



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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December 1, 2016

Executive Summary

The Infant Toddler Quality and Availability (ITQA) grant serves as a valuable quality improvement program in Colorado to support increased quality and access for infants and toddlers. This program is implemented in 20 of the 64 counties and 11 of the 31 Early Childhood Councils. During FY 2015-16 165 licensed programs received quality improvement supports, with 3,832 hours of coaching and professional development opportunities delivered to increase early childhood knowledge and skills of staff statewide. This grant program supported the increased quality and access for 6,031 infants and toddlers under three years of age and an additional 417 slots were created within the grant cycle. Finally, a total of seventy-five new jobs were created. All grantees successfully implemented strategies to increase quality, access, family engagement, and tiered reimbursement within their communities.

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 ITQA 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 grant monies awarded, and the total increase in the number of infants and toddlers served by the Infant and Toddler Quality and Availability Grant program.

Total Amount of Grants and Grant Monies Awarded

The total annual budget for the ITQA grant is \$2,937,347.00. In year one, CDHS awarded contracts to 11 councils and 20 local DHS agencies grant funds through an open and competitive request for proposal process. ITQA is implemented in 20 of the 64 counties and 11 of the 31 Early Childhood Councils. Grantees were required to utilize 35% of the awarded funds to support tiered reimbursement strategies.

Participating Counties

The following counties implemented ITQA during this grant cycle: Alamosa, Arapahoe, Boulder, Conejos, Costilla, Denver, Eagle, Fremont, Grand, Huerfano, Jefferson, Lake, La Plata, Larimer, Las Animas, Mineral, Pitkin, Rio Grande, Saguache, and Summit.

Summary of Data Received from Local Grantees

The number of infants and toddlers under three years of age served in home-based programs

Twenty-two of the ITQA participating programs were family child care homes. This represents 13% of all participating ITQA programs during this grant cycle. These programs have a licensed capacity to serve 194 children. A total of 99 infants and toddlers were served by the grant in home-based programs: 40 children utilizing child care subsidy and 59 private pay enrollments.

The number of infants and toddlers under three years of age served in center-based programs

Center-based programs represent the majority of participating ITQA programs during this grant cycle (n=194 or 87%). These programs have a licensed capacity to serve 12,381 children. A total of 5,932 infants and toddlers were served by the grant in center-based programs: 1,503 children utilizing child care subsidy and 4,429 private pay enrollments.

Length of service

On average, the length of service for children receiving child care subsidy enrolled at ITQA programs was 93.3 days over SFY 2015-16. This is across all license types (home-based programs and center-based programs).

To determine child enrollment, CDHS analyzed Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) payment data. During the grant period 309,384 records were pulled for the 165 ITQA programs. A record is a child enrollment instance. An instance is defined as a known child, enrolling at a known facility, on a known date. There were 3,315 unique child records for the ITQA programs during the grant cycle. Child enrollment instances ranged between one and 302 occurrences. To determine length of service, records were filtered to only include children three years of age in the 165 ITQA facilities in which enrollments occurred in FY1516 (June 1, 2015 – July 31, 2016). This analysis included only regular and manual claim payment types.

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

An additional 417 slots were created for children three years of age or younger. This includes both CCCAP and private pay children.

Number of Jobs Created through the Grant Program

During the grant cycle 75 new jobs were created. Positions include teachers, administrators, small business owners (home providers), management, and coaches.

Overview of Quality Improvement Strategies

Eleven Early Childhood Councils and 20 local DHS agencies implemented the ITQA program during this grant cycle. Awards to grantees 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.

Arapahoe County

The Arapahoe County Early Childhood Council (ACECC) was awarded \$236,147.00 to support ITQA quality improvement activities. This council served 23 child care programs (22 child care centers and 1 family child care home) and delivered a total of 700 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 2,274 children. A total of 1,553 children were served by participating grant programs during the grant cycle and on average these programs enrolled 369 infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP. Participating programs were also able to increase the enrollment of infants and toddlers by 127 slots. Grant funds were utilized to increase staff salaries, open new classrooms, provide professional development and provide materials to classrooms to improve quality.

The following professional development opportunities were offered by ACECC:

- Sixteen (16) programs attended a Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum overview.
- Seventeen (17) programs attended an Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS-R) training This training supports programs to assess the quality of the learning environment for infants and toddlers up to 30 months of age.
- Four programs attended the Early Learning and Leadership Institute.
- One program received a Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale (FCCERS-R) overview.

- Three early childhood directors attended a Director's lunchbox meeting.
- Seven Early Childhood Professionals attended an Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers training.
- Five early childhood professionals attended a Pyramid Plus training.

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, ACECC staff:

- Organized family and educational events such as back to school nights, multicultural days, nutrition classes and parent teacher conferences.
- Partnered with the Arapahoe Library District to provide eight sessions of Stories and More per month at five (5) locations and eight (8) Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) sessions of Make and Take per year.
- Offered Parents as Teachers serving 48 families.

The Arapahoe County Department of Human Services (DHS) received \$127,156.00 this grant cycle. These funds were utilized to pay tiered reimbursement to participating programs based on the quality rating and the number of CCCAP children served.

Boulder County

The Early Childhood Council of Boulder County (ECCBC) was awarded \$127,191.00 to support ITQA quality improvement activities. This council served 14 child care centers and delivered a total of 185 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 1,285 children. On average these programs enrolled 141 infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP. Participating programs were also able to increase the enrollment of infants and toddlers by 127 slots. ECCBC provided the following professional development opportunities:

- One (1) provider earned an Early Childhood Director Certificate.
- Sixteen (16) early childhood professionals completed the Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers and early childhood education courses.
- Nine (9) early childhood professionals participated in Pyramid Plus training.
- Fifteen (15) early childhood professionals enrolled in early childhood college courses.
- One (1) provider attended the Playworks Conference.
- Two (2) early childhood professionals attended the Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference.
- One (1) early childhood director completed the Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) training.
- Four (4) providers completed the Touchpoints training. Touchpoints helps to strengthen the caregiver's skills in establishing healthy positive relationships with parents.

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, ECCBC staff:

- Hosted parent teacher conferences.
- Hosted and engaged parents during family events such as BBQ Kick-off, holiday gatherings and parenting classes.
- Encouraged families to get involved and feel welcome by using open communication, providing and evaluating parent surveys and feedback.

The Boulder County DHS received \$68,800.00 in this grant cycle. These funds were utilized to support all provide tiered reimbursement to all participating ITQA programs. Tiered reimbursement rates are based on the number of children served and the Colorado Shines quality level of the program. In addition Boulder County DHS supported quality improvement activities as defined within the project participation plans for each program. Twenty infant

toddler classrooms serving the highest CCCAP infant toddler population within programs rated at as a Colorado Shines Level 1 or Level 2 received the most intensive support and resources. Provider quality improvement resources were tied to the provider's Quality Improvement Plan. Funding was used to reinvest and increase quality by:

- Increasing teaching staff salaries.
- Decreasing the cost of care gap.
- Maintaining low staff to child ratios.
- Providing incentives for staff to attend professional development opportunities.

Denver County

The Denver Early Childhood Council (DECC) was awarded \$386,486.00 to support ITQA quality improvement activities. This council served 41 child care programs (35 child care centers and six family child care homes) and delivered a total of 317 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 3,110 children. A total of 1,114 children were served by participating programs during the grant cycle and on average these programs enrolled 502 infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP. Participating programs were also able to decrease staff turnover by providing increases in staff wages. Quality improvement incentives and capital improvements were also invested to support participating programs.

The following professional development opportunities were offered by DECC:

- Sixteen early childhood professionals graduated from two pre-licensing trainings.
- Early childhood professionals participated in a Creative Curriculum, infant and toddler training.
- To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, DECC staff provided two Strengthening Families trainings.

DECC also hosted two staff appreciation events to honor the professionals employed within the participating programs.

The Denver County DHS opted out of the ITQA funding for this grant cycle and requested the funds be pooled with the DECC funds to support quality improvement activities.

Grand and Summit Counties

The Rural Resort Region Early Childhood Council - North East Division (RRR-NE) was awarded \$50,021.00 to support ITQA quality improvement activities. This council served eight child care programs (six child care centers and two family child care homes) and delivered a total of 125 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 457 children. A total of 70 infants and toddlers were served by participating programs during the grant cycle and on average these programs enrolled 24 infants and toddlers participating CCCAP. Participating programs were also able to increase the enrollment of infants and toddlers by 36 slots. ITQA funds also supported the purchase of classroom materials and staff training to increase quality.

The following professional development opportunities were offered to staff working within or supporting participating programs:

- Employee orientation for new infant and toddler teachers.
- Pyramid Plus training, focusing on inclusion practices supporting social emotional competencies and addressing challenging behaviors in young children.

- Touchpoints, a cross-disciplinary approach focused on supporting relationships between children and their caregiver.
- Technical assistance supports related to the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, the RRR-NE provided:

- Ready! For Kindergarten Infant and Toddler Blitz, family training on developmentally appropriate school readiness activities.
- Positive Solutions for Families, how to support healthy social and emotional development of infants.

Two county partners were awarded ITQA funds. Activities varied and a summary is included below:

- Grand County Department of Social Services (DSS) received \$5,000.00 in this grant cycle. These funds supported quality by paying tiered reimbursement to participating programs based on the Colorado Shines quality level and purchasing READY! for Kindergarten kits. The READY! curriculum and parent materials include printed material such as targeted sheets and parent handouts to support the curriculum as well as toys to use at home.
- Summit County DSS received \$27,434.00 in this grant cycle. These funds were utilized to support quality improvement activities such as professional development and training opportunities for early childhood staff along with purchasing materials and supplies for infant and toddler classrooms for nine eligible programs.

Fremont County

The Fremont Community and Family Center Early Childhood Council (ECHO) was awarded \$38,999.00 to support ITQA quality improvement activities. This council served two child care centers and delivered 132 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these programs. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 212 children. On average these programs enrolled 26 infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP. Each participating program achieved National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) re-accreditation valid through April 2020. Programs also received support for educational materials and other classroom improvements.

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

- Building Relationships with Children and Parents;
- College coursework in early childhood education; and,
- Mental health class for infant caregivers.

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

- Developmental screenings using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire along with vision and hearing screenings at no charge to the children enrolled in the participating programs. Parents were actively involved in their child's developmental screenings and the 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 97% of birth to one year olds, 83% of the children one to two years of age, and 89% of the children two to three years of age "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 is shared three times per year with parents, and parents provide input into the assessment informed planning of supports for their children.
- Monthly family events were held, such as Fairy Tale Night, Fall Festival, Pictures with Santa, and Health Fairs. These events offer families the opportunity to network with other families and meet the staff.

The Freemont County DHS received \$18,262.00 this grant cycle. These funds were utilized to pay tiered reimbursement to participating programs based on the quality rating and the number of CCCAP children served.

Huerfano and Las Animas Counties

The Huerfano-Las Animas Counties Early Childhood Advisory Council (HuLA) was awarded \$112,688.00 to support ITQA quality improvement activities. This council served three child care programs (two child care centers and one family child care home) and delivered 104 total coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 183 children and on average these programs enrolled 29 infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP. Three jobs were created with these grant funds.

The following professional development opportunities were offered by HuLA:

- Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers training, completed by 10 teachers
- Six Early Childhood Professionals received supports for early childhood education (ECE) 111 college portfolio credit through Trinidad State Junior College.
- Coaching and mentoring was offered to early childhood professionals.

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies:

- HuLA partnered with 14 organizations and provided four community screenings in the bi-county region, increasing family knowledge, awareness of child development services that are available locally and regionally.
- Week of the Young Child event held in April in Huerfano and Las Animas disseminated information to over 250 families.
- Early Learning and Development Guidelines were provided to 100 early childhood teachers.
- A social media campaign was launched to reinforce the importance of high-quality child care, CCCAP, early literacy and other valuable resources related to infants and toddlers. The social media followers increased from 2,300 to 2,500.

Two county partners were awarded ITQA funds. Activities varied and a summary is included below:

- Huerfano County utilized funds (\$28,500.00) to maintain and increase DSS staff employment from .75 FTE to 1.0 FTE, supplement the child care subsidy rate paid to participating programs so that payment for care is consistent with the fair market rate, and offer tiered reimbursement to programs based on the Colorado Shines quality level and number of children served.
- Las Animas County DHS utilizes funds (\$125,513.00) to partially fund a child care coordinator. The remaining funds were used to fund tuition costs for twenty two infants and toddlers per month.

La Plata County

The Early Childhood Council of La Plata County (ECCLPC) received \$63,026.00 to support ITQA quality improvement activities. This council served five child care centers and delivered a total of 40 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 372 children and on average these programs enrolled eight infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP. The Council blended the ITQA with private funding from El Pomar Foundation to support the expansion of 36 child care slots in La Plata County that serve children birth to 36 months of age. A total of 33 slots were created in the opening and expansion of centers. Grant funds were utilized to increase staff salaries, open new classrooms, provide professional development and provide materials to classrooms to improve quality.

The following professional development opportunities offered by ECCLPC include:

- Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers;
- Pyramid Plus;
- Colorado Shines QRIS and Professional Development Information System (PDIS);
- ASQ and the ASQ-Social and Emotional (ASQ-SE) developmental screening tools; and,
- Teaching Strategies Gold and Creative Curriculum assessments.

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, the ECCLPC:

- Supported parent orientations and conferences to increase parent participation in daily activities.
- Created a Parent Involvement Committee.
- Deployed parent public awareness strategy to communicate the importance of high quality child care and information about the Colorado Shines QRIS.
- Held meetings with parents at enrollment that include the family specialist and teacher to help develop positive parent/ teacher relationships and encourage continued parent involvement.
- Hosted a Positive Solutions for Families workshop.

La Plata County DHS office utilized ITQA funds (\$42,241.00) to pay reimbursement costs to participating programs based on the Colorado Shines quality rating level and number of children.

Larimer County

The Early Childhood Council of Larimer County (ECCLC) received \$90,196.00 to support ITQA quality improvement activities. This council served 25 child care programs (22 child care centers and three family child care homes) and delivered a total of 386 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 2,028 children. A total of 357 infants and toddlers were served by participating grant programs during the grant cycle and on average these programs enrolled 233 infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP. Participating programs were also able to increase the enrollment of infants and toddlers by 34 slots. ECCLC supported the opening of a new toddler classroom and prevented the closure of two classrooms with ITQA funds. Grant funds were utilized to increase staff salaries, open new classrooms, provide professional development and provide materials to classrooms to improve quality.

Professional development supports offered by ECCLC include:

- Nine scholarships awarded to early childhood professionals.

- Ten early childhood professionals completed the Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers training.
- Six early childhood professionals completed Pyramid Plus training.

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

- Family engagement events with the Thompson School District Family, where 400 families were in attendance.
- Positive social skills, health, and literacy were promoted through interactive stations during family events.
- The Conscious Discipline training series which addresses assertiveness and consequences was offered to parents.
- Other social family events such as evening pool gatherings, donuts with dads, and children's art show.
- Three-hundred books and 100 backpacks were distributed to families that included various activities and resources.

Larimer County DHS office utilized ITQA funds (\$242,435.00) to pay reimbursement costs to participating programs based on the Colorado Shines quality rating level and number of children. Reimbursement occurs on a quarterly basis. Payment amounts are based on assigned shares by quality rating.

Eagle, Lake, and Pitkin Counties

Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Council (RMECC) received \$274,740.00 to support ITQA quality improvement activities. This council served 17 early childhood programs and delivered over 950 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 997 children. During the grant cycle participating programs served on average 60 infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP.

Professional development opportunities were offered to address and support:

- The Colorado Shines QRIS and PDIS;
- Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS);
- Coaching to support professionals working with children exhibiting challenging behaviors, children with disabilities, and the development of Colorado Shines quality improvement plans.

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, RMECC:

- Conducted outreach and offered supports to families applying for CCCAP; as a result, over 100 families have qualified for child care subsidy.
- Held information sessions and provided resources to families and programs regarding the importance of quality within a child care setting.

Three county partners were awarded ITQA funds. Activities varied and a summary is included below:

- Eagle County DHS received funds (\$69,923.00) to staff program and grant management activities and pay for tuition subsidy. The tuition subsidy was used to support waitlisted CCCAP qualified infants and toddlers to enroll in an ITQA program.

- Lake County Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) paid the full amount of grant funds (\$10,000.00) to pay tiered reimbursement rates to participating programs based on the Colorado Shines quality rating level and number of children.
- Pitkin County HHS utilized the ITQA grant award (\$97,010.00) to cover the personnel and fringe costs for a family engagement coordinator.

Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande, and Saguache Counties

The Early Childhood Council of the San Luis Valley (ECCSLV) received \$161,657.00 to support ITQA quality improvement activities. This council served 13 early child care programs (seven child care centers and six family child care homes) and delivered a total of 445 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 416 children and on average 46 infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP received early learning and care supports. Seventeen new infant and toddler slots were created during this grant cycle. Grant funds were also used for classroom materials and capital improvements to increase quality.

The following professional development and training opportunities were offered to address the following areas:

- Colorado Shines QRIS and PDIS;
- Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers;
- Early childhood education course work; and,
- First Aid, Universal Precautions and Medication Administration.

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, ECCSLV provided:

- Monthly family events such as Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas dinner and parades.
- Resource sharing with families.
- Parent training on Creative Curriculum, Positive Solutions for Parents and information to reinforce the importance of high quality in child care.

Five county partners were awarded ITQA funds. Activities varied and a summary is included below:

- Alamosa County DHS utilized funds (\$22,835) to attend ITQA regional meetings, work with the SLV Child Care Workgroup regarding CCCAP issues, develop and implement a tiered reimbursement plan for child care providers proving quality care.
- Conejos County DSS utilized funds (\$5,207.00) to attend ITQA regional meetings, work with the SLV Child Care Workgroup regarding CCCAP issues, develop and implement a tiered reimbursement plan for child care providers proving quality care.
- Costilla County DHS utilized funds (\$5,207.00) to attend ITQA regional meetings, work with the SLV Child Care Workgroup regarding CCCAP issues, develop and implement a tiered reimbursement plan for child care providers proving quality care.
- Rio Grande DSS paid the full amount of grant funds (\$11,727.00) to cover tiered reimbursement costs to participating programs in both Rio Grande and Mineral counties based on the Colorado Shines quality rating level and number of children.
- Saguache County DSS utilized funds (\$5,207.00) to attend ITQA regional meetings, work with the SLV Child Care Workgroup regarding CCCAP issues, develop and implement a tiered reimbursement plan for child care providers proving quality care.

Jefferson County

Triad Early Childhood Council (Triad) received \$306,965.00 to support ITQA quality improvement activities. This council served 14 child care centers and delivered a total of 627

coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 1,241 children. A total of 309 children were served by participating grant programs during the grant cycle and on average these programs enrolled 79 infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP. Participating programs were also able to increase the enrollment of infants and toddlers by 54 slots. Grant funds supported capital improvements to increase quality in programs.

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

- Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers;
- Interactions training with infants, toddlers and staff;
- Triad Great Outdoor Conference, focused on outdoor experiences and playground development with infants and toddlers;
- Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference;
- Pyramid Plus;
- Safe Sleep; and,
- Early childhood education college courses.

To strengthen family engagement, infant and toddler providers offered the following:

- Family events such as literacy nights, gardening events, night at the museum, parent breakfast and art events.
- Resources such as parenting books, Early Learning and Developmental Guideline handouts, take-home book bags and storytelling kits.
- Information to families about infant/toddler growth, development, and developmental milestones.

Jefferson County DHS was awarded \$171,493.00 ITQA funds. A small portion of these funds were used to support program and grant management activities. The remaining funds covered tiered reimbursement costs paid to participating programs based on the Colorado Shines quality rating level and number of children.

Conclusion

ITQA serves as a valuable quality improvement program in Colorado to support increased quality and access for infants and toddlers. This program is implemented in 20 of the 64 counties and 11 of the 31 Early Childhood Councils. A total of 165 licensed programs received quality improvement supports, with 3,832 hours of coaching and professional development opportunities delivered to increase early childhood knowledge and skills of staff statewide. This grant program supported the increased quality and access for 6,031 infants and toddlers under three years of age and an additional 417 slots were created within the grant cycle. Finally, a total of seventy five new jobs were created. All grantees successfully implemented strategies to increase quality, access, family engagement, and tiered reimbursement within their communities.