

# ECLC

*Early Childhood Leadership Commission*

## Annual Report 2020



### **PRESENTED TO:**

Governor Jared Polis, The Colorado General Assembly, Senate Education Committee, Senate Health & Human Services Committee, House Education Committee, House Health & Insurance Committee, and House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services Committee

# Letter from the Governor

Dear Early Childhood Stakeholders,

The past year has been one of tremendous disruption for Coloradans, our nation and our world. The global COVID-19 pandemic has changed nearly every aspect of our daily lives and forced us to take important steps to keep ourselves, and those around us, safe during this challenging time. Coloradans have continuously risen to the occasion and shown that, when faced with adversity, we will come together and support one another.

This year has been particularly challenging for families without access to critical resources, making it even harder for all children to have a strong start in life. However, in Colorado we know that investing in quality, universal preschool is essential to giving children the best possible start – socially, emotionally and academically – and is vital to our success as a state.

Building on the momentum of the previous year, where we passed free, full-day kindergarten for all Colorado children, this year we turned our attention toward providing access to high-quality preschool.

In November, Colorado voters overwhelmingly supported Proposition EE, a tobacco and nicotine product tax initiative that will provide dedicated funding to ensure all children can access preschool, along with the important foundational elements of a strong workforce and adequate facilities.

I invite all early childhood champions and stakeholders throughout Colorado to join us as we work to design a preschool system that implements the ballot language of EE for universal preschool and supports quality and alignment across state and local programs, and a true mixed-delivery system that promotes parents' choice of early learning settings for their children.

Colorado's economic recovery depends on our workforce having access to stable, quality child care. I'm proud that



**COLORADO**  
Governor Jared Polis

last year the legislature passed key budget proposals to improve quality and access to child care, while also passing critical laws to support the early childhood workforce and capacity. Lower enrollment, temporary closures, and greater health and safety precautions have increased costs for child care providers, moving many of them to the brink of financial collapse.

In December, I worked with legislative leadership to convene a special session of the General Assembly providing relief and much needed resources to those impacted most by the pandemic. I'm very proud of the bipartisan legislation, which included \$45 million to enable existing licensed child care providers to keep their doors open and expand their programs, and support new providers to open and meet the needs of working parents, especially in child care deserts. The state also devoted \$5 million to replenishing essential community services that increase access to food for Colorado families who don't know where their next meal will come from, and \$20 million towards expanding broadband access – connecting more students to their teachers so that they can learn safely in the months ahead.

More than ever, it is imperative that we support efforts that lead to better state-level outcome data for our kids as we begin to understand the gaps in learning loss over the past year. We have to continue to prioritize a well-qualified, diverse early childhood workforce and ensure that parents and caregivers have the basic necessities to support their families as we recover from these unprecedented times.

I look forward to continuing working with the Early Childhood Leadership Commission and early childhood stakeholders as we build back our economy, strengthen our communities, and ensure that all children throughout the state have everything they need to succeed.

Sincerely,

**Jared Polis**  
Governor

# Letter from the ECLC Co-Chairs

Dear Governor Polis, Lt. Governor Primavera, Cabinet Members and Colorado General Assembly,

The Early Childhood Leadership Commission (Commission) is excited to present our ninth annual report and share our work to ensure that all of Colorado's children are valued, healthy and thriving.

As Colorado's federally-authorized state advisory council, our cross-sector and diverse members - appointed by the Governor - work to improve outcomes for young children birth to age 8 and their families by advancing the alignment, coordination and efficiency of early childhood programs and services.

2020 brought unique and heart-breaking challenges as we faced the COVID-19 global pandemic, with those already furthest from resources in our communities suffering the most. Our early care and learning industry - already a fragile and decentralized market - faced challenges to remain open and provide safe, quality environments for children while also ensuring the health and safety of our early childhood providers. Organizations serving families' basic needs and providing food, housing, clothing, physical and emotional health support faced unprecedented demands as the pandemic slowed the economy, disproportionately impacting low-income and communities of color. The pandemic has demonstrated how critical the early care and education industry is to our communities and economy. By ensuring that children have a safe place to grow and learn, parents and caregivers can work.

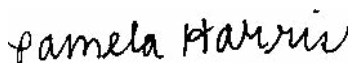
This year also brought the passage of Proposition EE, which provides funding to support a universal preschool program for all children in Colorado during the year before Kindergarten. The ECLC created the Universal Preschool Policy Discussion Guide to support this work and looks forward to continuing to engage in conversations with stakeholders across the state to build a system in which every child has the opportunity to succeed.

We commend Governor Polis, the General Assembly and the state agencies for supporting those most impacted by the pandemic and providing much needed relief for small businesses, essential workers including child care providers, and families throughout the state.

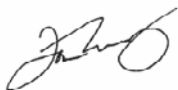
As we look to 2021, the Commission is committed to serving as stewards of equity by promoting a system in which every child has the opportunity to succeed. We are committed to inclusion, diversity and equity and look forward to engaging with you so that these continue to be at the forefront of our work together.

This annual report provides an overview of the Commission's work and accomplishments in 2020, and our priorities and commitments to all of Colorado's young children and their families as we look to the future. We look forward to strengthening our partnerships with public and private early childhood organizations and working in collaboration with families, providers, stakeholders and advocates across the state as we build back stronger in 2021.

Sincerely,



**Pamela Harris, PhD**  
ECLC Co-Chair



**Tom Massey**  
ECLC Co-Chair



**Susan Steele**  
ECLC Co-Chair



# About the Early Childhood Leadership Commission

The ECLC was originally established by the Colorado Legislature in 2010 and was re-authorized until 2023 through House Bill 17-1106. The Commission is comprised of 20 individuals representing a full spectrum of early childhood champions, advocates and leaders. It includes parents, early childhood professionals, Head Start, school districts, local municipalities, foundations, nonprofits, businesses and five state departments: Education, Health Care Policy & Financing, Higher Education, Human Services, and Public Health and Environment. As Colorado's state advisory council for early childhood, the role of the Commission is to be a statewide leader, subject matter expert and advocate for best and promising practices throughout the state.

## THE ECLC IS STATUTORILY CHARGED TO:

- Assist and monitor efforts to enhance alignment across programs and agencies that support young children and their families including collaboration among five state departments;
- Advise and make recommendations to the Governor's Office, the General Assembly and state departments; and
- Develop strategies and monitor efforts to increase the access, quality and equity of services and supports on behalf of pregnant women and children birth through age eight.



# 2020 ECLC Accomplishments

- Worked with more than **100 partners** including businesses, nonprofits, advocacy organizations, early childhood councils, government agencies and philanthropic partners to align and strengthen Colorado's early childhood systems on behalf of **pregnant women, children birth to eight and their families**

- Supported the passage of Proposition EE and developed the ***Universal Preschool Policy Discussion Guide***, a framework that uses an equity lens for policymakers as the state moves forward with designing a universal preschool program that serves all children in Colorado

- Developed the 2nd Annual ***Monitoring and Measuring Progress in Colorado's Early Childhood Areas of Opportunity*** report that provides ongoing information on key indicators for the three Areas of Opportunity identified by the Commission in 2018

- Added Communications resources and continued to encourage early childhood professionals to share and align their work on the ***Early Childhood Colorado Framework*** website, an interactive platform providing Colorado with a tool to better understand how the state is making progress toward the outcomes in the *Framework*

- Committed to ensuring that equity, diversity and inclusion are central to the work of the Commission and its Subcommittees

- Continued to implement the ***Early Childhood Workforce 2020 Plan***, Colorado's early childhood professional development plan, through coordination with the Early Childhood Workforce Development Subcommittee and the numerous workforce initiatives around the state

- Advised the CDHS Office of Early Childhood on the ***Colorado Shines Brighter, Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five – Renewal Grant***, supporting the state's shared vision to ensure all children are ready for school when entering kindergarten

- Worked with the Office of Governor Jared Polis and the Colorado General Assembly to promote best and promising practices related to early childhood policy

- Served as the ***State Advisory Council*** that advised on federal grant applications related to pregnant women and children birth through age eight and submitted letters of support required for Colorado to apply for those grants

# Our Strategies

In collaboration with our partners, we use the following STRATEGIES FOR ACTION to help guide all of our work across early childhood systems in Colorado.



**CONNECT AND  
EMPOWER  
FAMILIES**



**MAKE  
DATA INFORMED  
DECISIONS**



**ENCOURAGE  
PUBLIC-PRIVATE  
PARTNERSHIPS**



**BUILD CAPACITY  
AND SUSTAINABLE  
BUSINESS PRACTICES**



**PURSUE QUALITY  
AND CONSUMER  
AFFORDABILITY**



**PROMOTE AND  
SHARE KNOWLEDGE**



**DEVELOP  
AND RETAIN THE  
WORKFORCE**



**VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR  
ECLC RESOURCES &  
PAST NOTABLE WORK**

[earlychildhoodcolorado.org](http://earlychildhoodcolorado.org)

- [ECLC Equity Statement](#)
- [Senate Bill 19-063 Infant and Family Child Care Home Action Plan Report](#)
- [2020 Executive Order](#)
- [ECLC Areas of Opportunity](#)
- [Early Childhood Colorado Framework Website](#)
- [Past ECLC Annual Reports, 2012 - 2019](#)
- [ECLC Early Childhood Communication Efforts in Colorado](#)
- [2019 Executive Order](#)
- [Member List](#)
- [Organizational Chart](#)
- [ECLC Bylaws](#)
- [Enabling Legislation](#)



# Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

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## **A Statement from the Early Childhood Leadership Commission:**

The *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* is founded upon the pillars of access, quality and equity in serving all children and families in our state. These guiding principles speak to the commitment of the early childhood community to declare unequivocally that racism has no place in our communities.

Sadly, for many children in our state, their experience is inequitable from birth. This is evidenced by numerous indicators that show that children of color consistently face barriers that lead to lower educational attainment, poorer health outcomes and other lifelong challenges. The importance of early care and education in challenging and breaking through these systemic inequities cannot be overstated. Children's experiences in their formative years have the power to change our world. Three-month-old babies can visually categorize faces by race. Toddlers begin to connect behaviors to a person's racial features. Preschoolers can identify and act out against racial injustice on their own.

The recent events our state and country have experienced, in addition to the unprecedented times we are facing already in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, have challenged all of us to stand united and steadfast in our determination to stop a pattern of injustice and inequality.

Today, more than ever, we must stand together and turn anger and frustration into advocacy and action. We will first listen and then reflect, in order for all voices to be heard. We will examine our own organizational practices and procedures.

Throughout the past year, the ECLC has engaged in discussions at the Commission meetings as well as each subcommittee to identify opportunities to embed inclusion, diversity and equity practices into our work. We are committed to taking action steps throughout 2021 to keep these principles at the forefront of our work.

We express our sincere gratitude to all of you who have dedicated your work and your lives to fighting for access, quality and equity within your communities. We stand with you and know that we have much more work to do, together.

# Highlights from the ECLC Subcommittees

## ► COMMUNICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

Co-Chairs: Tom Massey, Katie Facchinello and Gerri Gomez Howard (former)

The ECLC formed the Communication Subcommittee to work with parents, providers and stakeholders to advance appropriate, accessible and timely communication efforts with parents and caregivers throughout Colorado. Over the past several years, the Subcommittee has worked with stakeholders to understand the amount and variety of parent and caregiver communication and engagement efforts in Colorado and provided recommendations for the field to better support and connect with parents and caregivers. From this research, eleven recommendations were developed across three areas: [noise reduction](#), [quality and engagement](#).

Recognizing the key role that early childhood professionals play as key messengers in their communities, the Communication Subcommittee has focused on creating resources that streamline effective community strategies and connect those in the early childhood field to examples, toolkits and research. The Subcommittee finalized the Communications Guidelines for Engaging with Parents and Caregivers checklist and began sharing it with early childhood programs and providers; in addition, they developed an online resource with national and local tools, resources and examples organized by the Guidelines. The online platform launched at the end of 2020 as part of the

*Early Childhood Colorado Framework* website, and the Subcommittee will work throughout 2021 to promote the resources and gather feedback from partners and stakeholders to inform future work.

## Future Priorities

In 2021, the Communications Subcommittee will:

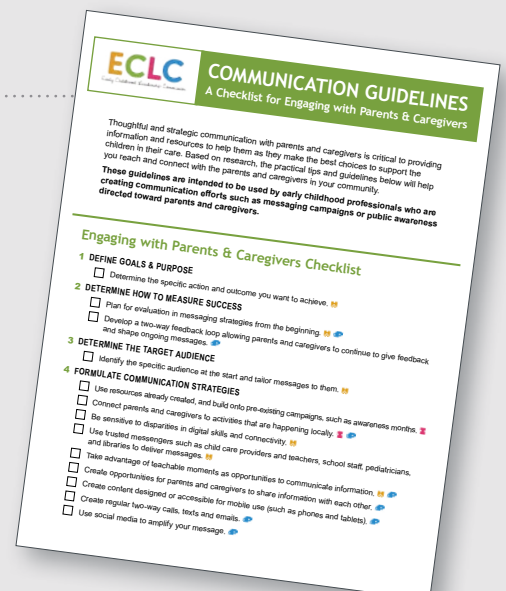
- Develop a communications plan for the Commission and the Subcommittee's outreach and engagement efforts;
- Promote the communication resources on the Early Childhood Colorado Framework website;
- Promote best practices among providers, organizations and programs for communicating about early childhood with parents and caregivers;
- Recognize & support effective communication efforts of providers, organizations and programs with parents and caregivers.

## Early Childhood Colorado Framework

The *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* is a shared vision that Colorado is a place where all children are valued, healthy and thriving. In 2019, the ECLC led the design of the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* website, an interactive platform used by early childhood professionals to share and align their work.

Now, the website also includes communications resources - such as an easy-to-use Communications Guidelines Checklist for Engaging with Parents & Caregivers - to help support early childhood professionals with their efforts to effectively and strategically engage with the parents and caregivers in their community.

Visit the *Framework* website to learn more about all of these resources and share the work you are doing to advance the Outcomes of the *Framework*.



[EARLYCHILDHOODFRAMEWORK.ORG](http://EARLYCHILDHOODFRAMEWORK.ORG)



## ► DATA SUBCOMMITTEE

**Co-Chairs: Susan Steele, Whitney LeBoeuf, Kate Reinemund and Charlotte Brantley (former)**

The Commission and its Data Subcommittee strongly support the consistent and responsible use of relevant, reliable and secure data to better understand populations across the state, identify opportunities to create efficiencies within programs and across departments, and encourage sufficient public and private investments in the early childhood system. This year brought an intentional focus on equity, diversity and inclusion, which led the Data Subcommittee to consider data collection methods as well as interpretation and analysis when reviewing and considering data and information. This focus will continue in the future, as the Subcommittee works to include more diverse voices at the table and embed an equity lens into all of their work.

Reliable, relevant and secure data guides and informs early childhood decision-makers at all levels who are working to ensure all children are valued, healthy and thriving in Colorado.

Early in 2020, the Subcommittee developed recommendations to revise how kindergarten school readiness data is reported and what data is available at the state level in order to better understand what children need to be ready for kindergarten; these recommendations were endorsed by the Commission and shared with policymakers. In March, the State Board of Education decided to change the reporting method to include statewide data across each of the six named domains. This is a significant advancement in understanding school readiness across the state. The Data Subcommittee looks forward to continuing to

support the use of kindergarten school readiness data to inform policy decisions that better support children, their families and educators.

The Subcommittee finalized the indicators to measure and track progress of the Commission's three Areas of Opportunity and support the development of the second annual *Monitoring and Measuring Progress in Colorado's Early Childhood Areas of Opportunity: 2020* report.

Finally, the Subcommittee supported partners and stakeholders in their research efforts throughout the COVID-19 efforts and created a space for sharing and learning from one another.



## Future Priorities

In 2021, the Data Subcommittee will:

- Implement an equity lens across their work to ensure the data used to drive decisions is collected and interpreted at the Commission and subcommittees in a way that promotes equity, diversity and inclusion;
- Using the 2020 Report, advance the three ECLC Areas of Opportunity and identify policy recommendations as appropriate;
- Review and disseminate trusted, publicly available early childhood data resources and reports on the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* website; and
- Champion the use of reliable, relevant and secure data to drive decisions across all levels of early childhood practice.

## ► PROGRAM QUALITY & ALIGNMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

**Co-Chairs: Anna Jo Haynes, Anji Gallanos, Jeanne McQueeney, Letty Bass (former) and Melissa Colzman (former)**

The Program Quality and Alignment (PQA) Subcommittee identifies opportunities for, and barriers to, the alignment of standards, rules, policies and procedures to ensure that children and families have access to the services and supports they need. Once again, the Subcommittee served as the advisory body for the Preschool Development Grant (PDG), bringing together a diverse array of programs and perspectives throughout 2020 to guide implementation of the Colorado Shines Brighter Strategic Plan.

In order to advance alignment across early childhood, the Subcommittee identified a particular topic at each meeting in 2020 and invited members to share their perspectives and their work. This created a shared space for learning as well as an opportunity to hear from experts working at the local, regional and state level, including parent and family voice.

The Program Quality and Alignment Subcommittee supported two Working Groups this year:

- Colorado Shines Brighter Working Group was convened to create a Landscape Analysis of organizations advancing the Colorado Shines Brighter Strategic Plan and to develop recommendations to update Colorado's plan. These recommendations were endorsed by the Commission in December 2020 and will drive the work of the Preschool Development Grant and PQA throughout 2021.
- Home Visiting Investment Strategy Working Group is charged with developing a strategy to scale a continuum of home visiting services in Colorado and guide the release of the future funding solicitations from the Office of Early Childhood, including Federal MIECHV funding. The strategy will support planning for state budget requests, the solicitation of new federal funding opportunities and alignment with philanthropic funding for home visiting.



## Future Priorities

In 2021, the Program Quality and Alignment Subcommittee will:

- Continue to guide and support the implementation of the Colorado Shines Brighter Statewide Birth through Five Strategic Plan;
- Promote and enhance the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* website resource to share program information and highlight progress that Colorado is making on the *Framework* outcomes for children and families; and
- Create a space for early childhood organizations across the state to connect with one another, learn from each other, and align programs, services and outcomes to strengthen early childhood in Colorado.

## ▶ EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Co-Chairs: Heather Craiglow, Pamela Harris, Rebecca Kantor and Jennifer O'Brien

In recognition of the tremendous importance of highly qualified early childhood educators in the lives of children and families to support their healthy growth and development, as well as the importance of aligning and sustaining efforts to advance a system that supports early childhood educators, the Commission was pleased to create the Early Childhood Workforce Development (ECWD) Subcommittee. Formerly known as the Early Childhood Professional Development (ECPD) Advisory Working Group, the ECWD is charged with implementing Colorado's Early Childhood Workforce 2020 Plan and developing recommendations regarding a quality, cohesive professional development and career advancement system, including performance metrics to guide continuous improvement processes for professionals working with young children. This plan, which was endorsed by the Commission in June 2017, focuses on retention, recruitment and compensation for early childhood professionals and outlines specific strategies and objectives to elevate this workforce so young children have consistent, effective and caring educators.

The Subcommittee identified four strategies within the EC Workforce 2020 Plan to focus their work throughout the year:

- Establish clearly-defined, shared terminology for different roles and credentials that cross settings

and sectors. (Workforce Obj 1, b)

- Explore relationships with early childhood councils to develop professional learning communities to share effective strategies around recruitment, retention and improving educator efficacy. (Recruitment and Retention Obj. 1, g)
- Explore relationships with early childhood councils to develop professional learning communities to share effective strategies around enhancing compensation, including wages and benefits. (Compensation, Obj. 1, f)
- Identify barriers and convene a roundtable to identify solutions to successfully recruit and retain people of color in leadership roles. (Recruitment and Retention Obj. 4, b)

The Subcommittee focused much of their work on equity, diversity and inclusion, including learning from early childhood leaders of Color and discussing opportunities to recruit and retain a diverse workforce. In addition to the progress made in these four strategy areas, the Subcommittee focused on the supports needed to sustain the early childhood field during the COVID-19 pandemic. Members shared resources with one another on program operations, business supports, health and safety efforts and mental health resources.

## Future Priorities

In 2021 the Early Childhood Workforce Development Subcommittee will:

- Identify state and local opportunities to elevate the early childhood workforce, including legislative development and implementation;
- Guide implementation of the workforce development and business support strategies identified in the Preschool Development Grant; and
- Develop recommendations and resources to recruit, retain and support early childhood educators and leaders of Color.





# Supporting Access to High-Quality Preschool for All Colorado's Children

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 healthy, life-long positive outcomes. The early care and education sector is a cornerstone of local and state economic health, enabling parents to work and provide for their families.

In November 2020, Colorado voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition EE: Tobacco and E-Cigarette Tax Increase for Health and Education Programs, which will provide needed revenue to secure access to voluntary preschool for all children and support a well-qualified workforce to create a brighter, healthy future for Colorado's kids. In addition to increasing early childhood outcomes, this measure will drive significant outcomes on the health of our children, families and communities. Taxing nicotine products has been proven to reduce the number of young people who start using tobacco; increase the number of people who quit using nicotine products; and improve overall population health.

We applaud the Colorado General Assembly for referring this bipartisan measure to the voters of Colorado and are grateful to Governor Jared Polis

for continuing to support health, education and early childhood in our state.

The ECLC was proud to endorse this measure and shortly after its passage created the Universal Preschool Policy Discussion Guide, which will serve as a resource for policymakers and early childhood stakeholders as we work to create a sustainable preschool program that serves all Colorado's kids the year before they enter Kindergarten. The guide contains critical components of a universal preschool system as well as key considerations when weighing policy options. Consistent with the ECLC's work throughout the year, the Guide focuses on equity and ensuring that the system is built so that all children, regardless of their race and ethnicity, their economic status or their zip code, can access high-quality care in the environment of their choice, while focusing the greatest resources to those who face the most significant barriers to school success.

The ECLC looks forward to engaging with legislators, policymakers, and stakeholders as we work to re-imagine a sustainable, accessible and equitable preschool program in Colorado that supports every child to succeed.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT  
**UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL POLICY DISCUSSION GUIDE**

# The ECLC Partners with State Agencies to Support Young Children and Their Families

## Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing (HCPF)

HCPF administers Health First Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid Program), Child Health Plan *Plus* (CHP+) and other programs for Coloradans who qualify. The Department's mission is to improve health care access and outcomes for the people HCPF serves while demonstrating sound stewardship of financial resources.

Health First Colorado is the largest program, covering approximately 1.3 million Coloradans. Children comprise approximately 41% of Health First Colorado members. Most Health First Colorado members are enrolled in the Accountable Care Collaborative, which seeks to improve member health and experience while improving health

care affordability. CHP+, which includes children and pregnant women, covered approximately 78,000 Colorado kids and pregnant women in the state fiscal year 2019-20. Approximately 44% of all babies born in Colorado in calendar year 2019 were born to Health First Colorado or CHP+ moms. HCPF also works closely with other state agencies, stakeholders and partners to improve the health and well-being of children in Colorado with a focus on the social determinants of health.

LEARN MORE ABOUT HCPF AT [COLORADO.GOV/HCPF](https://colorado.gov/hcpf)

## Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE)

CDPHE provides valuable services to improve the health of all Colorado children, youth, parents and families. Some highlights:

- Established seven new **MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH PRIORITIES** for the 2021-2025 Title V Block Grant, focusing on social determinants of physical and emotional health.
- Reported **95% IMMUNIZATION COMPLIANCE** among children in 1,747 child care facilities.
- Published the **MATERNAL MORTALITY IN COLORADO, 2014-2016 REPORT**, including recommendations to prevent maternal deaths and support maternal health and equity.
- Virtually trained 212 medical and dental staff through **CAVITY FREE AT THREE**.

CDPHE's COVID-19 pandemic response supported children, youth, parents, and families throughout 2020. Some highlights:

- Rapidly transitioned Colorado WIC to a **REMOTE MODEL OF HIGH-QUALITY WIC SERVICES** to families during the pandemic.
- Conducted intensive **CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM OUTREACH (CACFP)** with CDHS and implemented a joint technology solution with the Department of Education for easier school district child care participation in CACFP.
- Provided **COVID-19 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH GUIDANCE** and ongoing technical assistance to local public health agencies, stakeholders, and child care facilities.
- Developed **COVID-19 PERINATAL AND BREASTFEEDING GUIDANCE** for providers and a [public pregnancy FAQ](#).

- Released COVID-19 resources for families and organizations to support **CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS**.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CDPHE AT [COLORADO.GOV/CDPHE](https://colorado.gov/cdphe)





## Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS)

This year has presented many challenges for families and young children in Colorado. CDHS focused on a number of COVID-19 response efforts in 2020, in addition to doing vital work to support children and families into the future.

The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) Division of Early Care and Learning (DECL) continues to provide significant support to child care providers and families during COVID-19. The OEC received \$42,457,884.00 in funding through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The funding was used to directly support families and the early childhood community, including grants and supplies to child care providers, child care tuition credits for families of essential workers, supports for low-income families, and more.

In addition to the CARES Act funding, House Bill 20B-1002, Emergency Relief Programs For Child Care Sector, passed during the 2020 special legislative session. The legislation creates two emergency relief grant programs to allow the state to allocate and quickly distribute money to existing licensed and start-up child care providers in Colorado.

The OEC Division of Community and Family Support (DCFS) also continues to provide significant support during COVID-19. The Early Intervention (EI) program pivoted to virtual services, along with home visiting and educational programs including SafeCare and Incredible Years. DCFS helped to coordinate a shipment of essential supplies including diapers, wipes and formula to Family Resource Centers (FRCs) across the state, who have seen

an significant increase in requests for assistance during the pandemic.

Outside of COVID-19 response, the OEC received two exciting grants in 2020. First, a \$7.5 million Colorado Fatherhood Grant that will provide services across seven sites in Colorado and is designed to serve adult fathers age 18 and older through fatherhood partnerships. The program will serve 1,820 eligible fathers over five years.

In January, the OEC was thrilled to learn that Colorado had been selected to receive a Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Renewal. The grant provides \$33.5 million over three years, and funds will support Colorado's vision that all children are ready for school when entering kindergarten.

On September 23, 2020, The Colorado Behavioral Health Task Force released its Blueprint for Reform at a press conference with Governor Jared Polis. The big three recommendations for improving the current behavioral health system include: Creating a Behavioral Health administration to ensure a standard of high quality, integrated, people-first behavioral health care that is accessible to ALL Coloradans; Implement Care Coordination that connects the dots on patient care; and implement the top 19 recommendations focused on the key pillars that represent the fundamentals for a strong behavioral health system.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CDHS AT [CDHS.COLORADO.GOV](https://cdhs.colorado.gov)

## Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

CDE values its partnership with the Early Childhood Leadership Commission and its member agencies and organizations. CDE has a strong commitment to coherence of programs that support children and families across the preschool through third grade (P – 3) continuum.

CDE's P-3 Office consists of several teams working together to support comprehensive early childhood alignment within the department. Initiatives supported within the office are the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP), Results Matter, Kindergarten School Readiness, and the READ Act.

Highlights for the year include:

- Awarding of the Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant to Colorado. This five-year, \$16 million federal grant will support a statewide comprehensive system of literacy birth to grade 12. The grant supports the development and implementation of a state literacy plan with 95% of funds for local school districts to implement their own literacy plans to improve student learning outcomes in Colorado.
- Supporting the Preschool Policy Leadership Group, which is informing recommendations to policymakers on the design of preschool expansion for Colorado.
- Presenting nationally on Colorado's preschool inclusion rates with the University of Denver's Positive Early Learning Experiences Center.
- Administrating over \$128 million in CPP dollars to fund preschool for at-risk children in 176 of Colorado's 178 school districts to serve 23,474 children. Longitudinal analysis continues to show that CPP graduates are more likely to graduate from high school on time and less likely to have a significant reading deficiency in kindergarten compared to children who did not participate in CPP. The

CPP program has served over 400,000 children over its 32-year history.

- Providing no cost evidence-based training in teaching reading to any kindergarten through third grade teacher in Colorado. As of September, over 7,000 have enrolled.
- Collaborating with the Office of Early Childhood on the Preschool Development Grant to support preschool to kindergarten transitions. As part of this work, CDE was able to provide additional funding for schools to expand their Early Literacy Grants to support preschool teams with professional development in reading.
- Issuing 7,840 Early Childhood Professional Credentials, 74 Coaching Credentials and 124 Trainer Credentials.
- Creating 262 clock hours of community-based training in the Professional Development Information System. We are also working to get our community colleges on board to offer continuing education credits for those clock hours as well.
- Supporting thousands of users through the Professional Development Information System Help Desk to enable early childhood educators to access supports and resources.
- Supporting the Early Childhood Professional Development Advisory as it began work on the EC Workforce 2020 Plan.
- Completion of a new review preschool assessment tools for placement on the Results Matter menu resulting in additional tools added to the menu.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CDE AT [CDE.STATE.CO.US](https://cde.state.co.us)

## Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE)

The Colorado Department of Higher Education strives to support a strong early childhood educator workforce.

Highlights include:

- **Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreements** between 2- and 4-year public colleges and universities continue to be supported that allow students to transfer credits creating an efficient and affordable pathway to earning a bachelor's degree in early childhood education.
- **Colorado Mountain College** is the most recent institution of higher education to be approved to offer a bachelor's degree in the field of early childhood education bringing the total to 13 public and private colleges and universities across the state that offer programs in the field.
- **200 credentials** in early childhood education, early childhood special education, and early childhood special education specialist were completed at 4-year programs during the 2019-20 academic year.
- **19 stipends** were awarded to recruit and retain early childhood teachers and early childhood special education teachers who commit to teach in public schools in rural Colorado.
- **Family, School, and Community Partnership** was the topic of a convening for educator preparation faculty based on areas that in-service teachers identified where they could use more support in recent statewide needs assessments.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CDHE AT [HIGHERED.COLORADO.GOV](https://higher.ed.colorado.gov)



# COVID-19: Impacts of a Global Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 brought communities across the country to a halt. As businesses, restaurants, and schools shut down to protect the health and safety of Coloradans, the early care and learning industry - an already stressed market - struggled to stay afloat.

As early care and education community programs, family child care homes, and school districts had to make the heart rendering decision to close or limit their services due to health and safety concerns and a decrease in enrollment, the impact to communities was immediate. Throughout Colorado, businesses, policy makers, and community leaders were recognizing that the early care and learning sector serves as the backbone for so many essential workers who need safe, high-quality environments for their children while they perform critical functions to keep Coloradans healthy and the economy functioning.

## Research led by Early Milestones Colorado showed that in 2020:

▶ **Enrollment in early childhood facilities decreased statewide by more than 50%**

▶ **23% of workforce was furloughed or laid off**

▶ **50% of parents have seen their incomes decrease, disproportionately impacting families of Color**

Starting with the Emergency Child Care Collaborative, a public/private partnership that connected essential workers with available child care and access to funding, and continuing throughout the year to enhance cleaning practices and develop new health and safety practices, early childhood providers rose to the challenge and continued to offer care so children could be in healthy, safe environments while their parents and caregivers worked. Facing significant challenges in their communities, Family Resource Centers, Early Childhood Councils, health and mental health providers, school districts, and a wide array of other service organizations stepped up to connect families with vital resources and keep their communities healthy.

As Governor Polis, the General Assembly and state agencies all worked together to bring much needed resources to communities to address the changing needs of Coloradans, the Commission created a space to look across early childhood sectors and systems to identify opportunities to share resources and provide support for those continuing to provide quality learning environments, access to health care, and basic needs like food and shelter.

We want to thank everyone who worked tirelessly during these challenging times to ensure families and children were able to receive the support and care that they need. We are committed to working together and advocating for building back a stronger system that truly supports all children to be valued, healthy and thriving.



# Looking Forward

Even during this challenging and unprecedented year, Colorado early childhood stakeholders proved once again that we can work together to ensure children and families grow and thrive. Our state has made tremendous progress across the three domains of the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework*: Health & Well-Being, Family Support & Education and Learning & Development. Families, professionals, advocates and policymakers have worked together to build coordinated systems that support local areas to be responsive to the needs of their communities. The collaboration between state and local entities across private and public domains is a testament to Colorado's long and unwavering commitment to supporting children and families.

The global pandemic brought people together to serve children and families in new ways; however, it also highlighted the gaps and challenges that still exist in our systems to ensure that all children and families have the support they need to reach our shared vision: **all children are valued, healthy and thriving**. In 2021, the Commission will:

- Engage in the preschool policy planning process and champion policies that promote a system in which every child has the opportunity to succeed
- Continue to elevate the early childhood workforce, emphasizing the importance of workforce development as the state moves toward universal preschool
- Use the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* as a guide to collaborative efforts and increase the number of early childhood programs for alignment on the *Framework* website
- Serve as stewards of equity and stand united and steadfast with the early childhood community to promote diversity and inclusion
- Promote the best practices resource document, *Communication Guidelines for Engaging with Parents and Caregivers*, to encourage parent and caregiver engagement and share tools, resources and strategies through an online platform
- Collaborate on the implementation of the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five strategic plan to ensure all children are ready for school when entering kindergarten
- Review data for the Commission's three Areas of Opportunity using the second annual *Monitoring and Measuring Progress in Colorado's Early Childhood Areas of Opportunity* report to drive appropriate policy recommendations in 2021



The Commission is committed to working with Governor Polis, the Colorado General Assembly, state agencies and stakeholders to address the early childhood challenges Colorado faces to ensure that all children are valued, healthy and thriving.

We are grateful to all of the diverse organizations that work with the ECLC in Colorado for your dedication, your innovation and your contributions to this important work. We look forward to partnering with you in 2021!

# 2020 Early Childhood Leadership Commission

## 2019-20 Co-Chairs

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**Susan Steele**, President & CEO - Buell Foundation

**Tom Massey**, Deputy Executive Director - Department of Health Care Policy & Financing

**Pamela Harris, Ph.D.**, President & CEO - Mile High Early Learning

**Elsa Holguín**, President & CEO - Denver Preschool Program (former Co-Chair)

## 2019-20 Commissioners

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**Angie Paccione, Ph.D.**, Executive Director - Colorado Department of Higher Education

**Charlotte Brantley**, President/CEO - Clayton Early Learning

**George Welsh**, Superintendent - Cañon City Schools

**Gerri Gomez Howard**, Principal - Gomez Howard Group

**Heather Craiglow**, Head Start Collaboration Director - Office of Early Childhood, Colorado Department of Human Services

**Ida Rhodes**, Director of Programs - Catholic Charities Diocese of Pueblo

**Jai Scott**, Parent Representative

**Jeanne McQueeney**, County Commissioner - Eagle County

**Jeff Kuhr, Ph.D.**, Executive Director - Mesa County Health Department

**Jerene Petersen**, Deputy Executive Director for Community Partnerships - Colorado Department of Human Services

**Kate Reinemund**, Executive Director - Constellation Philanthropy

**K. Jehan Benton-Clark**, Portfolio Director - Colorado Health Foundation

**Melissa Colman, Ph.D.**, Associate Commissioner, Student Learning - Colorado Department of Education

**Ryan Beiser**, Regional President - PNC Bank

**Sue Renner**, Vice President of Philanthropy - Merage Foundations

## New Commissioners in 2020

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**Adeeb Khan**, Vice President of Corporate Social Responsibility, Delta Dental of Colorado; and Executive Director of the Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation

**Anne-Marie Braga**, Deputy Executive Director for Community Partnerships - Colorado Department of Human Services

**Happy Haynes**, Executive Director - Denver Parks and Recreation, City and County of Denver

**Rebecca Kantor, Ph.D.**, Dean of the School of Education & Human Development - University of Colorado Denver

**Tracy Miller**, Nutrition Services Branch Director - Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment

## Staff

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**Kristina Heyl**, Director

**Amanda Culbertson**, Program Assistant

# ECLC Annual Report Acronym Guide

**ACC:** Accountable Care Collaborative

**CCCAP:** Colorado Child Care Assistance Program

**CDE:** Colorado Department of Education

**CDHE:** Colorado Department of Higher Education

**CDHS:** Colorado Department of Human Services

**CDPHE:** Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

**CHP+:** Child Health Plan *Plus*

**CSB:** Colorado Shines Brighter

**ECLC:** Early Childhood Leadership Commission

**ECWD:** Early Childhood Workforce Development Subcommittee

**HCPF:** Health Care Policy & Financing

**LAUNCH:** Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children's Health

**MIECHV:** Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting

**OEC:** Office of Early Childhood

**PDIS:** Professional Development Information System

**PDG:** Preschool Development Grant

**PQA:** Program Quality and Alignment Subcommittee

**QRIS:** Quality Rating and Improvement System

Thank you to Mile High Early Learning, the University of Colorado-Denver, and the Office of Early Childhood, CDHS for donating the photography used in this report!

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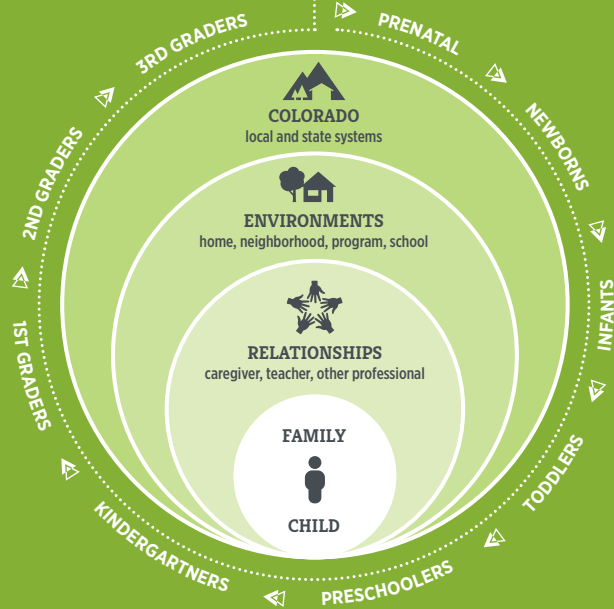
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# Early Childhood Colorado Framework

all children are valued, healthy and thriving



## Results



### CHILD

Young children reach their developmental potential and are ready to succeed in school and in life



### ENVIRONMENTS

Environments that impact children are safe, stable and supportive



### RELATIONSHIPS

Adults are knowledgeable, responsive and interact effectively with and on behalf of children



### COLORADO

Localities and the state attain economic and social benefits by prioritizing children and families

# ECLC

*Early Childhood Leadership Commission*

For questions relating to the ECLC, please visit [earlychildhoodcolorado.org](http://earlychildhoodcolorado.org)