



COLORADO

Department of Human Services

December 1, 2020

The Honorable Jonathan Singer
Chair, House Public Health Care and Human Services Committee

The Honorable Rhonda Fields
Chair, Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Representative Singer and Senator Fields:

The Colorado Department of Human Services, in response to reporting requirements set forth in Section 26-6.7-105, C.R.S., respectfully submits the attached Infant Toddler Quality Improvement Program Report.

"Notwithstanding section 24-1-136 (11)(a)(I), on or before December 1, 2014, and each December 1 thereafter, the state department shall provide a written report on the grant program to the public health care and human services committee of the house of representatives and the health and human services committee of the senate, or any successor committees. The report must include a summary of the data received pursuant to subsection (1) of this section, the total amount of grants and grant moneys awarded, and the total increase in the number of infants and toddlers under three years of age served by the grant program."

If you have any questions, please contact Kevin Neimond, CDHS' Legislative Director, at 303-620-6450.

Sincerely,

Mary Alice Cohen
Director, Office of Early Childhood





COLORADO

Office of Early Childhood

Division of Community & Family Support

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**

NOVEMBER 1, 2020

BY:

**MARY ALICE COHEN
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD**

DECEMBER 1, 2020



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 46 of the 64 counties and 29 of the 34 Early Childhood Councils. During the state fiscal year 2019-2020, 563 licensed programs received quality improvement supports, with 10,061 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 for programs that have the licensed capacity to serve 35,040 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 Committees 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 \$2,937,347.00.

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 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.

A total of 563 licensed child care programs received grant funding to support quality improvement during the state fiscal year 2019-2020. 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 2019-2020 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 the quality improvement grant application process, Early Childhood Councils awarded quality improvement and capital improvement grants to 563 licensed child care programs in 46 of the 64 Colorado counties. These programs were located in the following counties: Adams, Alamosa, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Chaffee, Clear Creek, Costilla, Delta, Denver, Dolores, Douglas, Eagle, El Paso, Fremont, Garfield, Gilpin, Grand, Gunnison, Jefferson, La Plata, Lake, Larimer, Las Animas, Lincoln, Logan, Mesa, Mineral, Montezuma, Montrose, Morgan, Ouray, Park, Pitkin, Pueblo, Rio Grande, Routt, Saguache, San Juan, San Miguel, Sedgwick, Summit, Teller, Washington, Weld and Yuma.

SUMMARY OF DATA FROM GRANTEES

Of the 563 programs that received Colorado Shines quality improvement funding through the ITQA grant program to support quality improvement, 157 programs were family child care homes. This represents 28% of all programs participating in ITQA this grant cycle. Center-based programs represent the majority with 411 or 72% of the participating programs for this grant cycle.

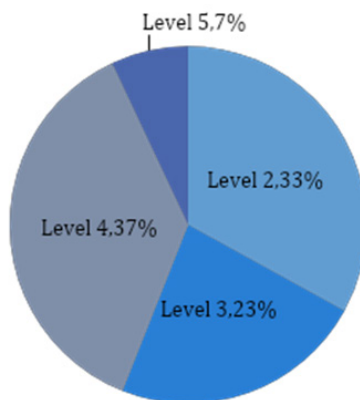
Quality improvement supports include coaching, professional development, financial support to purchase needed early learning materials, and minor capital improvement needs of the licensed child care program. Coaching and professional development opportunities support early childhood educators to increase quality practice within the classroom. The purchase of early learning materials support higher quality care and education that permit children to develop their abilities while providing for the following needs:

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

Funds utilized for capital improvements enhanced early learning environments and addressed health and safety concerns for the infants and toddlers served.

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 submit for a Colorado Shines Level 3-5 rating assessment within an 18 month time period.

ITQA Funded Programs by Colorado Shines Rating Level:



LENGTH OF SERVICE

On average, children under the age of three receiving child care subsidy attended participating programs for 106.5 days during SFY20 (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020). 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 563 ITQA grant-funded programs during the grant cycle time period (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020). During this grant period, 725,078 payment records for 6,444 unique children under the age of three were attributable to ITQA grant-funded programs. A payment record is a 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 310 days, with an average of 106.5 days and a median of 93 days.

OVERVIEW OF QUALITY IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Twenty nine (29) 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 69 quality improvement grants to licensed programs. Fifteen (15) programs were awarded capital improvement funds to improve early childhood classrooms and playgrounds to comply with health and safety regulations. ACECC promoted and strengthened family engagement in their community by:

- Partnering with WeeCycle, a non-profit organization that matches baby gear to families in need.
- Offering Parents as Teachers, where 43 families received community resources and referrals.
- Offering SafeCare, where 1,735 face-to-face visits were conducted, teaching families of young children skills to make their homes safer and how to have positive interactions with their children.

Alliance for Kids

Alliance for Kids (AFK) awarded 42 quality improvement grants to licensed programs. AFK promoted and strengthened families in El Paso County by:

Participating in 23 community events to educate families regarding the importance of the early years.
Facilitating a Foster Families Refresh Training for twelve families.

Bright Futures

Bright Futures awarded 22 quality improvement grants to licensed programs in San Juan, San Miguel, Montrose, Delta and Ouray counties. Four (4) programs were awarded capital improvement grants to enhance their early learning environment. Bright Futures promoted and strengthened family engagement by:

- Conducting six (6) parent workshops in Ouray, San Miguel and Montrose counties, educating parents on the Early Learning and Development Guidelines.
- Attending back to school nights to share information regarding the importance of the early years. These events occurred in Telluride, Ridgway, Norwood, Delta and Montrose counties.

Broomfield Early Childhood Council

Broomfield Early Childhood Council (BECC) awarded six (6) quality improvement grants to licensed programs. BECC promoted and strengthened family engagement by:

- Offering a parent class to strengthen their understanding of early childhood and the importance of parent/child interactions. A total of 20 parents attended this class.

- Offering Pyramid Plus, a course that focuses on social/emotional development, to parents and early childhood educators. The training had 40 participants.

Chaffee County Early Childhood Council

Chaffee County Early Childhood Council (CCECC) awarded four (4) quality improvement grants to licensed programs. CCECC promoted and strengthened family engagement by:

- Offering parent information sessions to promote age-based milestones and how to support their achievement. Eighteen (18) parents attended these sessions.
- Promoting the Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines and Colorado Shines information with parents via Facebook and through the local newspaper.
- Offering the Circle of Security and Conscious Discipline training to five (5) child care programs. This training offers an overview of early intervention models to share with families in their programs.

Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Lincoln Early Childhood Council

The Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Lincoln Early Childhood Council (CKLECC) awarded one (1) grant to a school district program that serves toddlers in their classroom. CKLECC promoted family engagement by offering a Family Fun Tote Program that provided families early learning materials that promoted the Early Learning and Development Guidelines (ELDG's) and the importance of parent/caregiver interactions.

Denver Early Childhood Council

The Denver Early Childhood Council (DECC) awarded quality improvement awards to 71 licensed programs. One (1) program was awarded capital improvement funds to build a fence to provide a safe outdoor learning environment for 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 coaching visits.

Douglas County Early Childhood Council

The Douglas County Early Childhood Council (DCECC) awarded 19 quality improvement grants to licensed programs. DCECC promoted and strengthened family engagement by:

- Adding three (3) parents to the Council Executive Committee to increase the parent voice and strategize how to better connect with their community.

Early Childhood Council of Boulder County

The Early Childhood Council of Boulder County (ECCBC) awarded 31 quality improvement grants to licensed programs. Eight (8) programs were awarded capital improvement funds to comply with health and safety regulations. ECCBC promoted and strengthened family engagement by:

- Providing coaching to support family engagement strategies.
- Conducting two (2) training events that address family and community partnership strategies.
- Collaborating with the statewide Colorado Shines Resource and Referral call center in order to provide updated, local resources to families receiving assistance.
- Maintaining a website that includes a family section, where materials that address childhood development, child health, nutrition and social/emotional health of children is posted.

Early Childhood Council of La Plata County

The Early Childhood Council of La Plata County awarded eight (8) quality improvement grants to licensed child care programs. Two (2) programs were awarded capital improvement funds to install a security system and to purchase infant materials for a new classroom. To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, the ECCLPC:

- Collaborated with Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants to provide family education services to address child development related topics.
- Provided Colorado Shines and Early Learning and Development Guideline related materials to providers for distribution to families.

Early Childhood Council of Larimer County

The Early Childhood Council of Larimer County (ECCLC) awarded quality improvement grants to 38 licensed child care programs. Ten (10) programs were awarded capital improvement grants to enhance the quality of their early learning environment and to open a new toddler classroom. To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, the ECCLC:

- Provided financial support for the Be Ready Fair, where over 200 families were provided with information on the importance of early learning and development.
- Provided family engagement training and strategies to all programs engaged in the Colorado Shines rating process.

Early Childhood Council of Logan, Phillips, and Sedgwick Counties

The Early Childhood Council of Logan, Phillips, and Sedgwick Counties (ECCLPS) awarded five (5) quality improvement grants to licensed child care programs. To promote and strengthen family engagement strategies, ECCLPS:

- Updated the Council Facebook page with information for providers and families.
- Provided four (4) Touchpoints and Love and Logic training events, supporting positive parent-child relationships.

Early Childhood Council of the San Luis Valley

The Early Childhood Council of the San Luis Valley (ECCSLV) awarded quality improvement grants to 13 licensed child care programs. The Council promoted family engagement with early childhood providers and their community using social media to share family engagement strategies. This promotion led to a 72% increase in family engagement between the first and third quarter of the reporting period.

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 five (5) licensed child care programs. The ECCYWKC promoted parent engagement by:

- Offering Love and Logic training to parents and educators within their community. The training had 20 participants.
- Creating and distributing copies of a resource directory with information on child care subsidy, mental health and Early Learning and Development Guidelines to the community.

Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County

The Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County (ECPAC) awarded 42 quality improvement grants to licensed child care programs. Capital improvement grants were awarded to eight (8) programs to increase the quality of their classrooms and outdoor space and ensure compliance with child care licensing rules and regulations. ECPAC provided the following activities to promote parent engagement:

- Offered eight (8) parent/family class series where 72 parents attended.
- Parent resources are posted to the Council Facebook page, where their following increased by 25% since last year.
- Distribution of over 950 advocacy materials to the community.

First Impressions of Routt County

First Impressions of Routt County awarded two (2) quality improvement grants to licensed child care programs (one family child care provider and one child care center). First Impressions promoted family engagement in Routt County by:

- Providing child care for 21 families so that they could attend the 3rd Annual Parent Summit in Steamboat Springs.
- Offering scholarships to four (4) families to support attendance to a five (5) week social emotional parenting series.

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 promoted family engagement by:

- Assisting families to find early education programs.

- Including two (2) parent representatives on the Early Childhood Council Membership Board to inform the work of the Council.
- Conducted 281 health and mental health screenings for young children in their community.

Grand Beginnings-Grand and Jackson Counties

Grand Beginnings awarded four (4) quality improvement grants to licensed child care programs. One (1) program was awarded a capital improvement grant to open a new infant classroom. 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.
- Provided Colorado Shines and Early Learning and Development Guidelines resources to families.

Gunnison-Hinsdale Early Childhood Council

The Gunnison-Hinsdale Early Childhood Council (GHECC) awarded five (5) quality improvement grants to licensed child care programs in Gunnison County, providing quality early learning materials and professional development to early learning staff. Two (2) programs were awarded capital improvement grants to enhance their infant and toddler playgrounds. GHECC provided the following activities to enhance parent engagement in Gunnison and Hinsdale counties:

- Engaged two (2) new families to assist with Council resource planning.
- Provided early childhood information to families via Facebook.
- Offered coaching to support programs to provide parent engagement activities.

Huerfano-Las Animas Counties Early Childhood Advisory Council

The Huerfano-Las Animas Early Childhood Advisory Council (HuLA) awarded a quality improvement grant to one (1) licensed child care provider. To promote parent engagement HuLA:

- Assisted families in the community to sign up for the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program.
- Posted educational materials related to the importance of high quality care on the Council website.
- Supported the week of the young child event, where over 150 families attended.
- Developed a parent volunteer program where parents in the community engage in opportunities to support leadership and family education needs.

Mesa County Partnership for Children and Families

The Mesa County Partnership for Children and Families awarded ten (10) programs quality improvement grants. This Council promoted parent engagement by:

- Providing outreach to families during community events and via email and social media.
- Promoted the gotkidsroadmap.com website, a guide with all of the resources that families need.

Montelores Early Childhood Council-Montezuma and Dolores Counties

The Montelores Early Childhood Council (MECC) awarded six (6) quality improvement grants to licensed child care programs in Montezuma County. MECC increased parent engagement in Montezuma and Dolores counties by:

- Providing targeted, educational materials for parents in the Council newsletter, Facebook page and at community events.
- Hosted a backpack giveaway where 503 backpacks were provided to families filled with family fun resources and food.

Morgan County Partnership for Children and Families

The Morgan County Partnership for Children and Families (MCPCF) awarded 11 quality improvement grants to provide coaching and early learning materials to infant and toddler classrooms. MCPCCF engaged families in their community by creating a Facebook page, providing parent resources and child care information.

Promises for Children

Promises for Children (PFC) awarded quality improvement grants to 13 licensed programs in Weld County. PFC increased parent engagement in Weld County by:

- Creating a roadmap for families with resources for child care, nutrition, safety, and health and school readiness.

- Supporting strategies through the direct support of quality improvement coaches to address parent engagement strategies to programs that were going through the rating process.

Pueblo Early Childhood Council

The Pueblo Early Childhood Council (PECC) awarded quality improvement grants to 11 licensed child care programs. To promote family engagement, PECC provided information to families regarding services and support within the community. Fifty (50) families were reached during this year.

Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Council

The Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Council (RMECC) awarded quality improvement grants to 46 licensed child care programs in Eagle, Garfield, Lake, and Pitkin counties. Capital improvement grants were awarded to five (5) 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 launched a new website that includes resources to support families and promote parent engagement.

Summit County Early Childhood Council

The Summit County Early Childhood Council (SCECC) awarded quality improvement grants to five (5) licensed child care programs in Summit County. SCECC supported family engagement in their community by:

- Providing family engagement training to the Spanish speaking family child care home providers in their community.
- Distributing information regarding the importance of quality care to over 135 families.
- Hosting a Family Fun Literacy Fair where parents were offered resources on how to engage with their children and promote literacy.

Teller/Park Early Childhood Council

The Teller/Park Early Childhood Council (TPECC) awarded quality improvement grants to seven (7) licensed child care programs in Teller and Park counties. TPECC increased parent engagement in their community by:

- Increasing the number of parent information handouts available in the community.
- Supporting parents and teacher conferences for most of the programs in Park and Teller counties.
- Publishing a newsletter with child development information for parents and community members.

Triad Early Childhood Council

The Triad Early Childhood Council (TRIAD) awarded quality improvement grants to 76 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 seven (7) programs in Jefferson County to enhance the safety in existing classrooms and to open a toddler classroom. The funds were utilized to improve infant and toddler outdoor spaces and to meet compliance with licensing rules and regulations. TRIAD promoted parent engagement by:

- Working with programs receiving quality improvement grants to create family engagement plans.
- Offering the Strengthening Families Framework training, where 103 family engagement plans were created.

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 29 Early Childhood Councils statewide. Quality improvement grants were awarded to 563 licensed child care programs in 46 of the 64 counties. This grant program supported the increased quality and access for programs that have the licensed capacity to serve 35,040 young children within the grant cycle. All grantees successfully implemented strategies to increase quality, access and family engagement within their communities.