



COLORADO

Office of Early Childhood

Annual Report to the Colorado General Assembly: The Infant and Toddler Quality and Availability Grant Program in Colorado

Submitted to:

The Senate Health and Human Services Committee and
The House Public Health and Human Services Committee
Senator Kevin Lundberg and Representative Dianne Primavera

By:

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Purpose

Pursuant to House Bill 13-1291, the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) has authored this report to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee and the House Public Health Care and Human Services Committee of the Colorado General Assembly. The purpose of the report is to provide the Health and Human Services Committee with information concerning the status of the Infant and Toddler Quality and Availability Grant program in Colorado. On December 1st of each year, CDHS is required to report to the Health and Human Services Committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The report includes a summary of the data received from local grantees, the total amount of grants and grant monies awarded, and the total increase in the number of infants and toddlers under three years of age served by the Infant and Toddler Quality and Availability Grant program.

Summary of Data Received from Local Grantees

The number of infants and toddlers under three years of age served because of the grant program in home-based programs: 45 children were served by the grant in home-based programs. This includes child care subsidy and private pay enrollment.

The number of infants and toddlers under three years of age served because of the grant program in center-based programs: A total of 2,430 infants and toddlers were served in center-based programs utilizing grant funding. This includes child care subsidy and private pay enrollment.

Length of service: On average, infants and toddlers received services for 12 months.

Detailed description of quality improvements using grant monies:

Twelve grantees continued their implementation of the Infant Toddler Quality and Availability Grant (ITQA) program for a second year. Year one awards were made through an open, competitive request for proposal process. Grantees worked directly with child care programs within their respective community to improve quality and access. The following are detailed accounts, by grantee, of continued quality improvements efforts.

Grantee Counties include: Alamosa, Arapahoe, Boulder, Conejos, Costilla, Denver, Eagle, Fremont, Grand, Huerfano, Jefferson, Lake, La Plata, Larimer, Las Animas, Pitkin, Rio Grande, Saguache and Summit

Arapahoe County: The Arapahoe County Early Childhood Council (ACECC) served 20 child care programs and delivered a total of 1,170 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. Twenty-one scholarships were awarded to Early Childhood Directors to attend Director's Lunchbox meetings and a Director's Roundtable. Nine Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers (EQIT) training sessions, with follow-up EQIT coaching were offered to training participants. Finally, programs were able to participate in an Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ERS) training. This training supports programs to assess the quality of the learning environment for infants and toddlers up to 30 months of age.

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, ACECC facilitated two Nurturing Parenting Program (NPP) sessions. Sixteen adults and nine children were served through the two NPP sessions. In partnership with Arapahoe Library District, seven sessions per month of Stories and More and six sessions throughout the year of Make and Take were offered to

Family Friend and Neighbor providers. ACECC extended the Parents as Teachers Program to families of infants and toddlers who attend quality child care; fifty-two children and parents received one-on-one parenting support. Early Learning Consultants continued to train and support ITQA providers on the way Colorado Shines recognizes quality in the Family Partnerships arena through the submission of documentation. As a result, ITQA Providers were able to provide:

- Monthly family events: Back to School Nights, Open Houses, and Holiday Celebrations. These events offered families a chance to participate in program activities to get to know staff, teachers, and other families
- Family based trainings: Cooking Matters and Fitness Challenges
- Community resources: Health fairs and dental clinics
- Information provided to families about their infant/toddler's growth, development, and developmental milestones

With a total of \$124,594 in increased tiered reimbursements received for the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), child care programs were able to reinvest and increase quality by:

- Increasing teaching staff salaries
- Hiring additional staff
- Lowering teacher/child ratios within classrooms
- Purchasing early learning materials and supplies
- Providing scholarships for the professional development of staff
- Making capital improvements for their facilities to increase health and safety for the children

Boulder County: The Boulder County Early Childhood Council (ECCBC) served eighteen child care programs and delivered a total of 375 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. Through the grant ECCBC supported:

- Seven teachers in completing Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers (EQIT)/Early Childhood Education Courses
- One provider to complete the Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Certification
- One provider to complete the Positive Solutions for Families workshop
- Two providers to complete the Healthy Eating, Active Living program
- Eighteen Program Directors participated in the Directors Circle

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, nine providers received the Touchpoints training. Touchpoints helps to strengthen the caregiver's skills in establishing healthy positive relationships with parents. Participants report that this training improved the communication with the families served and strengthened parent involvement within their programs.

One provider hosted and completed the Positive Solutions for Families workshop. The workshop involved selected families and teachers from the site who came together to work on modules throughout the five week training series. The Director reported it was a very successful program and it strengthened teacher and family relationships and improved communication.

With a total of \$68,000 in increased tiered reimbursements received for Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), child care programs were able to reinvest and increase quality by:

- Increasing teaching staff salaries
- Hiring additional staff
- Lowering teacher/child ratios within the classroom
- Purchasing materials and supplies
- Providing incentives for professional development for staff
- Providing better employer benefits for staff (Health Insurance, Sick/Vacation Days, etc.)
- Making capital improvements for their facilities to increase the health and safety of children

Denver County: The Denver Early Childhood Council (DECC) served 30 child care programs and delivered a total of 260 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. Thirteen new infant/toddler classrooms were created within these programs. Grant funds were utilized to conduct safety inspections and address needed infant/toddler playground improvements.

The following professional development opportunities were offered by DECC:

- A Pre-licensing training was offered to fourteen potential new family child care providers. Child Care Start-Up Kits that include health and safety items as well as infant/toddler activities and materials were provided to these participants as a follow-up to the training.
- Seven Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers (EQIT) trainings offered (including three in Spanish) paired with coaching for 150 participants
- One Creative Curriculum: Infants and Toddlers training provided by national trainers, attended two day training)
- Two Strengthening Families trainings
- One teacher appreciation event

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, DECC staff:

- Organized a Strengthening Families Training series to support providers on implementing the five protective factors to support families, enhance child development, and reduce potential child abuse and neglect
- Provided participating child care programs with a supply of the Colorado Association for Infant Mental Health Resource Wheel and the Dad's Guide to Fun with Your Baby and Baby Stages: A Parent's and Caregiver's Guide to Social and Emotional Development of Infants and Toddlers (birth to three years) to distribute to families with infants/toddlers participating in the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP)
- Shared Child Development and parent-child interaction resources with satellite Denver Human Services offices where families can access and enroll in CCCAP and other services

Tiered reimbursements received for Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), continue to support child care programs to invest in quality by:

- Purchasing materials and supplies
- Providing scholarships for staff professional development
- Making capital improvements for their facilities to increase the health and safety of children

Fremont County: The Fremont Community ECHO and Family Center Early Childhood Council served four child care programs and delivered 180 total coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs included ten inclusive classrooms that served a total of 128 children. One of the four programs received an onsite quality rating assessment, receiving a four star quality rating level. Two

programs earned a National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation. A total of \$8000 was spent on educational materials and classroom improvements. Funds also supported one program to open an additional infant classroom.

This grantee offered the following professional development opportunities to professionals working within the participating programs:

- Early Childhood Educational college coursework
- Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers classes
- Mental health class for infant caregivers

Participants reported improved skills and knowledge base and resources resulted from these activities.

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, the following opportunities were provided:

- Developmental Ages and Stages Questionnaire along with vision and hearing screenings were offered at no charge to the children enrolled in the participating programs. Parents were actively involved in their child's developmental screenings. Developmental screening results were discussed with families, including developmental support strategies.
- All enrolled infants and toddlers were monitored for progress in six different developmental activities using the Results Matter, Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment. On average 100% of birth to 1 year olds, 83% of 1 to 2 year olds, and 86% of 2 to 3 year olds reached Widely Held Expectations by the June reporting period. Widely Held Expectations are predictive of a child's success in managing the social, behavioral and educational content demands of traditional school environments.
- Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment information was shared three times per year with parents, and parents provided input into the planning that was generated from the assessment.
- Monthly family events were held, such as Fairy Tale Night, Fall Festival, Pictures with Santa, and Health Fairs. These events offered families the opportunity to network with other families and meet the staff.

With a total of \$14,563 in increased tiered reimbursements received for the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), programs were able to reinvest and increase quality by:

- Increasing teaching staff salaries
- Lowering teacher/child ratios within the classroom
- Purchasing materials and supplies
- Providing scholarships for professional development for staff
- Making capital improvements for their facilities to increase health and safety for the children

Huerfano and Las Animas Counties: The Huerfano-Las Animas Counties Early Childhood Advisory Council (HuLA) served three child care programs (two centers and one family child care home) and delivered 97 total coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. Ten jobs were created within these facilities. The family child care home expanded enrollment to include infants and toddlers enrolled in the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP). This program has received a quality Level

2 rating within the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System. The highest Colorado Shines rating is a Level 5.

The following professional development opportunities were offered by HuLA:

- Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers (EQIT) training, completed by sixteen teachers
- Early Childhood Education (ECE) 101 college portfolio credit through Trinidad State Junior College, completed by fourteen participants
- Two Colorado Shines professional development opportunities were offered locally to ten participants
- Tuition assistance was provided to twenty ECE professionals to advance their knowledge and formal education

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies:

- HuLA partnered with Assuring Better Child Health and Development for technical assistance to strengthen early identification and referral practices. As a result, a collaborative community screening event was held to conduct developmental screenings for children within the community
- Week of the Young Child event held in April in Huerfano and Las Animas disseminated information to over 250 families
- Over 900 Early Learning and Development Guidelines resource packets were provided to families throughout the community. These packets summarize what children can and should be able to do from birth to eight years of age
- Early Learning and Development Guidelines were provided to 150 early childhood teachers
- A social media campaign was launched to reinforce the importance of high-quality child care, the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), early literacy and other valuable resources related to infants and toddlers

As a result of tiered reimbursement, two child care centers have been able to remain open - one being the largest child care center in Las Animas County and the other the only child care center in Huerfano County. With a total of \$127,459 in increased tiered reimbursements received for CCCAP, programs were able to reinvest and increase quality by:

- Hiring additional staff
- Lowering teacher/child ratios within the classroom
- Purchasing materials and supplies
- Providing scholarships for professional development for staff

La Plata County: The Early Childhood Council of La Plata County (ECCLPC) served four child care programs and delivered a total of 34 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. The Council was successful in creating partnerships with local stakeholders such as Mercy Employee Childcare, La Plata Family Center, Campbell Center and La Plata Pregnancy Center to support the distribution of family resources, including providing a resource website for families (www.roadmapforparents.org); this resulted in more than 2,500 new visits to the site. The website was advertised through local partners in the form of magnets and bookmarks. Radio and print advertisements highlighted the Early Learning and Development Guidelines. The Council has been able to support Child Care Resource and Referral services that support families and providers seeking

assistance with the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP). These services include face-to-face meetings for both families and providers and have resulted in a total of 94 new referrals.

The following professional development opportunities were offered by ECCLPC:

- Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers (EQIT), nineteen participants additionally received an additional 80 hours of coaching and substitute support for teachers to participate
- Pyramid Plus Approach training, attended by 14 participants
- Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) & Professional Development Information System (PDIS) trainings, which attracted 79 participants
- Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and the ASQ-Social and Emotional (ASQ-SE) Developmental Screening in a Coordinated System of Care training was attended by 19 participants

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, the ECCLPC provided:

- Six sessions of Positive Solutions for Families workshops to a total of 31 individual participants. These workshops, conducted by a certified Pyramid Plus Trainer, were offered in a community based child care program and provided childcare for parents attending the workshops and materials for parents to take home to implement strategies.

With a total of \$33,538 in increased tiered reimbursements received for Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) child care programs were able to reinvest and increase quality by:

- Hiring additional staff
- Lowering teacher/child ratios within the classroom
- Helping close the gap between private pay and CCCAP reimbursement rates
- Creating a continuity of care model for teachers to stay with the children for a longer period of time without transitioning to a new teacher; and
- Providing scholarships for professional development for staff

Larimer County: The Early Childhood Council of Larimer County (ECCLC) served eighteen child care programs and delivered a total of 996 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. This grantee was able to support two new family child care providers to become licensed and provide additional infant and toddler slots in the county. Scholarships were provided so that staff within the ITQA programs could attend professional development opportunities. Other professional development offered by ECCLC included:

- University of Colorado-Denver graduate level coaching classes, attended by five coaching staff
- Collaboration meetings for staff, coaches, and trainers of Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers that supported overall planning and support strategies; and
- Scholarships to providers for professional development opportunities

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, the following opportunities were provided:

- Two “Be Ready” Fairs, hosted in Fort Collins and Loveland, supported an increase in parents’ knowledge of how they can support their children, and prepare them for kindergarten
- Parent education training for parents who have children enrolled in the Loveland ITQA programs in collaboration with the Thompson School District
- Training on primary care giving and continuity of care and what that means for families
- Screenings for families in Estes Park

Families reported the trainings as meaningful and were very supportive and thankful for the opportunities to have such trainings offered.

With a total of \$184,890 in increased tiered reimbursements received for the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), child care programs were able to reinvest and increase quality by:

- Supporting program operations
- Providing scholarships for professional development for staff; and
- Making capital improvements for their facilities to increase health and safety for the children

Eagle, Lake, and Pitkin counties: The Lake County Department of Human Services (LCDHS) and Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Council (RMECC) served 16 child care programs and delivered a total of 940 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These child care programs offered technical assistance by the Family Engagement Coordinators (FRC) to navigate the systems supported by the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP). This technical support helped programs to understand the systems and continue to provide CCCAP services to families in their areas. FRCs met with families to support them to apply for CCCAP funding. The County Human Services Director reported that this approach was collaborative and supportive, ensuring families get the services they need. In Eagle County, an additional 20 children were able to receive funding. Pitkin County was able to double their CCCAP enrollment numbers. Programs were supported to make improvements to support additional CCCAP eligible slots. One program opened a Toddler room; another was able to make capital improvements to meet licensing requirements.

The following professional development opportunities were offered to professionals working within or supporting ITQA programs:

- ITQA training attended by sixteen staff members
- The CCCAP Conference, hosted by CDHS, was attended by the FECs

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, The ECCLPC provided:

- Strengthening Families workshops to 57 participants
- The Incredible Years Toddler Parenting series to twelve participants
- A collaborative approach to supporting individual families

With a total of \$188,746 in increased tiered reimbursements received for CCCAP, programs were able to reinvest and increase quality by:

- Increasing teaching staff salaries

- Sustaining operations
- Purchasing materials and supplies
- Providing scholarships for professional development for staff
- Making capital improvements for their facilities to increase health and safety for the children

Alamosa, Rio Grande, Mineral, Saguache, Conejos and Costilla counties: The Early Childhood Council of the San Luis Valley (ECCSLV) served seven child care programs and delivered a total of 100 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. The ECCSLV coordinated efforts with Coaches, Family Engagement Coordinators and County staff to support families to access the Colorado Child Care Assistance program (CCCAP). The families in all participating classrooms received a detailed Family Resource Guide describing an array of services available to them in the San Luis Valley.

With a total of \$31,104 in increased tiered reimbursements received for CCCAP, programs were able to reinvest and increase quality by:

- Increasing teaching staff salaries
- Hiring additional staff
- Helping cover overhead operational costs
- Purchasing materials and supplies
- Providing scholarships for professional development for staff
- Making capital improvements for their facilities to increase health and safety for the children

Jefferson County: The Triad Early Childhood Council (Triad) served 11 child care programs and delivered a total of 703 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. Triad was able to support community based health fairs, dental clinics and provided information to families about early growth, development, and developmental milestones.

As a result of this grant the following professional development opportunities were offered:

- Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers (EQIT) training for 16 teachers
- Strengthening Families workshop attended by five teachers

To strengthen family engagement, ITQA providers offered the following events:

- Week of the Young Child, Open Houses, and Holiday events
- Love and Logic training
- Health fairs and dental clinics; and
- Information to families about their infant/toddler's growth, development, and developmental milestones

With a total of \$171,478 in increased tiered reimbursements received for Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), child care programs were able to reinvest and increase quality by:

- Purchasing materials and supplies
- Providing scholarships for professional development for staff; and

- Making capital improvements for their facilities to increase health and safety for the children

A Summary of the Number of Jobs Created through Grant Program

In year two of the grant, 77 new jobs were created. Positions created include teachers, administrators, small business owners (home providers), management, and coaches.

Total Amount of Grants and Grant Monies Awarded

The total budget for the Infant Toddler Quality and Availability Grant (ITQA) program is three million dollars annually. In year one, CDHS awarded 10 councils/agencies grant funds to 19 counties through an open competitive request for proposal process. These same grantees continued through year two and were required to utilize a minimum of 35 percent of the monies awarded to support tiered reimbursement strategies within their communities. The balance of funds is utilized by CDHS to cover administrative costs for this program.

Increase in the Number of Infants and Toddlers Under Three Years of Age Served

In year two, a total of an additional 177 slots were created for infants and toddlers under the age of three years. This includes both children receiving child care subsidies and making private payments.

Conclusion

The Infant and Toddler Quality and Availability (ITQA) Grant program serves as a valuable program in Colorado to support increased quality and access for infants and toddlers. This grant program supported the increased quality and access for 2,475 infants and toddlers under three years of age. A total of 131 programs have participated in quality improvement activities. Professional development opportunities to increase early childhood knowledge and skills have been provided to 485 staff members statewide. All grantees successfully implemented strategies to increase quality, access, family engagement and tiered reimbursement within their communities.