



**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 Care and Human Services Committee**

**By:
Office of Early Childhood
Colorado Department of Human Services**

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Executive Summary

The Colorado Infant and Toddler Quality and Availability (ITQA) grant program serves as a valuable quality improvement program to support increased quality and access for infants and toddlers. This program is implemented in 43 of the 64 counties and 27 of the 34 Early Childhood Councils. During state fiscal year 2018-2019, 535 licensed programs received quality improvement supports, with 10,917 hours of coaching and professional development opportunities delivered to increase early childhood knowledge and skills of staff statewide. In addition, funds were used to purchase early learning materials and provide capital improvements in order to provide higher quality care and education that will permit children to develop their abilities while providing for the following:

1. Protection of children's health and safety.
2. Building positive relationships.
3. Opportunities for stimulation and learning from experience.

This grant program supported the increased quality and access to early childhood education for approximately 38,250 young children within the grant cycle. All grantees successfully implemented strategies to increase quality, access, and family engagement 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 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 ITQA grant program.

Total Amount of Grants and Grant Monies Awarded

The total annual budget for the ITQA grant program is \$2,937,347

The Office of Early Childhood, Division of Early Care and Learning within CDHS issued the Early Childhood Council Systems Building and Colorado Shines Quality Improvement Request for Application on March 31, 2017. This RFA included a section that addressed the Colorado Shines Quality Improvement funding, which includes the ITQA grant program.

Through this RFA process, all of the Early Childhood Councils (34) were awarded base funding to cover basic operating costs and salary and wage costs for staff to conduct outreach and engagement activities in order to educate eligible programs within their respective service area about the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and the quality improvement supports and incentives available through the ITQA grant program.

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A total of 535 licensed child care programs received grant funding to support quality improvement. These grants were made available through a statewide application process. Early Childhood Councils reviewed applications for early childhood education programs located within their catchment area. Applications were reviewed against a rubric that incorporates a High Needs Score. Quality improvement grants were then awarded to the licensed child care programs with the highest score that serve infants and toddlers under the age of three, have at least a Colorado Shines quality Level 2, and hold an active fiscal agreement with the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program. Upon award, funds were disbursed to Early Childhood Councils through a General Accounting Encumbrance which allowed funds to be directed across the state based on demand.

Participating Counties

Base implementation funds were awarded to all Early Childhood Councils to support outreach and education efforts regarding the grant opportunity. During the SFY 2017-2018 grant cycle, Archuleta County was the only county not included in an Early Childhood Council service area and therefore did not receive the base implementation funding.

Based on quality improvement grant application process, Early Childhood Councils awarded quality improvement and capital improvement grants to 535 licensed child care programs in 43 of the 64 Colorado counties. These programs were located in the following counties: Arapahoe, Adams, Bent, Boulder, Broomfield, Chaffee, Clear Creek, Crowley, Delta, Denver, Dolores, Douglas, Eagle, El Paso, Fremont, Garfield, Gilpin, Grand, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Huerfano, Jackson, Jefferson, La Plata, Lake, Larimer, Las Animas, Logan, Mesa, Montezuma, Montrose, Otero, Park, Phillips, Pitkin, Pueblo, Routt, San Miguel, Sedgwick, Summit, Teller, Washington and Weld.

Summary of Data from Grantees

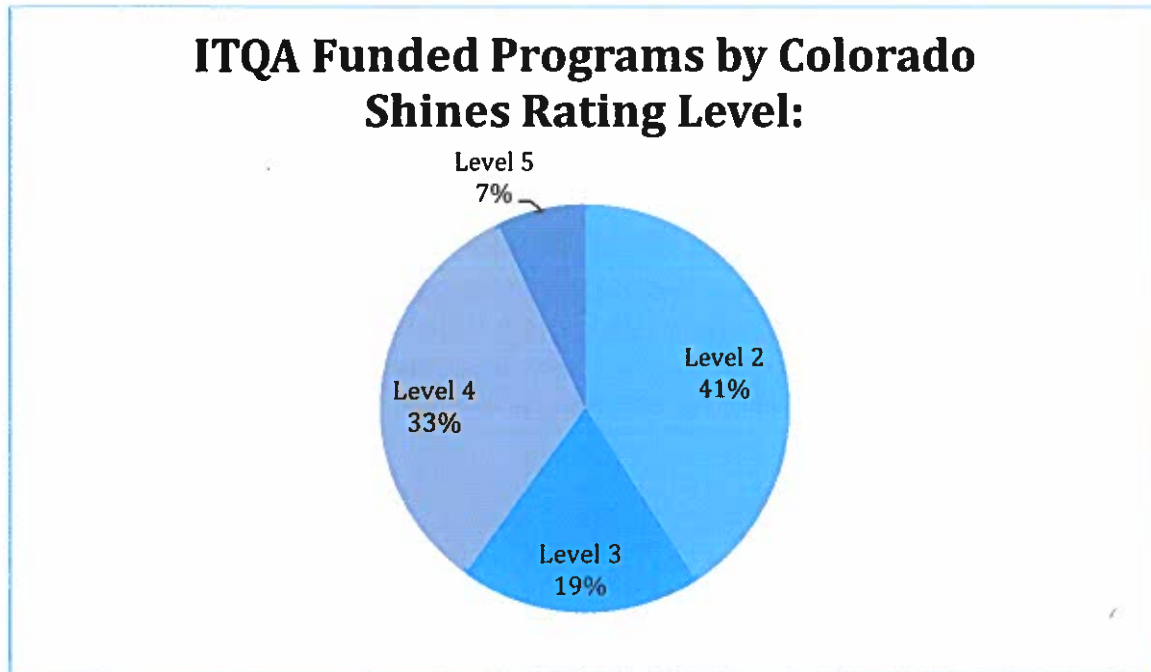
Of the 535 programs that received Colorado Shines quality improvement funding through the ITQA grant program to support quality improvement, 170 programs were family child care homes. This represents 32% of all programs participating in ITQA this grant cycle. Center-based programs represent the majority, with 365 or 68% of the participating programs for this grant cycle.

Quality improvement supports are defined as coaching and professional development opportunities delivered to increase early childhood knowledge and skills of staff statewide. In addition, funds were used to purchase early learning materials in order to provide higher quality care and education that will permit children to develop their abilities and while providing for the following basic needs:

1. Protection of children's health and safety
2. Building positive relationships
3. Opportunities for stimulation and learning from experience

Funds were also utilized for capital improvements that enhanced early learning environments and addressed health and safety concerns.

When receiving quality improvement grants, programs sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Early Childhood Council. As part of the MOU, programs with a Level 2 rating agree to go through a Colorado Shines Level 3-5 rating assessment within an 18-month time period.



Length of Service

On average, children under the age of three receiving child care subsidy attended participating programs for 92.1 days during SFY19 (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019). This is across all license types (home-based programs and center-based programs).

To determine child attendance, CDHS analyzed Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) regular and manual claims payment data, filtered to include only the records for children under the age of three at the time of care in one of the 535 ITQA grant-funded programs during the grant cycle time period (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019). During this grant period, 605,891 payment records for 6,494 unique children under the age of three were attributable to ITQA grant-funded programs. A payment record is an instance of child attendance instance, defined as a known child attending a known facility on a known date; however, more than one child attendance instance can occur on a single date depending upon the characteristics of the CCCAP case(s) of the child. The number of distinct days in the grant period attended by each child ranged from one (1) day to 295 days, with an average of 92.1 days.

Overview of Quality Improvement Strategies

Twenty-seven (27) Early Childhood Councils supported the efforts of the ITQA grant program during this reporting period through the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (Colorado Shines). Awards to grantees were made through an open, competitive request for application process. Grantees worked directly with licensed early childhood education programs within their respective community to improve quality and access. Early childhood education programs were considered eligible for ITQA funds by serving infants and/or toddlers, having a Colorado Shines quality level of 2 or higher and a CCCAP fiscal agreement. The following are detailed accounts, by grantee, of continued quality improvement efforts.

Arapahoe County Early Childhood Council

The Arapahoe County Early Childhood Council (ACECC) awarded 59 quality improvement grants to licensed programs. Three (3) programs were awarded capital improvement funds to improve early childhood classrooms and to comply with health and safety regulations. ACECC provided the following activities to promote and strengthen family engagement:

- Coaching on Colorado Shines Family Partnerships quality indicator, to reinforce quality practices such as child assessment, parent/teacher conferences, parent handbook, and community information.
- The Wellness Council established an agency-to-agency referral process for family referrals such as health screenings, employment, housing, transportation, food security, parenting skills, physical and mental health. The council received 174 referrals from 24 different referral sources.

Alliance for Kids

Alliance for Kids (AFK) awarded 41 quality improvement grants to licensed programs. Two (2) programs were awarded funds to support capital improvements within their infant and toddler outdoor space and to comply with licensing rules and regulations. The following activities occurred to promote and strengthen families:

- The council engaged with 364 families through local community events, educating families about the importance of children's early years and the characteristics of high-quality early education and care.
- Engaged with over 500 families receiving CCCAP subsidy, explaining the importance of early education and quality care.
- The council sustained and promoted the FamilySPEAK project to connect and empower families to access resources and services to promote healthy child development.
- Thirty (30) professionals attended a Strengthening Families training intended to shift agencies' practice with families to strengthen those protective factors correlated with family access.

Bent, Otero, Crowley Early Childhood Council

The Bent, Otero, Crowley Early Childhood Council (BOC) awarded four quality improvement grants to licensed programs. BOC provided the following activities to increase family engagement:

- Held monthly meetings for families to share community resources, 68 providers attended.
- Created a family resource guide, providing the most up to date information to community members regarding community resources.
- Collaborated with community-wide agencies to deliver information regarding child care subsidy to families.

Bright Futures

Bright Futures awarded 15 quality improvement grants to licensed programs in San Miguel, Montrose and Delta counties. Two (2) programs were awarded capital improvement grants to enhance their early learning environment. The following activities occurred to promote and strengthen family engagement:

- Offered one training to providers on increasing family engagement in their program.
- Offered family engagement events in 192 sites engaged in Colorado Shines.

Broomfield Early Childhood Council

Broomfield Early Childhood Council (BECC) awarded ten (10) quality improvement grants to licensed programs. Two (2) programs in Broomfield County were awarded capital improvement grants to enhance the outdoor learning environment. The following activities occurred to promote and strengthen family engagement:

- Courses addressing cultural competence and family responsiveness were offered to eight early childhood professionals.
- Three parent courses were offered on the Early Learning and Development Guidelines to support parent knowledge of child growth and development.

Chaffee County Early Childhood Council

Chaffee County Early Childhood Council (CCECC) awarded three quality improvement grants to licensed programs. The following activities occurred to promote and strengthen family engagement:

- Parent information sessions, promoting the understanding of age-based milestones and how to support their achievement. Over 90 families received these services.
- Shared Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines and Colorado Shines information with parents via social media three to four times per week.
- Circle of Security training was completed by 31 parents, where they learned about early intervention models.

Denver Early Childhood Council

The Denver Early Childhood Council (DECC) awarded quality improvement awards to 66 licensed programs. Two (2) programs were awarded capital improvement funds to enhance their toddler playground. The following activities occurred to promote and strengthen family engagement:

- Council staff attended twelve (12) community events where parents were in attendance to share early childhood resources.
- Early Learning and Development Guidelines were shared through social media and newsletter three times per month and during 79 coaching visits.

Douglas County Early Childhood Council

The Douglas County Early Childhood Council (DCECC) awarded 15 quality improvement grants to licensed programs. The following activities occurred to promote parent engagement:

- The Council partnered with the Early Childhood Collaborative of Douglas County to create a brochure and process called “Guidelines to Support Child Development in Early Care and Learning.” This group aims to improve processes by which children are monitored for development, receive developmental screening, are referred for evaluation and/or services and receive comprehensive health services.
- The Council distributed over 4,500 “The Journey Begins” brochures to the Douglas County School District and the Douglas County Library. These brochures offer interactive activities that parents can do with their young children to increase their executive functioning.

Early Childhood Council of Boulder County

The Early Childhood Council of Boulder County (ECCBC) awarded 25 quality improvement grants to licensed programs. Two (2) programs were awarded capital improvement funds to comply with health and safety regulations. The following activities occurred to promote and strengthen family engagement:

- The Council participated in the Family Resource Network Regional Council monthly meetings to increase and sustain accessibility and capacity of early childhood services within family support, health and mental health across the county.
- The council hosted four Directors Circles, where coaching was offered to 31 early childhood programs, discussing topics such as how to communicate and partner with parents.

Early Childhood Council of La Plata County

The Early Childhood Council of La Plata County awarded seven (7) quality improvement grants to licensed child care programs. To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, the ECCLPC:

- Collaborated with Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants to support distribution of materials to families of young children.
- Provided Colorado Shines and Early Learning and Development Guideline materials to 70 child care providers for distribution to families.

Early Childhood Council of Larimer County

The Early Childhood Council of Larimer County (ECCLC) awarded quality improvement grants to 46 licensed child care programs. Four (4) programs were awarded capital improvement grants to enhance the quality of the early learning environment. To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, the ECCLC:

- Attended 19 community fairs and distributed parent/family resources to 628 families.
- Has a website with a dedicated section for families and early childhood providers. In this section information regarding trainings and workshops.

Early Childhood Council of Logan, Phillips, and Sedgwick Counties

The Early Childhood Council of Logan, Phillips, and Sedgwick Counties (ECCLPS) awarded nine (9) quality improvement grants to licensed child care programs. ECCLPS conducted the following activities to promote parent engagement in their community:

- Distributed the Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines to parents and community members at 24 community events.
- Provided four Touchpoints and Love and Logic trainings, supporting positive parent-child relationships.

Early Childhood Council of Yuma, Washington and Kit Carson Counties

The Early Childhood Council of Yuma, Washington and Kit Carson Counties (ECCYWKC) awarded quality improvement grants to seven (7) licensed child care programs. The ECCYWKC promoted parent engagement by:

- Offering parents and providers Touchpoints and Love and Logic training, supporting positive parent-child relationships. Twenty participants completed these courses.
- Creating and distributing 5000 copies of a resource directory with information on child care subsidy, mental health and Early Learning and Development Guidelines to the community.
- Newsletter distribution regarding the importance of high-quality care and the Early Learning and Development Guidelines to 202 recipients including parents.

Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County

The Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County (ECPAC) awarded 34 quality improvement grants to licensed child care programs. Capital improvement grants were awarded to four (4) programs to increase the quality of their outdoor space and ensure compliance with child care licensing rules and regulations. ECPAC provided the following activities to promote parent engagement:

- Six parent/family classes, where attendees were taught how to engage in leadership opportunities. Sixty-nine parents attended these courses.
- Distributed over 12,271 written materials to families, promoting early literacy, social emotional development, the importance of high-quality care, maternity mental health and the Early Learning and Developmental Guidelines.

First Impressions of Routt County

First Impressions of Routt County awarded five (5) quality improvement grants to licensed child care programs (two family child care providers and three child care centers). One (1) program was awarded a capital improvement grant to follow health and safety regulations in their outdoor space. First Impressions promoted family engagement in Routt County by doing the following activities:

- Writing a weekly parenting article in the local paper to share with families.
- Published the second edition of the Routt County Family Resource Guide, connecting all families with children to resources.
- Provided free child care to families so that they could attend the Parent Connections Summit, a conference that reached over 103 parents within the Routt county community.
- Providing resources to families regarding Colorado Shines and the importance of quality in early childcare, Early Learning and Development Guidelines and child care subsidy.

Fremont Community and Family Center Early Childhood Council

The Fremont Community and Family Center Early Childhood Council (ECHO) awarded four (4) quality improvement grants to licensed child care programs. ECHO provided the following activities to increase parent engagement within Fremont County:

- Strengthening Families training was offered to parents and early childhood providers two times per year.
- Provided health screenings to children and information resources to parents.
- Use of social media and advertisements to promote education and quality awareness for parents on a monthly basis.

Grand Beginnings-Grand and Jackson Counties

Grand Beginnings awarded six (6) quality improvement grants to licensed child care programs. Grand Beginnings provided the following activities in Grand and Jackson counties to engage families:

- Collaborated with the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program to provide subsidy and assist families looking for child care.
- Provide Colorado Shines QRIS and Early Learning and Development Guidelines resources to families.

Gunnison-Hinsdale Early Childhood Council

The Gunnison-Hinsdale Early Childhood Council (GHECC) awarded six (6) quality improvement grants to licensed child care programs in Gunnison County, providing quality early learning materials and professional development to early learning staff. GHECC provided the following activities to enhance parent engagement in Gunnison and Hinsdale counties:

- Offered free admission to parents attending the Early Childhood Conference. Seventy-seven parents and professionals attended the conference.

- Provided Early Learning and Development Guidelines resources to families at health fairs, and community events.
- Quality Improvement Coaches worked with programs to provide parent engagement activities.

Huerfano-Las Animas Counties Early Childhood Advisory Council

The Huerfano-Las Animas Counties Early Childhood Advisory Council (HuLA) awarded quality improvement grants to three licensed child care programs. HuLA provided the following activities to promote parent engagement in Huerfano and Las Animas Counties:

- Disseminated over 200 Early Learning and Development Guidelines tip sheets during family engagement meetings.
- Shared Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System information with parents via social media. The Council has over 2,500 followers.
- Presented to parents at a local Head Start meeting regarding Council resources. Twenty-five parents were in attendance.

Mesa County Partnership for Children and Families

The Mesa County Partnership for Children and Families awarded 19 programs quality improvement grants. To promote parent engagement the Mesa County Partnership for Children and Families performed the following activities:

- Shared information with providers regarding trainings they offer to parents in the community: Cooking Matters, Incredible Years and Parents as Teachers classes.
- Attended two Healthy Families Initiative meetings and program meetings in Mesa County to inform parents about the importance of high quality child care.

Montelores Early Childhood Council-Montezuma and Dolores Counties

The Montelores Early Childhood Council (MECC) awarded nine (9) quality improvement grants to licensed child care programs in Montezuma County. Two (2) programs were awarded capital improvement grants to maintain a safe environment for infants and toddlers. MECC performed the following activities to increase parent engagement in Montezuma and Dolores counties:

- Hosted two school transition events. Thirty-five parents attended in Dolores and 212 in Cortez.
- Hosted a Conscious Discipline family workshop with 22 parents in attendance.
- Worked with the Family Leadership Training Institute and 20 families, providing families with knowledge, tools and inspiration to help their children succeed in school life.

Promises for Children

Promises for Children (PFC) awarded quality improvement grants to 20 licensed programs in Weld County. Six (6) programs were awarded capital improvement grants to enhance the quality in their infant and toddler learning environment. PFC performed the following activities to increase parent engagement in Weld County:

- Created a Roadmap for families with resources for child care, nutrition, safety, and health and school readiness.
- Council staff attended the Strengthening Families conference, learning strategies to work with and engage families.
- Offered Best Start for Babies and Toddlers parenting classes with the goal of increasing parents' knowledge of child development, improving their attitude about being parents and increasing social supports and connections among them.

Pueblo Early Childhood Council

The Pueblo Early Childhood Council (PECC) awarded quality improvement grants to 9 licensed child care programs. To promote family engagement, PECC provided information to families regarding services and supports within the community.

Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Council

The Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Council (RMECC) awarded quality improvement grants to 40 licensed child care programs in Eagle, Garfield, Lake, and Pitkin counties. Capital improvement grants were awarded to nine (9) programs to expand and increase slots for infants and toddlers. Playgrounds were modified to increase quality standards and facilities were brought into compliance with licensing rules and regulations. RMECC provided the following activities to promote parent engagement:

- Worked with Colorado Mountain College to promote available courses to parents.
- Offered parenting classes through the Family Leadership Training Institute to 25 parents.
- Promoted and distributed four newsletter articles and eight flyers in the community regarding available parenting classes and services offered by Council.

Summit County Early Childhood Council

The Summit County Early Childhood Council (SCECC) awarded quality improvement grants to four (4) licensed child care programs in Summit County. Four (4) programs were awarded capital improvement grants to enhance the outdoor environment and to comply with licensing rules and regulations. SCECC performed the following activities to support family engagement in their community:

- Offered the 48-hour Pyramid Plus Approach training. Eleven early childhood professionals attended.
- Distributed the Early Learning and Development Guidelines to over 50 families.
- Assisted families looking for high quality care for their children.

Teller/Park Early Childhood Council

The Teller/Park Early Childhood Council (TPECC) awarded quality improvement grants to nine (9) licensed child care programs in Teller and Park counties. TPECC trained four providers on the importance of hosting open houses and providing family/teacher conferences for the families in their programs.

Triad Early Childhood Council

The Triad Early Childhood Council (TRIAD) awarded quality improvement grants to 60 programs in Jefferson, Gilpin and Clear Creek Counties. The programs were provided with quality early learning materials and professional development for their infant and toddler teachers. Capital improvement funds were awarded to six (6) programs in Jefferson County. The funds were utilized to improve infant and toddler outdoor spaces and to meet compliance with licensing rules and regulations. TRIAD provided the following activities in Jefferson, Gilpin and Clear Creek Counties to promote parent engagement:

- Hosted Parent and Teacher Associations to provide a mechanism to get parent feedback, establish parent-informed programming, and foster deeper conversations with early childhood providers about family engagement.
- Distribution of Early Learning and Development Guidelines to 53 parents.

Conclusion

ITQA serves as a valuable quality improvement program in Colorado to support increased quality and access for infants and toddlers. The program has seen a dramatic increase in the number of communities impacted as well as the number of programs served. This fiscal year, the program was implemented by 27 Early Childhood Councils statewide. Quality improvement grants were awarded to 535 licensed child care programs in 43 of the 64 counties. This grant program supported the increased quality and access for approximately 38,250 young children within the grant cycle. All grantees successfully implemented strategies to increase quality, access and family engagement within their communities.