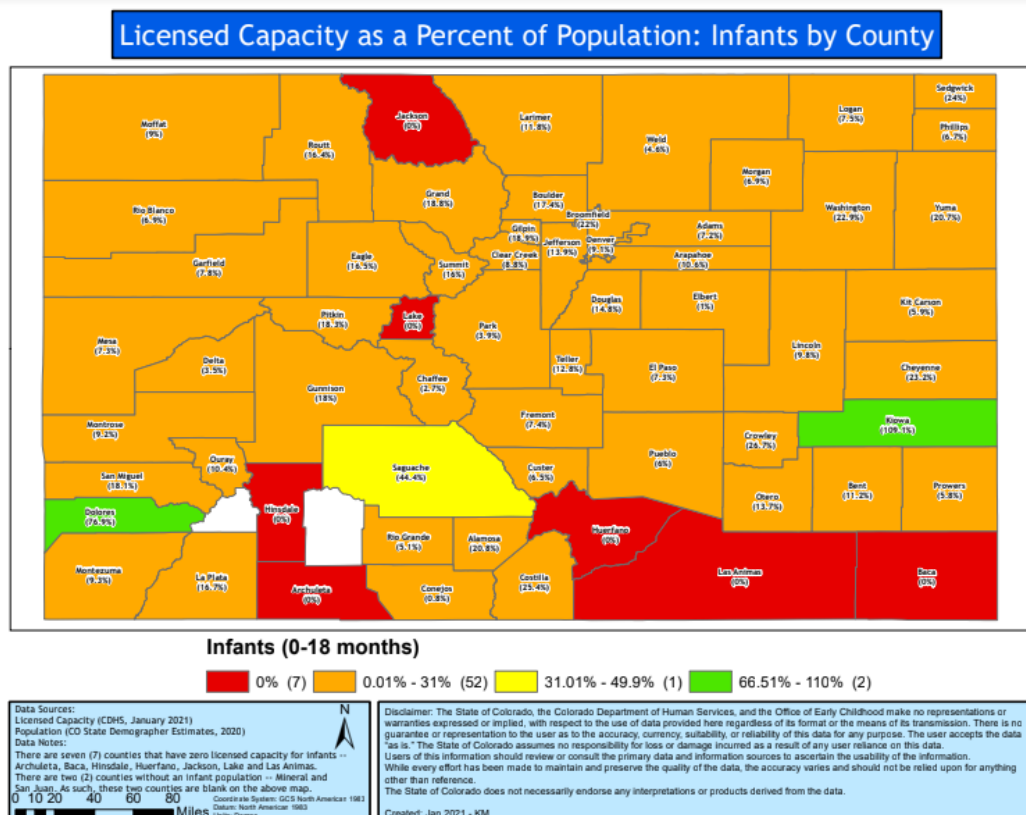
⁸ Results cannot be determined for Broomfield County through this methodology. CPP slot allocations are determined at the school district level. School districts are coded to the county in which most of the population reside, although district boundaries can overlap counties. Due to this coding methodology, no districts are mapped to Broomfield County.

⁹ Due to a necessary change in age groupings for child care desert maps for the 2021 report, comparison maps from the 2019 report have not been provided.

¹⁰ Center for American Progress. (2020). Costly and unavailable: America lacks sufficient child care supply for infants and toddlers. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2020/08/04/488642/costly-unavailable-america-lacks-sufficient-child-care-supply-infants-toddlers/>

Development Grant needs assessment, which included parent preference in the absence of barriers as a factor, identified a deficit of 39,000 licensed child care slots in Colorado for children birth through age five.¹¹ The majority of this deficit can be found in infant and toddler populations, with a 10,000-slot deficit for infants under 1 year and an 18,000-slot deficit for toddlers ages 1-2 years. Current policy and initiatives for universal pre-kindergarten access are more expansive and are likely to address gaps and deficits for 3-5 year olds, while less emphasis has been placed on families with the youngest children who will continue to struggle.

Figure 3: Infant Child Care Deserts by County, January 2021 (Colorado Department of Human Services)



¹¹ Colorado Shines Brighter: Opportunities for Colorado's Early Childhood System, Colorado Office of Early Childhood & Colorado Health Institute, December 2019

Figure 4: Toddler Child Care Deserts by County, January 2021 (Colorado Department of Human Services)

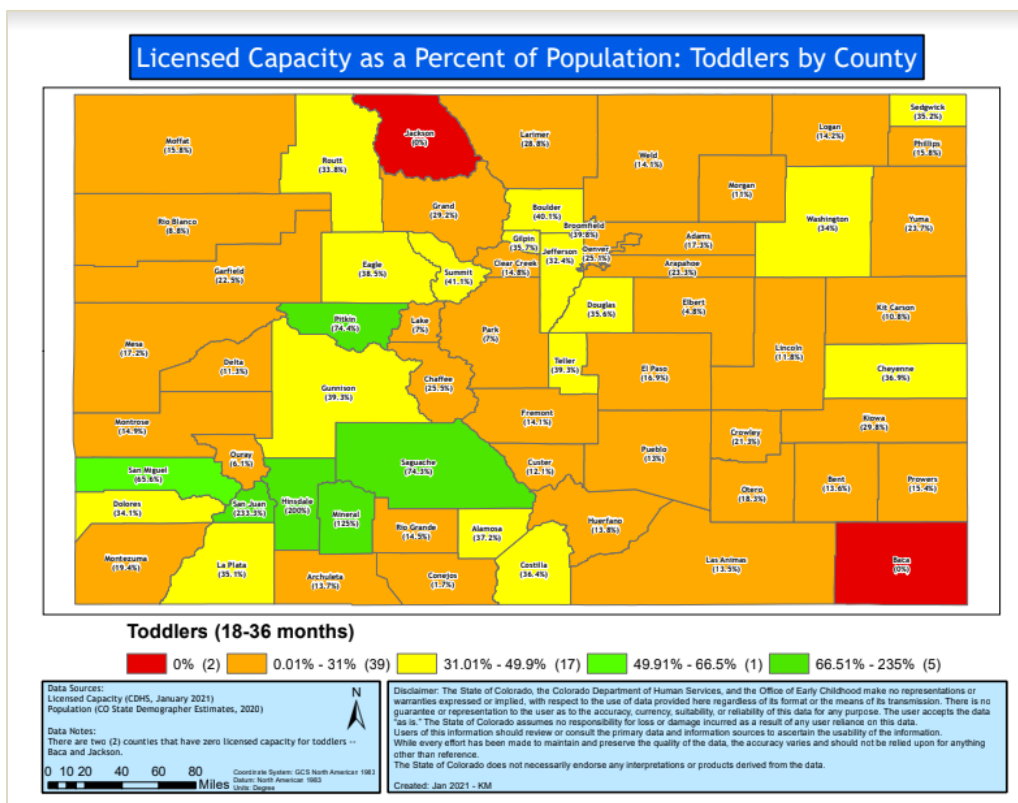
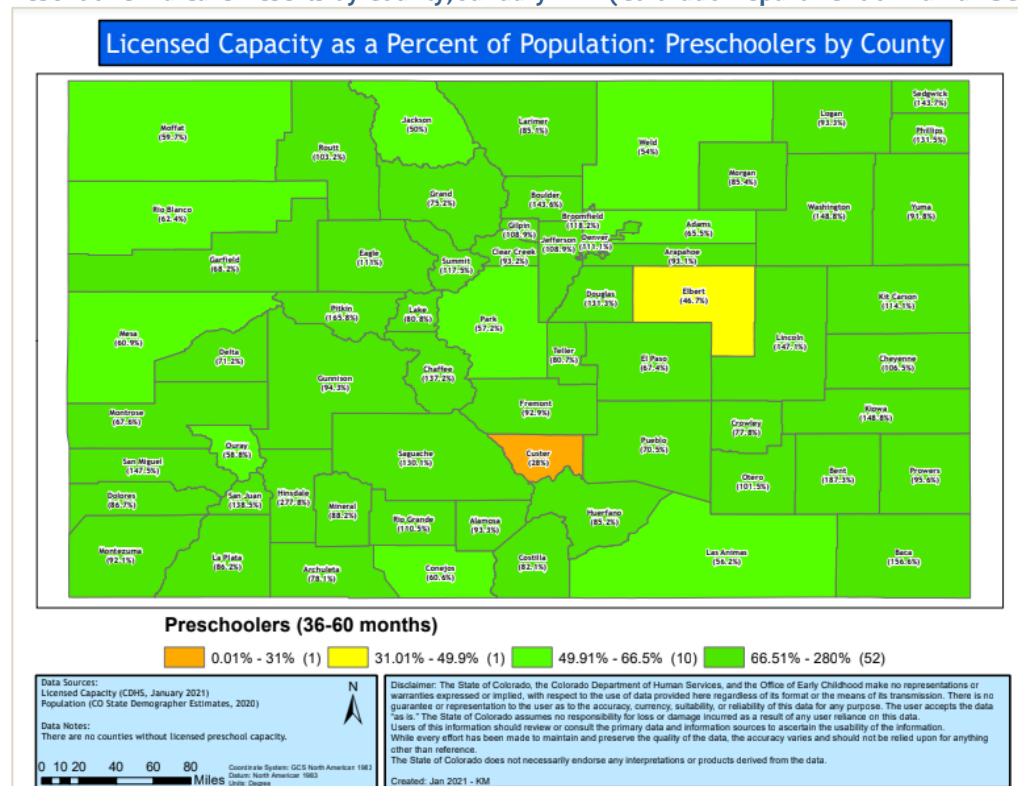


Figure 5: Preschool Child Care Deserts by County, January 2021 (Colorado Department of Human Services)



AFFORDABILITY

For this report, affordability is measured by the percent of families with income not meeting the Self Sufficiency Standard (SSS)¹² for their county who are able to participate in the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP).¹³ Child care is recognized as a considerable factor in the cost of living for families with young children and is accounted for in the SSS. When families do not have access to stable, affordable care, it is harder for them to work productively and consistently. This measure estimates the number of families who would benefit from CCCAP compared with those who receive it. Note that the number who would benefit is different from the number who are eligible. Each Colorado county determines its methodology for the distribution of CCCAP funds, creating some difficulty in estimating statewide eligibility and those receiving support. Further, this is not a comprehensive assessment of affordability since many families with children under the age of five struggle with the cost of care, particularly infant care.¹⁴

Statewide, approximately 9.4% of children who would benefit from CCCAP receive it based on these calculations. The local data indicate that in most Colorado counties, approximately four to 14 percent of families who would benefit from CCCAP receive it. It is difficult to assess whether families would benefit more from an expansion of family eligibility criteria or from expansion in the total number of settings or providers who accept CCCAP reimbursement. The Preschool Development Grant needs assessment found that just under half of licensed care providers in Colorado have agreements in place to accept CCCAP eligible children. However, parents still report difficulty in finding providers that accept CCCAP and nearly one-third of families do not know if they are eligible for CCCAP.¹⁵ Overall, this data exhibits insufficient funding for the CCCAP program in providing access for those who are eligible.

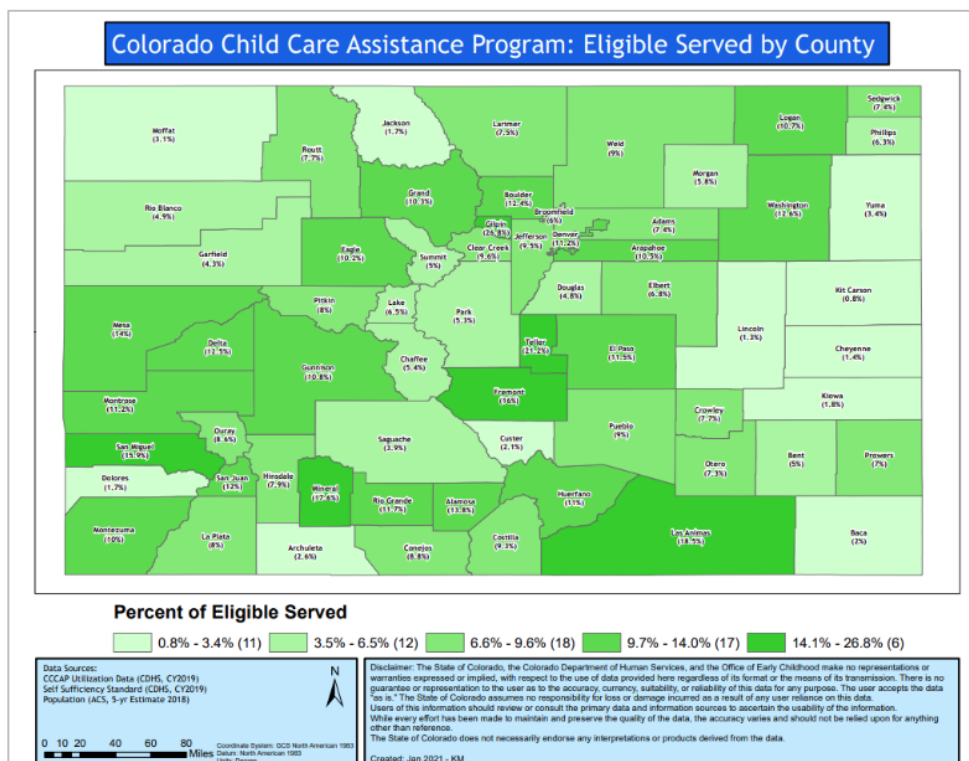
¹² University of Washington, (2018). Colorado Self Sufficiency Standard <http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org/colorado>

¹³ Numerator is families participating in CCCAP; denominator is families not meeting SSS for their area.

¹⁴ Economic Policy Institute. (2020). The cost of child care in Colorado. <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/CO>

¹⁵ Colorado Shines Brighter: Opportunities for Colorado's Early Childhood System, Colorado Office of Early Childhood & Colorado Health Institute, December 2019

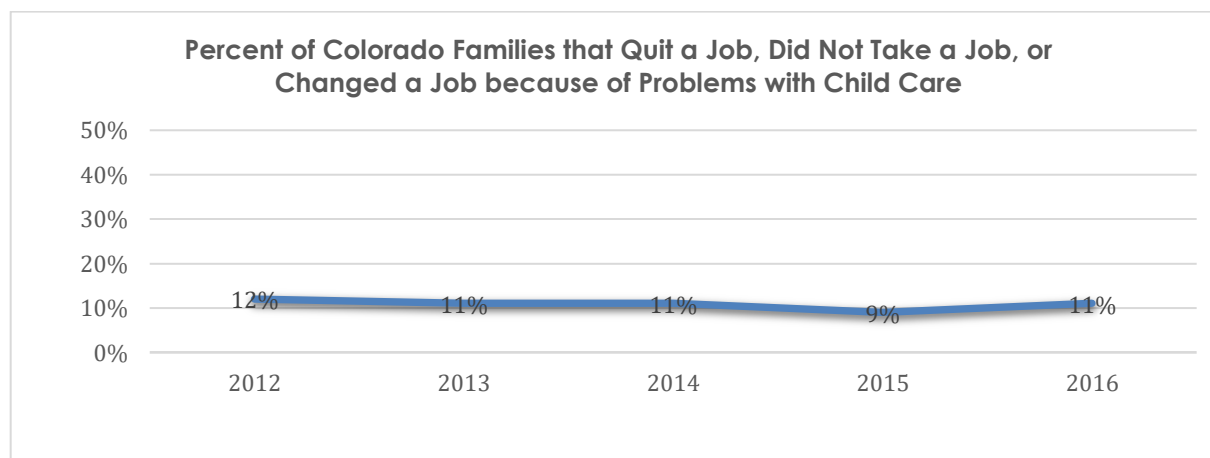
Figure 6: Colorado Child Care Assistance Program Eligible Served, 2019 (Colorado Department of Human Services)



MEETING THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES

Employment is the indicator currently chosen to measure whether the ECE needs of families have been met. Due to changes to the Colorado Child Health Survey, there are no new data for this indicator. From 2012-2016, the percentage of families who responded with an affirmative response on having to change or leave a job because of child care issues ranged from 9 to 12 percent. This shows little change over those five years with approximately 1 in every 10 parents surveyed reporting this challenge.

Figure 7: Impact of child care on family employment. (Colorado Child Health Survey, 2012-2016)



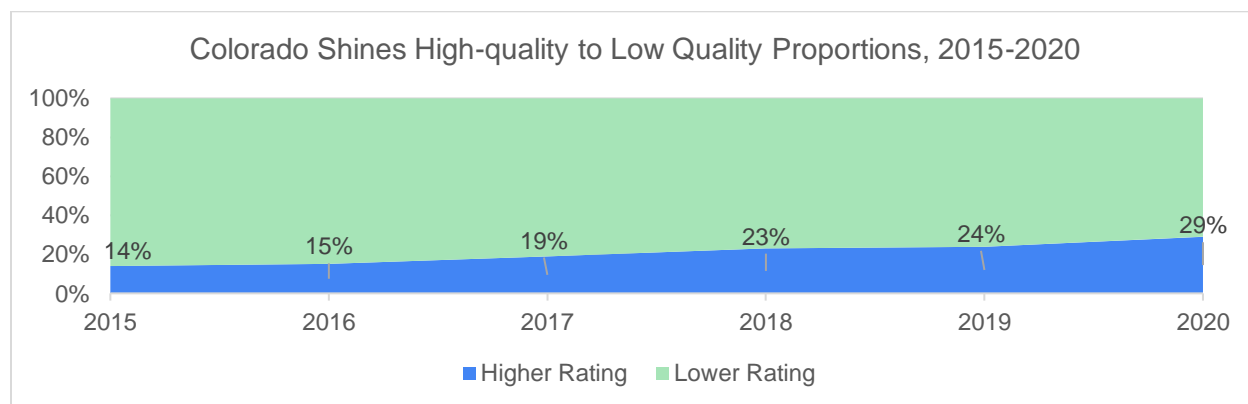
Unfortunately, given many contextual factors, it is likely that this picture has changed significantly since 2016. Other sources have shed light on the needs of families more recently. The Preschool Development Grant needs assessment conducted an extensive, point-in-time evaluation of the ECE needs of families, identifying significant challenges in accessing and affording quality care that meets their needs. More recently, a report from the COVID-19 Early Childhood Research Partnership found that 60% of families had to change their care arrangements due to the pandemic. Further, they found that families of color were more likely to need to work outside the home yet less likely to have found the care they need. With losses in income, families who struggled previously to afford care are faced with an even greater challenge.¹⁶

This, again, is a limited measure of the impact of child care on families. Additional analysis or assessment through the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program might further illuminate economic barriers of families due to the “cliff effect”, that is when a family’s income changes and exceeds eligibility criteria for a program¹⁷. The cliff effect may cause a family to lose benefits, or to decline a financial opportunity to avoid losing benefits.

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION QUALITY

The standard benchmark of quality for licensed child care facilities is a Colorado SHINES Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). A rating of level 3 or higher on the scale from 1-5 indicates high quality. Though all licensed facilities must participate in SHINES to be licensed, some facilities do not actively participate in quality rating improvement efforts. This may indicate that some providers are delivering high-quality care though they do not have the reflective rating. Despite participation challenges, this is the best available measure of quality. Between 2015-2020, Colorado increased its percentage of levels 3-5 quality rated, licensed child care facilities by fifteen percentage points (as shown in Figure 8), increasing from 14 percent to 29 percent.

Figure 8: Colorado Shines High Quality to Low Quality Proportions, 2015-2020
(Colorado Department of Human Services)



¹⁶ COVID-19 Early Childhood Research Partnership. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on Colorado families. <https://earlymilestones.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/COVID-EC-Research-Family-Brief.pdf>

¹⁷ Aspen Institute. (2018). Reducing the cliff effect to support working families. <https://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/reducing-the-cliff-effect-to-support-working-families/>

SUMMARY: IMPROVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION FOR ALL FAMILIES

OBSERVATIONS

While the data do not currently present a full picture of ECE access and quality in Colorado, a few observations can be noted with support from other recent efforts.

- Overall, ECE supports and services do not meet demand and needs of Colorado families.
- Families with infants and toddlers are most likely to struggle to find and afford quality ECE services. With recent efforts toward universal pre-kindergarten, families with preschool age children may see improvement, while families with infants and toddlers are most likely to continue to struggle.

DATA NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

There are significant data gaps in each of the factors measured for this Area of Opportunity. Specific needs include:

- A more precise measure of ECE demand and need across settings and sectors.
- More accurate reporting on utilization of publicly funded slots.
- There is a need for consistently collected data that assess the ECE needs of families and the degree to which those needs have been met by existing services.
- It is difficult to assess whether families would benefit more from an expansion of family eligibility criteria or from expansion in the total number of settings or providers who accept CCCAP reimbursement. However, it is likely that they would benefit from both, and additional funding is needed to support this program.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Colorado Shines Brighter: Opportunities for Colorado's Early Childhood System, Colorado Office of Early Childhood and Colorado Health Institute, December 2019](#)¹⁸

[Impact of COVID-19 on Colorado Families, COVID-19 EC Research Partnership \(January 2021\)](#)¹⁹

[Parent Voices: COVID-19 & Pre-K Through Elementary Education, Early Milestones \(December 2020\)](#)²⁰

[A Pandemic within a Pandemic: How Coronavirus and Systemic Racism Are Harming Infants and Toddlers of Color, CLASP \(September 2020\)](#)²¹

¹⁸ <https://dcfs.my.salesforce.com/sfc/p/#410000012srR/a/4N000000AGxx/QPNqI9n15kNbYRhObm7zKcWoPajUElvqWkrdaeSjdHY>

¹⁹ <https://earlymilestones.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/COVID-EC-Research-Family-Brief.pdf>

²⁰ <https://earlymilestones.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Parent-Voices--December-2020.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.clasp.org/publications/report/brief/pandemic-within-pandemic-how-coronavirus-and-systemic-racism-are-harming>

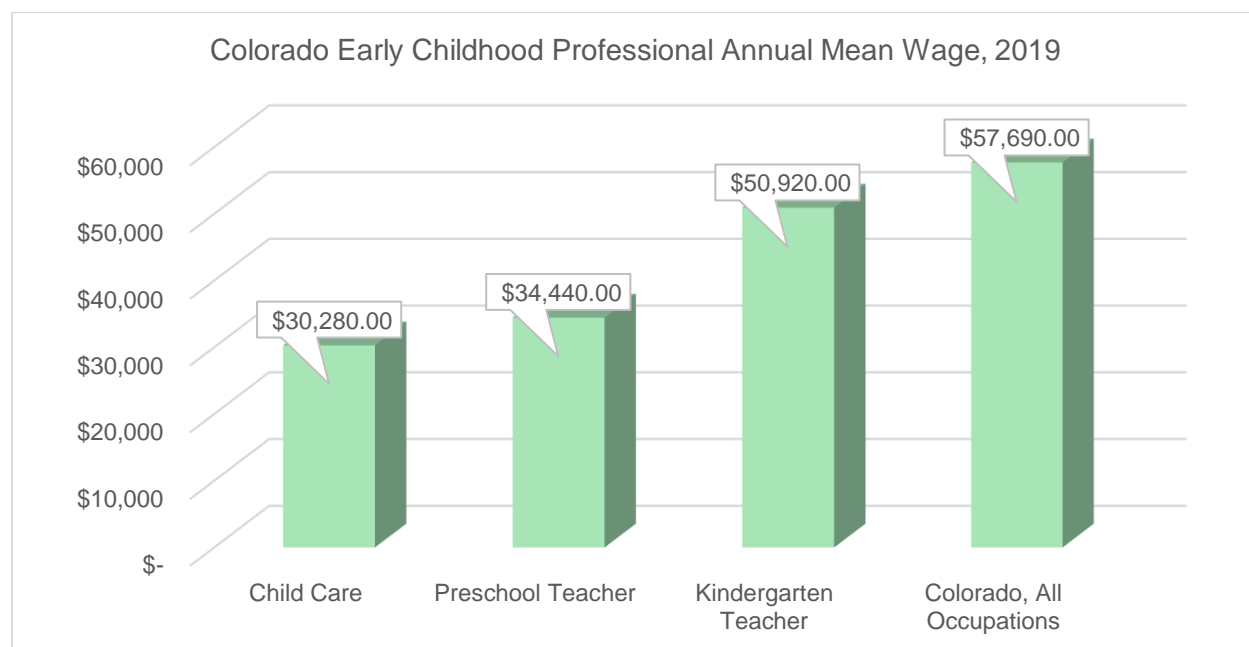
AREA OF OPPORTUNITY: ELEVATE THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE TO ENSURE COORDINATED CAREER PATHWAYS AND APPROPRIATE COMPENSATION.

Early childhood educators provide the critical foundation for children in out-of-home care to develop the literacy and social-emotional skills they need to succeed in school. The early care and education sector is a cornerstone of local and state economic health, enabling parents to work and provide for their families while employing a large workforce of educators. However, as professional development opportunities and expectations for these educators have increased, compensation lags behind most other industries, and communities throughout Colorado are facing significant challenges recruiting and retaining a stable early childhood workforce. Ensuring that Colorado has a qualified, consistent and diverse early childhood workforce is critical to supporting the healthy development of children and maintaining a thriving economy.

WORKFORCE COMPENSATION

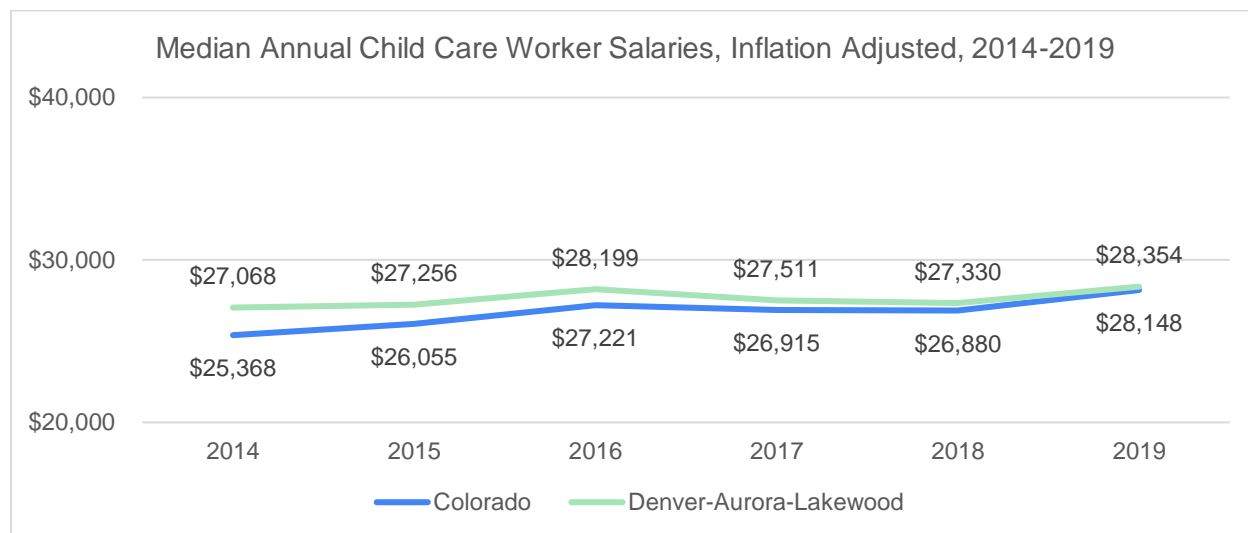
The most recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics on compensation is from 2019. In 2019, the mean annual child care provider wage in Colorado was \$30,280. This is approximately half of Colorado's 2019 mean annual wage of \$57,690 across all occupations. Figure 9 demonstrates that child care providers, on average, earn approximately 40% less than their kindergarten counterparts and preschool teachers earn approximately 30% less than kindergarten teachers.

Figure 9: Colorado Early Childhood Professional Annual Mean Wage, Bureau of Labor and Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics, 2019



Further, as shown in figure 10, inflation adjusted salaries show that the spending power of child care professionals has mostly remained flat, indicating that small wage increases were offset by inflation. Figure 10 also demonstrates that median child care worker salaries in the Denver Metro area are, overall, higher than the state median. This suggests lower salaries in rural areas. This difference appears to be smaller in 2019, but persists from the preceding five years.

Figure 10: Inflation Adjusted Child Care Worker Salaries, Bureau of Labor and Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics, 2014-2019



This follows a similar wage trend nationwide, where most wage increases have been seen for higher-paid workers.²² A report by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment also notes that states with minimum wage increases have typically seen greater increases in child care worker wages.²³ However, this does not appear to be the case in Colorado.

Further, it is important to consider the ability of ECE providers to make ends meet in their communities. In the 2017 Colorado Workforce Survey, teachers and family child care providers were asked about any low-income public subsidies or financial support they currently utilize (e.g., Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Section 8 Housing vouchers, public housing, Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or free or reduced lunches). Findings report that, “Approximately 32 percent of teachers across service sectors and job roles and 31% of the family child care providers reported that they received at least one form of public assistance due to their low-incomes.” It is noteworthy that this survey did not include the Earned Income Tax Credit as a public subsidy category. If it had been included, the rate would likely have been closer to the national reporting of 46 percent.²⁴

²² Pew Research Center. (2018). For most U.S. workers, real wages have barely budged in decades. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/07/for-most-us-workers-real-wages-have-barely-budged-for-decades>

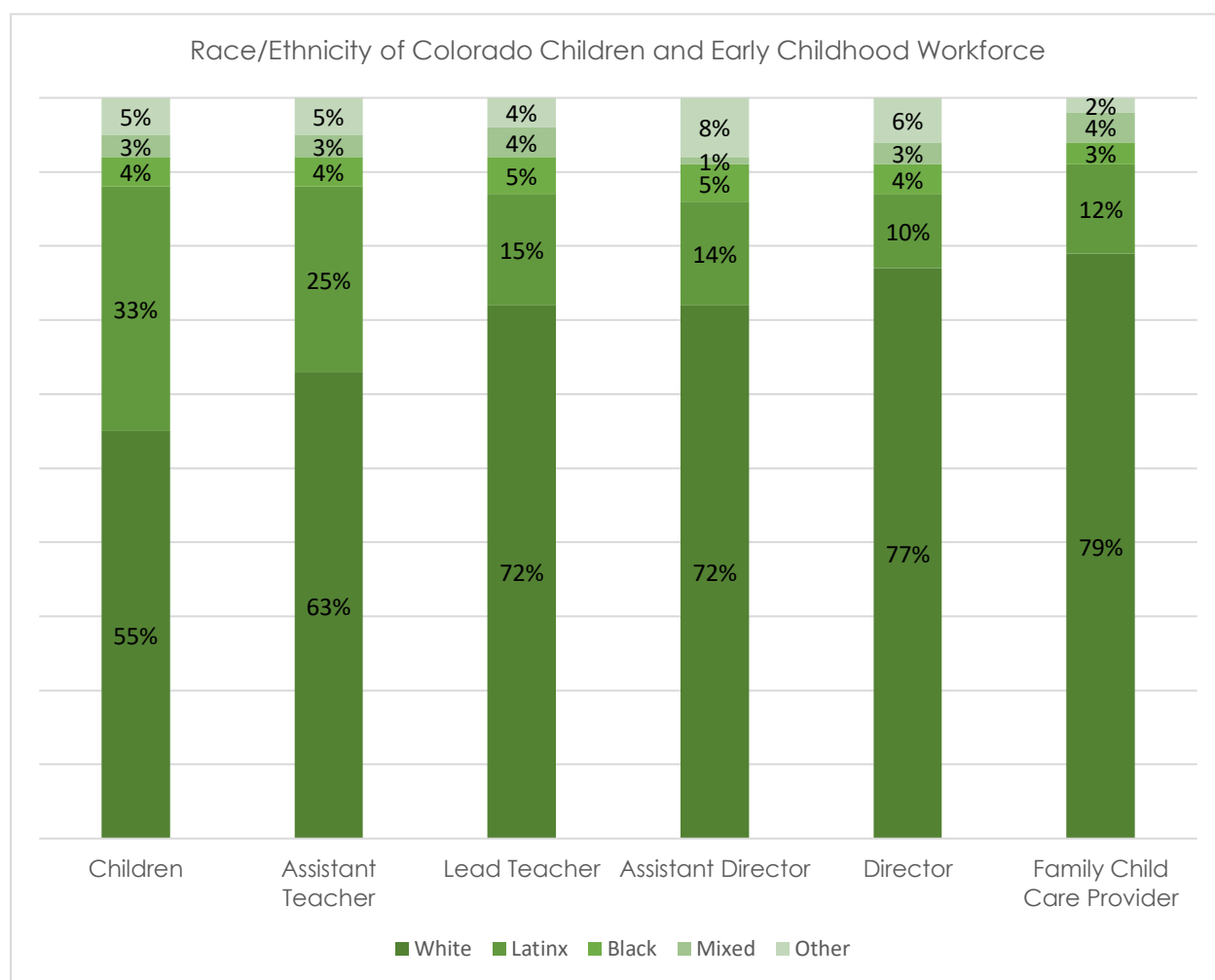
²³ Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. (2018). Early Childhood Workforce Index 2018. <https://www.packard.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Early-Childhood-Workforce-Index-2018.pdf>

²⁴ Diana D. Schaack & Vi-Nhuan Le. (2017). Colorado Early Childhood Workforce Survey 2017: At the Heart of the Matter: The Compensation of Colorado’s Early Educator Workforce.

WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

Data utilized for workforce race and ethnicity was taken from the Colorado Early Childhood Workforce Survey. This survey has not been repeated, therefore there are no new estimates in this report for workforce diversity compared to that of Colorado children. Fortunately, population-level data has not likely shifted significantly enough for Colorado children or the workforce to change trends observed in the last report. While diversity in the ECE workforce varies by setting, a great majority of the workforce identify as white, non-Hispanic. In Colorado, children of non-white race and ethnicity comprise approximately 45 percent of the population. Early childhood professional representation of Black, Latinx, Mixed, and other races and ethnicities as identified in the Colorado Early Childhood Workforce Survey range from 37 percent (assistant teacher) to 21 percent (family child care provider). The proportional representation decreases in higher levels of authority and pay, suggesting structural inequities in opportunity that have persisted.

Figure 11: Child and Early Childhood Workforce Race/Ethnicity (American Community Survey, Colorado Early Childhood Workforce Survey)



SUMMARY: ELEVATE THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE TO ENSURE COORDINATED CAREER PATHWAYS AND APPROPRIATE COMPENSATION

OBSERVATIONS

Observations for 2021 resemble those from 2019.

- ECE provider salaries are 30-40% lower than those of kindergarten teachers and have remained flat when adjusted for inflation. Many ECE provider salaries are low enough to warrant access to public benefits to make ends meet.
- The diversity of ECE providers varies by position and the field of ECE providers is generally less diverse than Colorado's children.

DATA NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The data continue to present only a partial picture of workforce pathways and compensation in Colorado and there are significant data gaps for this Area of Opportunity. Specific needs include:

- More comprehensive Colorado data on provider salaries by sector and setting would offer deeper insight into areas of greater need. Some national data is available for comparison.
- Colorado data on salaries by race and ethnicity would illuminate disparities that may impact workforce diversity.
- The Professional Development Information System data could be strengthened to provide more comprehensive race and ethnicity data of child care providers.
- Colorado data on languages spoken by providers would further understanding of equity issues in child care.
- Further effort is needed to define and measure career pathways and assess the degree to which providers access those pathways.
- The Preschool Development Grant seeks to address several of these areas, which is progress in data development.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Colorado's Early Care and Education Professionals: 2019 Snapshot Report](#), Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab²⁵

²⁵ <https://coloradolab.org/early-childhood-education-workforce/>

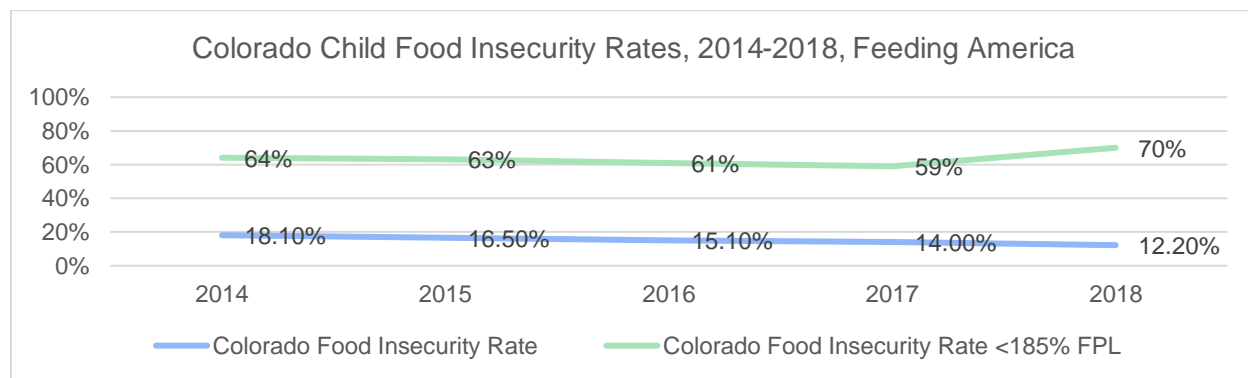
AREA OF OPPORTUNITY: SUPPORT IMPROVED FAMILY HEALTH AND ECONOMIC SECURITY THROUGH A TWO-GENERATION APPROACH

Parents are their children's first and most important teachers. Ensuring that parents have the health and economic supports they need to provide a nurturing home environment and meet their children's basic needs is essential for a child's healthy development. Children who are cared for in stable environments with access to health services, nutritious foods, safe water, stable housing, and high-quality learning environments are better able to develop the skills they need to succeed in school and thrive in their communities. Unfortunately, many children are living in environments without these basic supports, which research suggests can lead to poor mental and physical health, less success at school and work, and lower socioeconomic status in adulthood. Colorado should continue to support family health and economic security through state and local programs and ensure that interventions provide opportunities for both children and caregivers.

FOOD SECURITY

Nutrition is one of the most essential, foundational building blocks for healthy child development. The Harvard Center on the Developing Child identifies "appropriate nutrition" as one of three "foundations for lifelong health".²⁶ Feeding America defines food insecurity as a household's inability to provide enough food for every person to live an active, healthy life.²⁷ In this case, family health is measured through child food insecurity, as well as lower-income child food insecurity at <185% of the federal poverty level (FPL). While Colorado's child food insecurity rate has been on the decline overall to a low of 12%, it is evident that this is not the case for children in lower-income households, as demonstrated in Figure 12, at 70% in 2018. This sharp increase could have been caused in part by the expanded Public Charge Rules that included nutrition programs. Figures 13 and 14 maps of child food insecurity rates overall and at <185% FPL also show differences between urban, suburban, and rural counties.

Figure 12: Child Food Security in Colorado, 2014-2018 (Feeding America)



²⁶ Harvard Center on the Developing Child. (2010). Foundations of lifelong health. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/deep-dives/lifelong-health/>

²⁷ Feeding America. How do you measure hunger? <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/food-insecurity>

Feeding America also recently projected the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food insecurity given the relationship of food insecurity to income. For Colorado, the projection was a leap in the overall child food insecurity rate to 19%. The report also cites the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on people of color who have also historically experienced a heavier burden of food insecurity.²⁸

Figure 13: Child Food Insecurity in Colorado Overall, by County, 2018 (Feeding America)

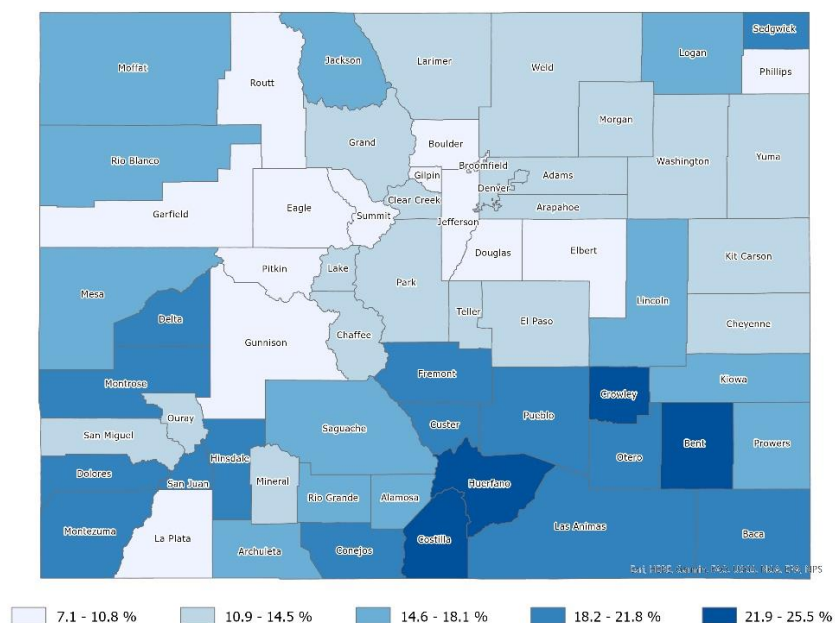
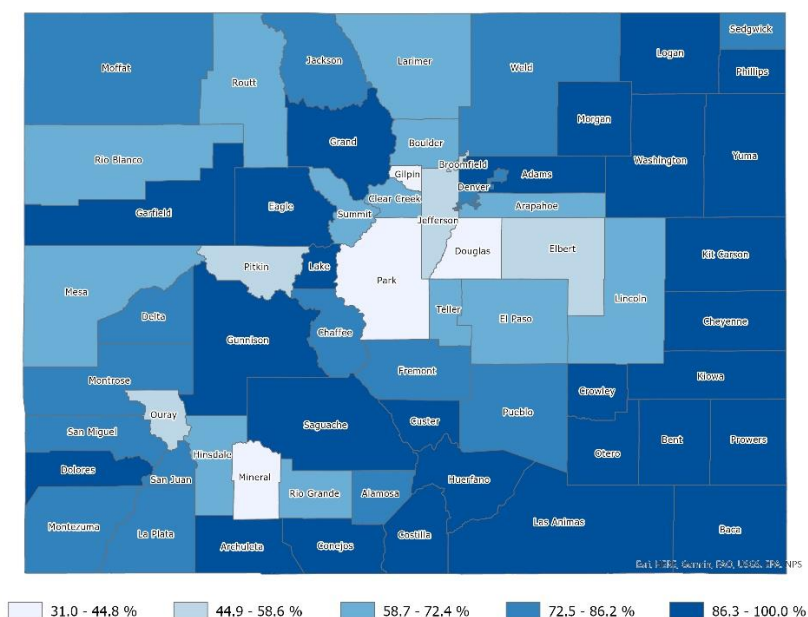


Figure 14: Child Food Insecurity <185% FPL in Colorado, by County, 2018 (Feeding America)

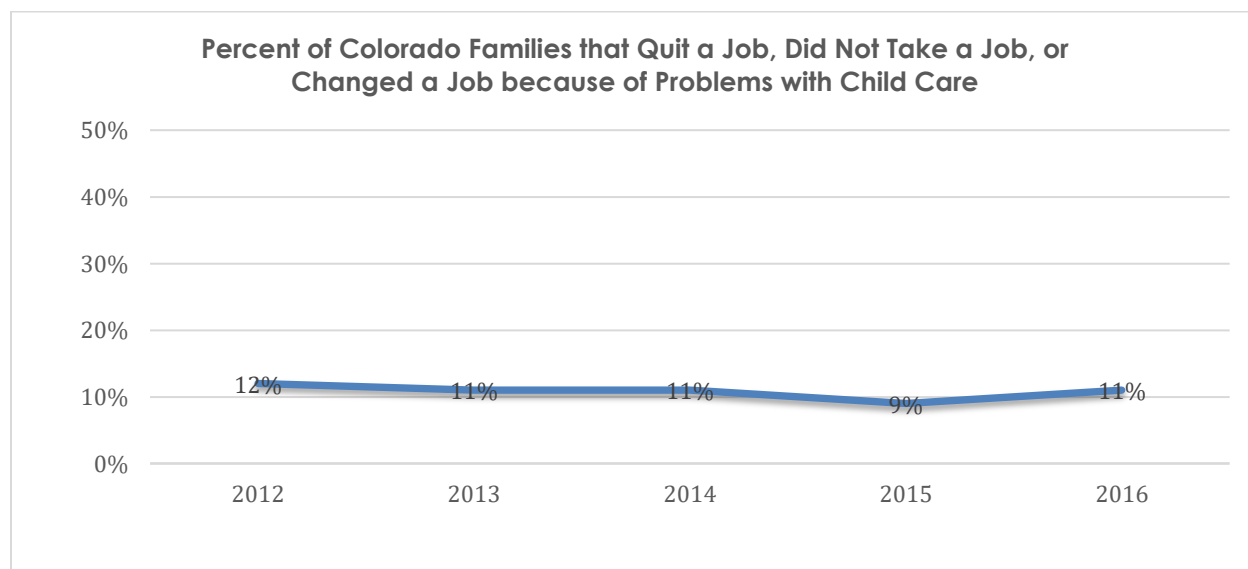


²⁸ Feeding America. (2020). The impact of coronavirus on food insecurity in 2020. https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/Brief_Local%20Impact_10.2020_0.pdf

CHILD CARE SUPPORTS

Employment is the indicator currently chosen to measure whether the ECE needs of families have been met. Due to changes to the Colorado Child Health Survey, there are no new data for this indicator. From 2012-2016, the percentage of families who responded with an affirmative response on having to change or leave a job because of child care issues ranged from 9 to 12 percent. This shows little change over those five years with approximately 1 in every 10 parents surveyed reporting this challenge.

Figure 15: Impact of child care on family employment. (Colorado Child Health Survey, 2012-2016)



Unfortunately, given many contextual factors, it is likely that this picture has changed significantly since 2016. Other sources have shed light on the needs of families more recently. The Preschool Development Grant needs assessment conducted an extensive, point-in-time evaluation of the ECE needs of families, identifying significant challenges in accessing and affording quality care that meets their needs. More recently, a report from the COVID-19 Early Childhood Research Partnership found that 60% of families had to change their care arrangements due to the pandemic. Further, they found that families of color were more likely to need to work outside the home yet less likely to have found the care they need. With losses in income, families who struggled previously to afford care are faced with an even greater challenge.²⁹

While this is an important factor in family health and a Two-Generation approach, the data for this indicator do not provide significant insight for this Area of Opportunity.

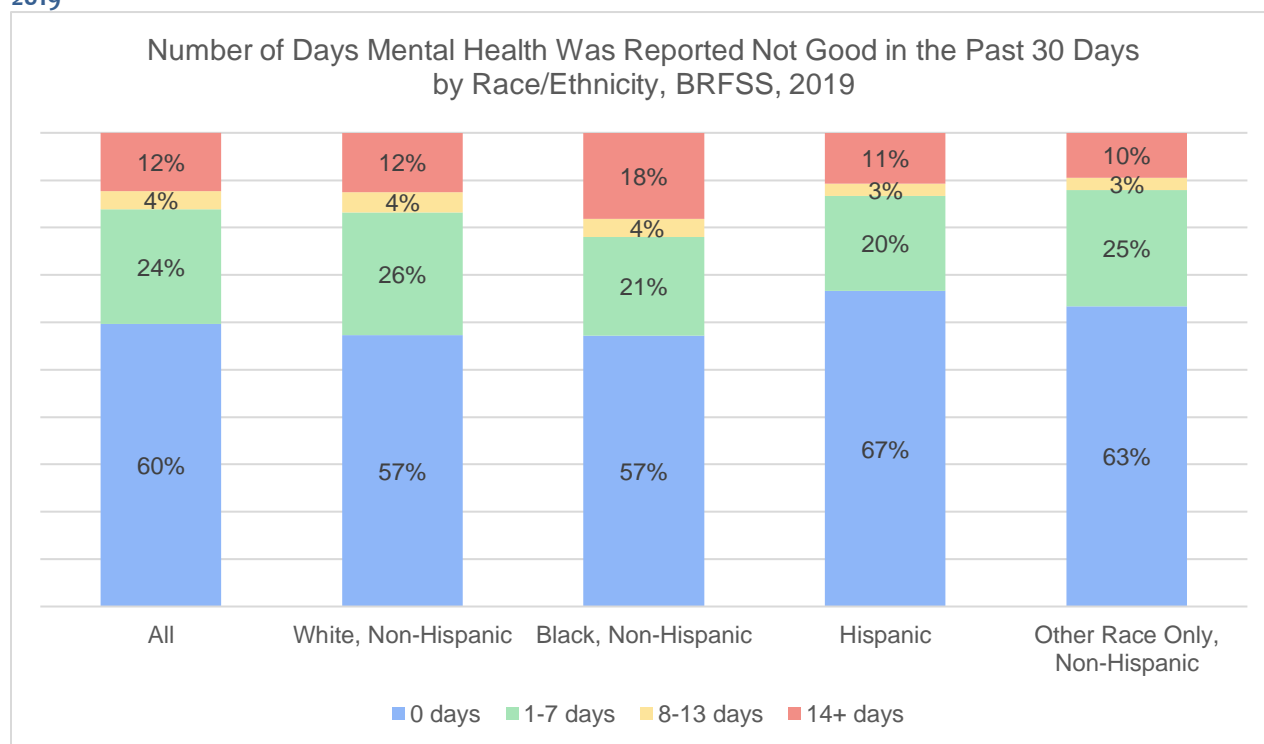
²⁹ COVID-19 Early Childhood Research Partnership. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on Colorado families. <https://earlymilestones.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/COVID-EC-Research-Family-Brief.pdf>

MENTAL WELL-BEING OF CAREGIVERS

The mental wellness of caregivers who can provide strong, supportive relationships and secure environments is well-documented as a protective factor for healthy child development. The Harvard Center on the Developing Child again cites both “stable, responsive relationships” and “safe, supportive environments” as foundations in lifelong health.³⁰ Further, the Strengthening Families framework calls out “parental resilience” as a protective factor for positive child and family outcomes.³¹ Again, this is an area in which the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted families. A June 2020 survey conducted by the American Academy of Pediatrics showed that 27% of parents reported worsening mental health, and 14% reported worsening behavioral health for their children. Almost 1 in 10 reported both worsening parental mental health and child behavioral health.³²

The indicator included for the mental wellness of caregivers is self-report data from the 2019 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) on the number of “not good” mental health days in the past month. About 16% of respondents overall indicated more than 8 (of 30) poor mental health days. Looking at race and ethnicity in Figure 16, significantly more Black respondents reported more than 8 poor mental health days, and almost 40% more reported 14+ poor mental health days.

Figure 16: Mental Health in the Past 30 Days by Race/Ethnicity, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, 2019



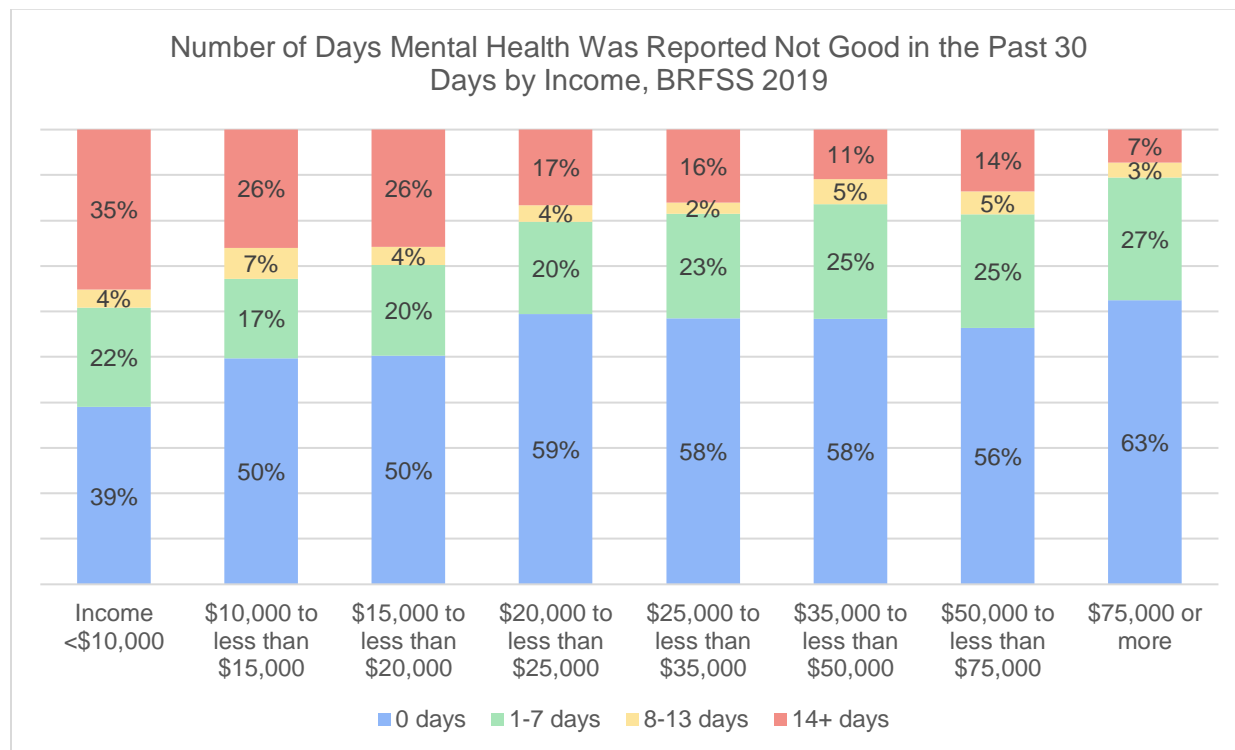
³⁰ Harvard Center on the Developing Child. (2010). Foundations of lifelong health. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/deep-dives/lifelong-health/>

³¹ Center on the Study of Social Policy. Protective Factors Framework. <https://cssp.org/our-work/projects/protective-factors-framework/>

³² Patrick, S.W., et. al. (2020). Well-being of parents and children during the COVID-19 pandemic: A national survey. <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/146/4/e2020016824>

When considering income in Figure 17, higher income is clearly protective for mental wellness, with respondents earning lower incomes experiencing a greater number of poor mental health days.

Figure 17: Mental Health in the Past 30 Days by Income, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, 2019

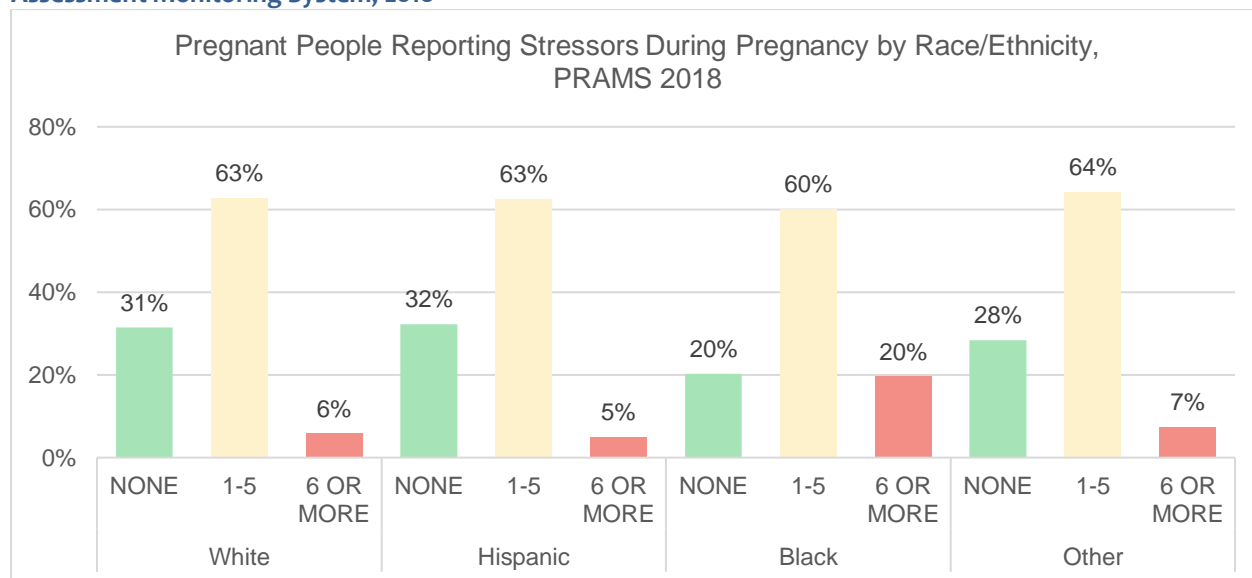


STRESSORS DURING PREGNANCY

Multiple major stressors during pregnancy have been linked with poor birth outcomes (e.g., low birth weight and preterm birth) as well as perinatal depression and anxiety. Noting the previously mentioned impact of relationships and environments on child development, prenatal stressors are an important indicator of family health.

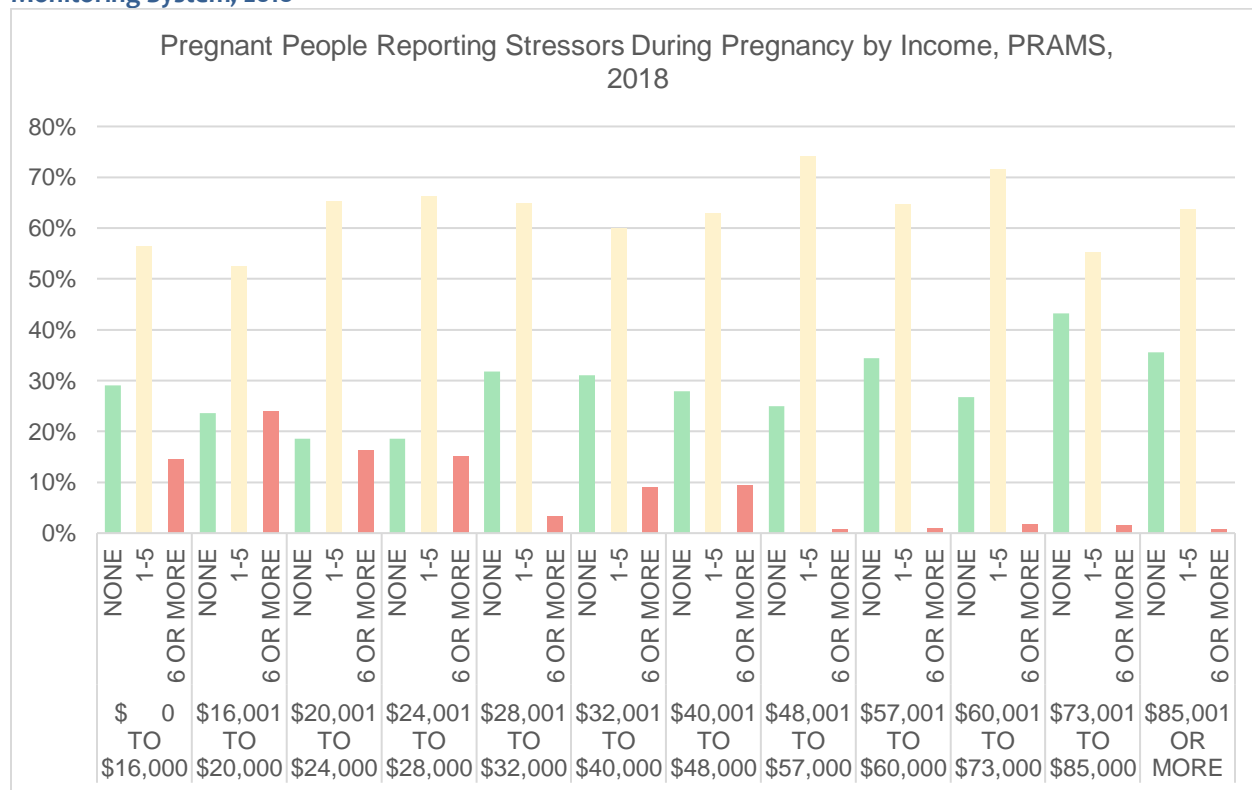
The data on stressors during pregnancy are taken from the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System. Overall, in Colorado in 2018, 31% of respondents indicated no major stressors during pregnancy; 63% indicated 1-5 stressors; 6% indicated 6 or more stressors. When looking at the data by race and ethnicity in Figure 18, pregnant people who are Black are almost four times more likely than other races and ethnicities to experience six or more major stressors. This is significant given rates of preterm birth and low birth weight among pregnant people who are Black (see next section).

Figure 18: Pregnant People Reporting Stressors During Pregnancy by Race and Ethnicity, Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System, 2018



When examining stressors during pregnancy by income, higher income is once again protective, with lower-income pregnant people being much more likely to experience stressors. This is also significant in the next section.

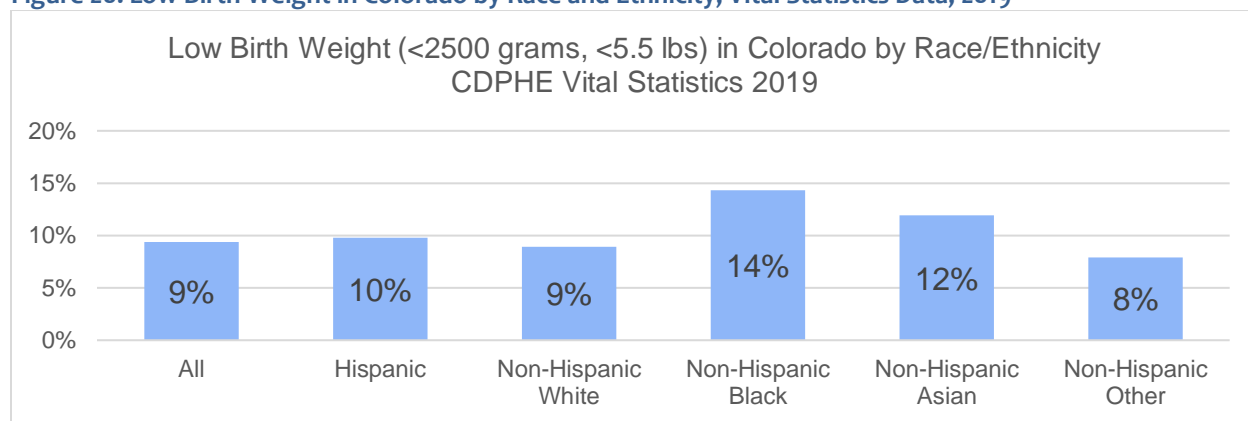
Figure 19: Pregnant People Reporting Stressors During Pregnancy by Income, Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System, 2018



BIRTH OUTCOMES – LOW BIRTH WEIGHT

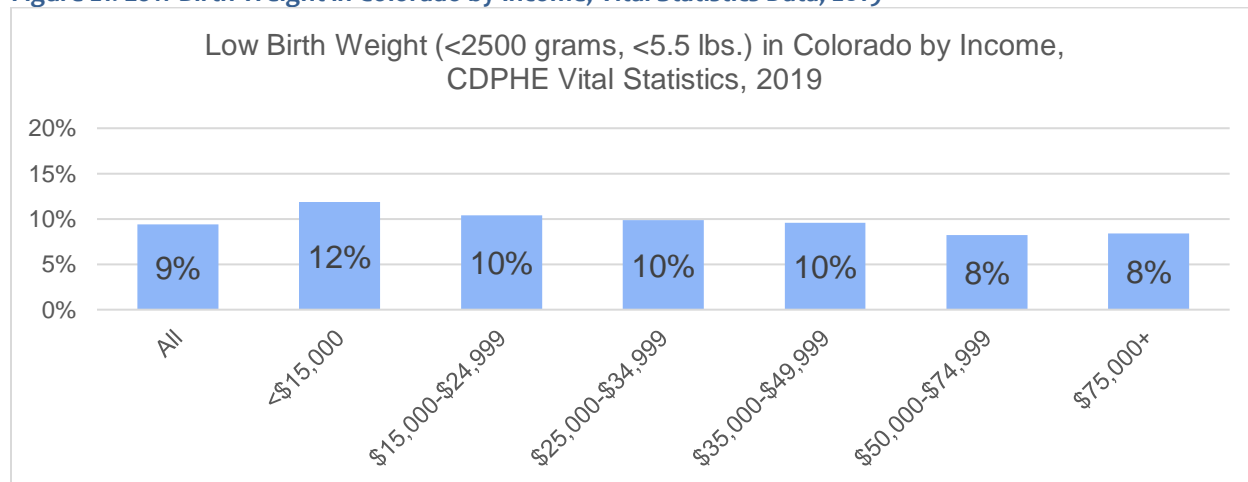
Positive birth outcomes are associated with positive child development. Appropriate birth weight is important to health and feeding in the weeks following birth and to development in the early years. Nationwide in 2018, 8.28% of infants were born with low birth weight and the rate has been increasing related to an increase in preterm births. Colorado's rate is slightly higher at 9%. Figure 20 demonstrates significant and important disparities between races and ethnicities. The previous section showed a higher percentage of Black pregnant people experiencing a high numbers of stressors, which are risk factors for low birth weight.

Figure 20: Low Birth Weight in Colorado by Race and Ethnicity, Vital Statistics Data, 2019



Once again, higher income appears to be somewhat protective for appropriate birth weight, as shown in Figure 21.

Figure 21: Low Birth Weight in Colorado by Income, Vital Statistics Data, 2019



Little is known with certainty at this time about how the occurrence of COVID-19 has impacted low birth weight in Colorado. At this time, research focus has been placed on the impact of COVID-19 infection on perinatal outcomes, rather than population-based research that examines the COVID-19 pandemic perinatal experience. Vital Statistics data for 2020 will be available later in 2021. Health eMoms survey data will also be forthcoming with more information.

SUMMARY: SUPPORT IMPROVED FAMILY HEALTH AND ECONOMIC SECURITY THROUGH A TWO-GENERATION APPROACH

OBSERVATIONS

- The data demonstrate what we already know—higher income is protective for all the factors related to family health and child development, above.
- Food insecurity is particularly concerning in this time of economic instability. This is particularly true for lower-income families.
- Racial disparities for Black pregnant people in perinatal outcomes persist in the face of long-standing, institutional racism.

DATA NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Better measures of economic security, including more recent data on child care, would further enhance this Area of Opportunity.
- While the BRFSS data provides a snapshot of mental wellness overall in Colorado, it does not provide insight into the mental wellness of caregivers. Data specific to parents and/or caregivers would be more meaningful.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[The Impact of Coronavirus on Food Insecurity in 2020](#) (Feeding America, 2020)³³

³³ https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/Brief_Local%20Impact_10.2020_0.pdf

KEY POINTS FOR EACH AREA OF OPPORTUNITY

This report shares extensive Colorado early childhood data to measure the ECLC Areas of Opportunity. Each indicator holds importance for Colorado's early childhood system and the well-being of families and young children. Looking forward, the data must drive focus and action, or they are not of service. In a February 2021 conversation, the Data Subcommittee identified four areas of emphasis from the data presented in this report. These are areas in which the data are compelling and most critical to early childhood outcomes.

INFANT AND TODDLER CARE: NEGLECTING OUR YOUNGEST

The data within the first Area of Opportunity on access to high-quality early care and education again demonstrates significant deficits and disparities in access to infant and toddler care. There is less capacity than for preschool-age children. This has been corroborated by the Preschool Development Grant needs assessment and many sources since. Further, policies and initiatives in support of preschool expansion are likely to address preschool access and quality, while infant and toddler care continue to be a challenge. The Data Subcommittee elevates this concern for the first Area of Opportunity.

WORKFORCE COMPENSATION: A KEY TO IMPROVING SYSTEMS

The data within the second Area of Opportunity on the early childhood workforce again demonstrates that compensation for Colorado's early childhood workforce is poor in comparison to other teaching professions in Colorado and in comparison, to compensation in other states. Compensation is critical to developing a high-quality, stable, diverse workforce and system of care and education. The Data Subcommittee elevates this concern for the second Area of Opportunity.

FOOD SECURITY: LOSING GROUND

The data within the third Area of Opportunity on family health and economic security demonstrates that we are losing ground in child food security, particularly in our families earning the lowest incomes. Furthermore, the data in this report have not fully shown impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, which has grave implications for Colorado families and children. Stable, healthy nutrition is critically foundational in healthy child development. The Data Subcommittee elevates this concern for the third Area of Opportunity.

ECONOMIC SECURITY: PROTECTIVE ACROSS OUTCOMES

Across all Areas of Opportunity, it is evident that economic security is protective and supportive of positive outcomes for families and young children. Again, reduced employment opportunity, as well as reduced access to child care supports due to the COVID-19 pandemic have not yet been fully observed in the data in this report. But it does continue to demonstrate the protective nature of economic security in areas such as mental well-being, birth outcomes, and nutrition security. Other, more recent data sources point to declining economic security for families at this critical moment. The Data Subcommittee elevates this concern across all three Areas of Opportunity.

DATA DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: IDENTIFYING DATA GAPS

WHAT IS A DATA DEVELOPMENT AGENDA?

An important part of this process has been developing a Data Development Agenda for the ECLC. Results Based Accountability³⁴ defines this as “measures for which you might want to invest resources to develop quality data that would be available on a timely basis”. In some cases, existing indicators or data collection methods may not go far enough to answer important questions with sufficient precision to inform early childhood efforts. In other cases, the data to answer relevant questions do not exist. The Data Subcommittee has begun to identify these gaps as they relate to the Areas of Opportunity and will continue this work ongoing. Themes emerged in data needs and the Data Development Agenda is developed according to those themes. Additional notes are included in the summary of each Area of Opportunity on specific data development needs related to each.

ECLC DATA DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Significant progress has been made since the 2019 Indicators Report on generating point-in-time data through several needs assessments and research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Similar, valuable opportunities are on the horizon. However, where Colorado’s early childhood partners continue to struggle is having access to routinely collected, reliable data that can impact policy and practice in a timely manner. One exciting exception to this is in enhancements of linkages and reportability of early childhood workforce data. Partners are making strides in linking and reporting reliable data sources that provide meaningful dashboards and reports. Similar, sustainable data collection, linking, and reporting strategies are needed to support early childhood partners.

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

2019 DATA NEEDS

- Deeper understanding of current ECE workforce demographics and pathways
- Measure of retention in ECE workforce
- Various indicators (e.g., quality, total compensation, etc.) across sectors and settings of a mixed delivery system
- Index of child care affordability
- % eligible population enrolled in Early Head Start
- Data collected on informal or unlicensed care settings
- Use of culturally relevant/diverse curricula

³⁴ Clear Impact, (2016). What is Results Based Accountability? <https://clearimpact.com/results-based-accountability/>

2021 PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

*Colorado Shines Brighter: Opportunities for Colorado's Early Childhood System*³⁵

A comprehensive, statewide birth through five needs assessment was conducted using initial Preschool Development Grant funds. The needs assessment covers the current Colorado mixed delivery system including informal and formal care settings, across factors such as access, affordability, and quality. This was a point-in-time assessment that addressed several Colorado data needs. The needs assessment also examined gaps in available information. The needs assessment continues to be updated annually.

*Colorado Shines Brighter Birth through Five Strategic Plan*³⁶

The findings from the Colorado Shines Brighter needs assessment were utilized to develop the Birth through Five Strategic Plan. The plan includes extensive data enhancements, including community-level dashboards, and modernizing workforce data systems. The Strategic Plan is reviewed annually and updated by the Early Childhood Leadership Commission.

*Colorado Early Care and Education Workforce Data Dashboard (Colorado Department of Human Services)*³⁷

Philanthropic partners in Colorado came together to develop this dashboard of early childhood workforce data. The dashboard includes demographics, qualifications, retention trends, and other key workforce data. CDHS will continue to build out the workforce data dashboard with a second phase of data. Anticipated enhancements include adding Colorado Department of Education workforce data to the dashboard.

*Colorado's Early Care and Education Professionals: 2019 Snapshot Report (University of Denver, Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab)*³⁸

This report accompanies the workforce data dashboard, providing insight into the study to develop the “first comprehensive dataset on ECE professionals in Colorado” utilizing the Linked Information Network of Colorado (LINC). The report shares key findings from the study and implications of the data. Future opportunities include expanding LINC data to include post-secondary enrollment and degrees, and labor and employment data. The data will enhance both the dashboard and data snapshot.

Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System Rebuild Enhancements

During the 2019 Preschool Development Grant Planning Grant, the Office of Early Childhood conducted a number of workgroups to identify functionality needed to enhance the user experience and for the Colorado Shines PDIS rebuild. Several PDIS enhancement strategies were identified in the Colorado Shines Brighter Strategic Plan. In addition, HB 20-1053 details the need to create more aligned, transparent pathways for individuals to become qualified early childhood workforce

³⁵ <https://dcfs.my.salesforce.com/sfc/p/#410000012srR/a/4N000000AGxx/QPNqI9n15kNbYRhObm7zKcWoPajUElvqWkrdaeSjdHY>

³⁶ <https://dcfs.my.salesforce.com/sfc/p/#410000012srR/a/4N000000AGyC/mrW1bt1kWUwXur3Ss0ZgYnCS8C30CedVzb5qV3X2UXE>

³⁷ https://public.tableau.com/views/OEC_PDIS_BIU_Analytics/Home?:language=en&:display_count=y&:origin=viz_share_link&:showVizHome=no

³⁸ <https://coloradolab.org/early-childhood-education-workforce/>

members. The rebuilt system will continue to serve as the professional registry and learning management system for early childhood education professionals, but will better serve them and their employers by linking required licensing information, such as background checks and training, with other information to support personnel requirements for child care licensing. The new system will include a broader representation of educators to provide more robust data on Colorado's workforce. These roles range from Staff Aide to Program Director. In all, the new system will host applications for 19 distinct roles, which include just under ninety different ways that individuals may submit verifiable information to satisfy the personnel requirements across these roles.

[Office of Early Childhood Provider Hub](#)³⁹

The provider hub gives early childhood providers access to Colorado Shines, CCCAP, PDIS, and attendance tracking all through one portal. This streamlined portal will provide timely, improved data on ECE providers and services.

[COVID-19 Pandemic Impact on ECE Providers](#)⁴⁰

The COVID-19 EC Research Partnership surveyed ECE providers and provided two briefs on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

FAMILIES

2019 DATA NEEDS

- Meeting child care needs of families
- Impact of stressors on parent-child bond
- Family engagement, leadership, advocacy
- Impact of “stacking” of basic needs barriers
- Assessment of implementation of policies supporting families
- Availability of relevant supports/services for families

2021 PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

[Colorado Shines Brighter: Opportunities for Colorado's Early Childhood System](#)⁴¹

A comprehensive, statewide birth through five needs assessment was conducted using initial Preschool Development Grant funds. The needs assessment examined family needs and assessed family demand for ECE services through modeling. This was a point-in-time assessment that sought to address the degree to which Colorado's mixed delivery system meets the needs of families.

³⁹ <https://mailchi.mp/state/introducing-the-oec-provider-hub>

⁴⁰ <https://earlymilestones.org/project/covid-ec-research/>

⁴¹ <https://dcfs.my.salesforce.com/sfc/p/#410000012srR/a/4N000000AGxx/QPNqI9n15kNbYRhObm7zKcWoPaiUElvqWkrdaeSIdHY>

MIECHV Needs Assessment

In October 2020, Colorado's Maternal and Infant Early Childhood Home Visitation Program submitted its statutorily required needs assessment. The needs assessment sought to identify community levels of risk at the county level based on multiple factors that recognized Colorado's geographical diversity (urban, rural, frontier). Thirteen indicators were identified to measure risk. The assessment also provided a deeper focus on the Black and African American population in Colorado. This report provides an opportunity to examine the impact of "stacking" of barriers and risk factors that was identified as a data gap, as well as disproportionate impact of these barriers on the Black and African American population. This report and additional documents will be released in 2021.

[COVID-19 Pandemic Impact on Families](#)⁴²

The COVID-19 EC Research Partnership surveyed Colorado families and provided a brief on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

TRACKING AND MONITORING

2019 DATA NEEDS

- Tracking and monitoring of screening, referral, evaluation, services for Early Intervention/Child Find systems

2021 PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

The Colorado Early Childhood Screening and Referral Policy Council (ECSRPC)

The ECSRPC has made strides in its efforts to improve tracking and monitoring of children screened and referred for developmental concerns.

- The ECSRPC submitted a letter of support to Colorado Medicaid to encourage the mandatory use of screening diagnosis codes to qualify for billing reimbursement. The use of these codes will help track kids from screening to receipt of Early Intervention services.
- ABCD and CDPHE are working with Colorado Medicaid to build a screening dashboard to gauge whether kids are receiving developmental and autism screens at well child checks.
- ABCD in collaboration with ResultsLab is in process of completing a needs assessment to understand the gaps, barriers, and opportunities related to early identification of developmental delay. The final report will include an overview of the data as well as parent experiences, leading to the development of an implementation plan to address those findings.

⁴² <https://earlymilestones.org/project/covid-ec-research/>

EQUITY

2019 DATA NEEDS

- Indicators across prioritized populations (e.g., children with special needs, families experiencing homelessness, etc.) to measure status and progress of *all* children

2021 PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Data Subcommittee Equity Conversations

The ECLC Data Subcommittee has had continued to hold conversations on how to enhance equity, diversity and inclusion across the early childhood field. They have identified opportunities to expand their knowledge and understanding of equity across data and research as well as enhance the Subcommittee membership and operations in order to be more inclusive and diverse. Throughout the next year, the Subcommittee will develop guiding questions in order to approach conversations and data discussions with an equity-focused lens. They will also continue to identify presentations, research opportunities, and shared learning experiences to increase their knowledge and advocacy of equity, diversity and inclusion.

MIECHV Needs Assessment

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Refugee Populations

In early fall of 2020, Early Milestones and Butler Institute surveyed refugee families associated with the Spring Institute. The data provide initial insight into themes on needs and assets of this important population.

APPENDIX A: OPPORTUNITY INDEX INDICATORS

ECONOMY	Jobs	Unemployment rate (percentage of the population ages 16 and older who are not working but available for and seeking work)
	Wages	Median household income (in 2010 dollars)
	Poverty	Percentage of the population below the federal poverty level (the amount of pretax cash income considered adequate for an individual or family to meet basic needs)
	Income Inequality	80/20 ratio (ratio of household income at the 80th percentile to that at the 20th percentile)
	Access to Banking Services	Number of banking institutions (commercial banks, savings institutions and credit unions) per 10,000 residents
	Affordable Housing	Percentage of households spending less than 30 percent of their income on housing-related costs
	Broadband Internet Subscription	Percentage of households with subscriptions to broadband internet service
EDUCATION	Preschool Enrollment	Percentage of 3- and 4-year olds attending preschool
	High School Graduation	On-time high school graduation rate (percentage of freshmen who graduate in four years)
	Postsecondary Education	Percentage of adults ages 25 and older with an associate degree or higher
HEALTH	Low Birth Weight	Percentage of infants born weighing less than 5.5 pounds
	Health Insurance Coverage	Percentage of the population (under 65) without health insurance coverage
	Deaths Related to Alcohol/Drug Use and Suicide	Deaths attributed to alcohol or drug poisoning, or suicide (age-adjusted rate per 100,000 population)
COMMUNITY	Volunteering	Percentage of adults (ages 18 and older) who reported they volunteered during the previous year
	Voter Registration	Percentage of adults ages 18 and older who are registered to vote
	Youth Disconnection	Percentage of youth (ages 16-24) not in school and not working
	Violent Crime	Incidents of violent crime reported to law enforcement agencies (per 100,000 population)
	Access to Primary Health Care	Number of primary care physicians (per 100,000 population)
	Access to Healthy Food	Number of grocery stores and produce vendors (per 10,000 population)
	Incarceration	Number of people incarcerated in jail or prison (per 100,000 population 18 and older)

APPENDIX B: NATIONAL AND COLORADO OPPORTUNITY INDEX SCORES, 2017 AND 2019⁴³

	COLORADO 2017	COLORADO 2019	NATIONAL 2017	NATIONAL 2019
Overall Score	54.1	54.7	52.4	53.2
Economy Score	60.9	62.9	52.9	57.0
Education Score	54.7	56.0	54.4	56.1
Community Score	50.7	50.8	46.8	47.8
Health Score	49.9	49.1	55.5	52.0

The indicators used to measure the Opportunity Index are not specific to young children. However, the well-being of both family and community, (i.e. the relationships and environments that surround young children) were noted by the Data Subcommittee to be particularly pertinent to child outcomes in this Area.

Within the Economic Score, one might question whether all Coloradans enjoy the economic benefits captured by the score since there is no comparison between sub-populations and demographic characteristics.

⁴³ Opportunity Index, Child Trends and Opportunity Nation, <https://opportunityindex.org/>