



# 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 Jim Smallwood and Representative Jonathan Singer

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## 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 2016-17 166 licensed programs received quality improvement supports, with 4,340 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 5,091 infants and toddlers under three years of age and an additional 413 slots were created within the grant cycle. Finally, a total of 67 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**

Thirty five of the ITQA participating programs were family child care homes. This represents 21% of all programs participating in ITQA this grant cycle. These programs have a licensed capacity to serve 315 children. A total of 193 infants and toddlers were served by the grant in home-based programs: 86 children utilizing child care subsidy and 107 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 (79%). These programs have a total licensed capacity to serve 11,307 children. A total of

4,898 infants and toddlers were served by the grant in center-based programs: 2,744 children utilizing child care subsidy and 2,154 private pay enrollments.

### **Length of service**

On average, the length of service for children receiving child care subsidy enrolled at ITQA programs was 87.2 days over SFY 2016-17. 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 250,094 records were pulled for the 166 ITQA programs. A record is a child enrollment instance. An instance is defined as a known child, attending a known facility, on a known date. There were 2,971 unique child records for the ITQA programs during the grant cycle. Child enrollment instances ranged between one and 329 occurrences. To determine length of service, records were filtered to only include children under three years of age in the 166 ITQA facilities in which enrollments occurred in SFY 2016-17 (July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017). 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 413 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 67 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 22 child care programs (21 child care centers and one family child care home) and delivered a total of 952 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 2,126 children. A total of 1,310 children were served by participating grant programs during the grant cycle and, on average, these programs enrolled 800 infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP. Participating programs were also able to increase the enrollment of infants and toddlers by 87 slots. Grant funds were utilized to hire new infant and toddler staff, open new classrooms, provide professional development and provide materials to classrooms to improve quality.

The following professional development opportunities were offered by ACECC to all twenty two programs:

- Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum overview;

- Safe Sleep;
- Cradling Literacy;
- Developmental Pathways;
- Director's lunchbox meeting;
- Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers training; and,
- Arapahoe Early Childhood Council Forum.

Programs within ACECC offered the following activities to promote and strengthen family engagement:

- Family and educational events such as parent educational workshops, nutrition classes, curriculum events, behavioral training and parent teacher conferences.
- Partner with the Arapahoe Library District to provide book bags to children and their families.
- Family holiday events such as Easter egg hunts, fall festival, Thanksgivings celebrations and Mother's Day breakfast.

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 nine child care centers and delivered a total of 127 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 783 children. On average these programs enrolled 118 infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP. Participating programs were also able to increase the enrollment of infants and toddlers by 17 slots. ECCBC provided the following professional development opportunities:

- Sixty three early childhood professionals attended Colorado Shines QRIS Level 2 courses.
- Eighteen early childhood professionals completed the Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers and early childhood education courses.
- Fourteen early childhood professionals participated in Pyramid Plus training.
- Nine early childhood professionals enrolled in early childhood college courses.
- Thirty five early childhood professionals attended Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) training.
- Two early childhood professionals attended the Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference.
- Three early childhood professionals completed the Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) training.
- Fourteen providers completed the Touchpoints training. Touchpoints helps to strengthen the caregiver's skills in establishing healthy positive relationships with parents.
- Director Circles, providing the opportunity for Directors to come together and share ideas, problem solve and provide support to one another.

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, ECCBC staff:

- Hosted parent teacher conferences and Early Learning and Developmental Guideline events.
- Hosted and engaged parents during family events such as swim parties, potlucks, and holiday gatherings and parenting education 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 \$68,000.00 in this grant cycle. These funds were utilized to support and 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. 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 \$386,488.00 to support ITQA quality improvement activities. This council served 34 child care programs (23 child care centers and 11 family child care homes) and delivered a total of 232 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 1,888 children. A total of 852 children were served by participating programs during the grant cycle and on average these programs enrolled 317 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.

Twenty one early childhood professionals graduated from the pre-licensing training offered by DECC.

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, DECC staff provided two Strengthening Families trainings.

DECC also used ITQA funds to open five new toddler classrooms.

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. These funds supported the opening of five new toddler classrooms.

### **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 fourteen child care programs (six child care centers and eight family child care homes) and delivered a total of 27 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to

serve 419 children. A total of 250 infants and toddlers were served by participating programs during the grant cycle and on average these programs enrolled 54 infants and toddlers participating CCCAP. Participating programs were also able to increase the enrollment of infants and toddlers by 19 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:

- Colorado Shines QRIS Level 2 courses;
- Early Childhood Education college courses;
- Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers training; and,
- Pyramid Plus training, focusing on inclusion practices supporting social emotional competencies and addressing challenging behaviors in young children.

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; and,
- Parents Interacting with Infants (PIWI) training.

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 were utilized to purchase classroom materials along with providing teacher planning time to improve program quality.
- 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 five 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 428 children. On average these programs enrolled 209 infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP. Two of the participating programs maintained National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) through re-accreditation, valid through April 2020. Participating 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:

- Expanding Quality for Infants and Toddlers training;
- Director Development courses focusing on managing individual child behaviors in the classroom; and,
- College coursework in early childhood education.

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, the following opportunities were provided 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 Fremont 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 children served utilizing CCCAP subsidies.

### **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 149 total coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler community. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 183 children and on average these programs enrolled 80 infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP. Four 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 11 teachers.
- Eleven 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.
- SAFE Playground training.

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies:

- HuLA partnered with 10 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 100 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.

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

- Huerfano County utilized funds (\$28,500.00) to increase staff capacity, lower ratios, assist with professional development for early childhood professionals and increased infant and toddler classroom environments.
- Las Animas County DHS utilizes funds (\$125,513.00) to increase staff capacity, lower ratios and improve the infant and toddler environment.

### **La Plata County**

The Early Childhood Council of La Plata County (ECCLPC) received \$63,025.00 to support ITQA quality improvement activities. This council served seven child care centers and delivered 49 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to



serve 518 children and on average these programs enrolled 19 infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP. The Council blended the ITQA with private funding from El Pomar Foundation to support the expansion of 26 child care slots in La Plata Montezuma, Dolores and San Juan Counties. 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;
- CLASS observations and training, improving the teacher and child interactions that drive learning and development;
- Teaching Strategies Gold and Creative Curriculum assessments;
- Colorado Shines QRIS technical assistance; and,
- Nonviolent Communication Training and Social Emotional Development training.

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: and,
- 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 and to provide substitutes for professional development opportunities.

### **Larimer County**

The Early Childhood Council of Larimer County (ECCLC) received \$90,195.00 to support ITQA quality improvement activities. This council served 22 child care programs (15 child care centers and 7 family child care homes) and delivered just under 417 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 1,191 children. A total of 530 infants and toddlers were served by participating grant programs during the grant cycle and on average these programs enrolled 240 infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP. Participating programs were also able to increase the enrollment of infants and toddlers by 25 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:

- Eleven scholarships awarded to early childhood professionals.



- Touchpoints training which helps to strengthen the caregiver's skills in establishing healthy positive relationships with parents.
- Pyramid Plus training;
- Coaching for Colorado Shines QRIS; and,
- Training on lesson plans and Early Learning and Developmental Guidelines (ELDG).

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies ECCLC hosted the Be Ready Fair and calendar event where each participating program provided a calendar of individual and group activities with the idea of connecting families with community 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 1,163 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 1,090 children. During the grant cycle participating programs served on average 147 infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP.

Professional development opportunities were offered to address and support:

- The Colorado Shines QRIS;
- Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS); and,
- 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 the number of CCCAP contracts increased by approximately 3 dozen.
- 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 (\$69,920.00) to assist programs with capital improvements needed to be in compliance with licensing requirements. They also used the funds offering mini grants to infant and toddler programs looking to increase their quality.
- 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 that provides supports to families with infants and toddlers.

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

The Early Childhood Council of the San Luis Valley (ECCSLV) received \$161,567.00 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 74 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 541 children and on average 126 infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP received early learning and care supports. Sixteen 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 support:

- Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference scholarships; and,
- Child Development Associates Certifications.

To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, ECCSLV provided:

- Resource sharing with families;
- Parent training on infant and toddler development;
- Parent teacher conferences; and,
- Family events such as egg hunts, lunches, Dr. Seuss family night, and reading with your child.

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

- Alamosa County DHS utilized funds (\$22,835) to implement tiered reimbursement for child care providers providing 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.
- Costilla County DHS utilized funds (\$5,207.00) to attend ITQA regional meetings, work with the SLV Child Care Workgroup regarding CCCAP issues.
- Rio Grande DSS used 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.

### **Jefferson County**

Triad Early Childhood Council (Triad) received \$306,964.00 to support ITQA quality improvement activities. This council served 20 child care centers and delivered a total of 1,017 coaching hours to professionals working within the infant and toddler classrooms of these facilities. These programs have the licensed capacity to serve 2,140 children. A total of 607 children were served by participating grant programs during the grant cycle and on average these programs enrolled 218 infants and toddlers participating in CCCAP. Participating programs were also able to increase the enrollment of infants and toddlers by 33 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;
- Social emotional development;
- Guidance and the early learning and developmental guidelines;
- Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference scholarships;
- Healthy Child Care, Healthier Communities Conference; and,
- Early childhood education college courses.

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

- 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.
- Family events such as literacy nights, gardening events, night at the museum, parent nutrition and art events.

Jefferson County DHS was awarded \$176,774.00 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 166 licensed programs received quality improvement supports, with 4,340 hours of coaching and professional development opportunities delivered to increase early childhood knowledge and skills of participating staff. This grant program supported the increased quality and access for 5,091 infants and toddlers under three years of age and an additional 413 slots were created within the grant cycle. Finally, a total of 67 new jobs were created. All grantees successfully implemented strategies to increase quality, access, family engagement, and tiered reimbursement within their communities.