



COLORADO

Department of Human Services

December 1, 2021

The Honorable Dafna Michaelson Jenet
Chair, House Public and Behavioral Health and Human Services Committee

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

Representative Michaelson Jenet 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, Policy and Legislative Affairs Director, at 303-620-6450.

Sincerely,

Mary Alice Cohen
Director, Office of Early Childhood





COLORADO

Office of Early Childhood

Department of Human Services

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

BY:

MARY ALICE COHEN
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

DECEMBER 1, 2021



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 was implemented in 48 of the 64 counties and 30 of the 34 Early Childhood Councils. During state fiscal year 2020-2021, 660 licensed programs received quality improvement supports, with 9,975 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 25,139 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, presented on December 1 of each year. The report includes a summary of the data received from local grantees, the total amount of grant monies awarded, and the total number of infants and toddlers served by the ITQA grant program.

TOTAL AMOUNT OF GRANTS AND GRANT MONIES AWARDED

The FY 2020-21 annual budget for the ITQA grant program was \$2,851,353.

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 660 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, agree to go through a Colorado Shines quality rating, 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 2020-2021 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 grants to 660 licensed child care programs in 48 of the 64 Colorado counties. These programs were located in the following counties: Adams, Alamosa, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Chaffee, Clear Creek, Crowley, 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, Otero, 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 660 programs that received Colorado Shines quality improvement funding through the ITQA grant program to support quality improvement, 202 programs were family child care homes. This represents 31% of all programs participating in ITQA this grant cycle. Center-based programs represent the majority, with 458 or 69% of the participating programs for this grant cycle.

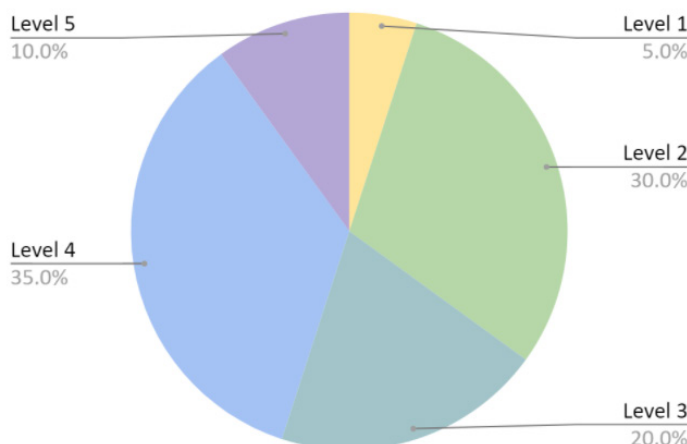
Quality improvement supports are defined as coaching and professional development opportunities delivered to increase early childhood knowledge and skills of staff statewide. In addition funds were used to purchase early learning materials in order to provide higher quality care and education that will 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 to award 50 capital improvement grants to enhance early learning environments and address 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 1 Colorado Shines rating agree to earn a Level 2 rating and submit a Colorado Shines application for a Level 3 - Level 5 on-site rating assessment within 24 months of the original Colorado Shines QI MOU execution; or earn a Level 3 or Level 4 Colorado Shines rating through an alternative pathway. Programs who have earned a Colorado Shines Level 2 rating agree to maintain their Level 2 rating and submit a Colorado Shines application for a Level 3-Level 5 on-site rating assessment within 18 months of the original Colorado Shines QI MOU execution; OR earn a Level 3 or Level 4 Colorado Shines rating through an alternative pathway.

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 110.6 days during SFY20 (July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021). 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 660 ITQA grant-funded programs during the grant cycle time period (July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021). During this grant period, 647,871 payment records for 5,821 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 285 days, with an average of 110.6 days and a median of 93 days.

OVERVIEW OF QUALITY IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Thirty (30) 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 a 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, being willing to go through a Colorado Shines rating or an alternative pathway and having an active 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 78 quality improvement grants to licensed programs. Nine (9) 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:

- Connecting families with high quality child care programs.
- Offering information to families regarding children's developmental and social emotional needs through a series of social media posts, newsletters, and website resources
- Training council Family Support Team in the Strengthening Families Curriculum.

Alliance for Kids

Alliance for Kids (AFK) awarded 40 quality improvement grants to licensed programs. The following activities occurred to promote and strengthen families within El Paso County:

- Council coaches supported programs with family engagement strategies through the use of the Colorado Shines Family Engagement indicators as they visited with programs.

Bright Futures

Bright Futures awarded 27 quality improvement grants to licensed programs in San Juan, San Miguel, Montrose, Delta and Ouray counties. Ten (10) programs were awarded capital improvement grants to enhance their early learning environments. The following activities occurred to promote and strengthen family engagement:

- Social stories were provided to assist families with the importance of wearing masks and social distancing.
- Assistance to providers to increase voluntary family engagement activities.

Broomfield Early Childhood Council

Broomfield Early Childhood Council (BECC) awarded 13 quality improvement grants to licensed programs. One (1) family child care home provider was awarded a capital improvement grant to replace unsafe flooring in her learning environment. The following activities occurred to promote and strengthen family engagement:

- Resources provided to families on supports and educational opportunities.
- Partnered with the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) administrators to do outreach to licensed providers on benefits of family engagement.

Chaffee County Early Childhood Council

Chaffee County Early Childhood Council (CCECC) awarded six (6) quality improvement grants to licensed programs. The following activities occurred to promote and strengthen family engagement:

- Parent information sessions using the Circle of Security and Seedlings models.
- Hosted a Conscious Discipline Parent Night with over 20 parents in attendance via Zoom.
- Made updates to the council website to enhance the user experience.

Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Lincoln Early Childhood Council

The Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Lincoln Early Childhood Council (CKLECC) awarded three (3) grants to a school district program that serves toddlers in their classroom. The council promoted family engagement by conducting the following activities:

- Provided social and emotional materials to professionals and families.
- Early Learning and Development Guidelines (ELDG's) were shared through social media and council newsletter.

Denver Early Childhood Council

The Denver Early Childhood Council (DECC) awarded quality improvement awards to 77 licensed programs. The following activities occurred to promote and strengthen family engagement:

- The council participated and coordinated with community resource partners to increase awareness around early childhood development and services for children and families.

Douglas County Early Childhood Council

The Douglas County Early Childhood Council (DCECC) awarded 25 quality improvement grants to licensed programs. Two (2) programs were awarded capital improvement dollars to replace playground materials to be in compliance with health and safety standards. To promote family engagement the council has done the following:

- Held virtual training regarding school transitions and registration; over 40 families attended.
- Held meetings to increase awareness to families regarding council resources.

Early Childhood Council of Boulder County

The Early Childhood Council of Boulder County (ECCBC) awarded 36 quality improvement grants to licensed programs. Three (3) programs were awarded capital improvement funds to comply with health and safety regulations. The following activities occurred to promote and strengthen family engagement:

- Family engagement methods were provided to early learning programs going through the Colorado Shines rating process.
- Collaborated with the statewide child care call center to provide updated, local resources to families receiving assistance.
- The council website has a section for families, where materials are shared regarding childhood development, child health, nutrition and social/emotional health of children.

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

- Provided Colorado Shines and Early Learning and Development Guideline (ELDG's) 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. Four (4) 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:

- Increased the number of families that could access and afford quality care by partnering with the United Way of Larimer County to support the establishment of the Larimer County Childcare Fund, a scholarship program for families struggling to afford care
- Collaborated with families and community organizations to address and break down barriers to accessing services.
- Provided financial support to programs to support family engagement activities through partnering with two local school districts in engagement events.

Early Childhood Council of Logan, Phillips, and Sedgwick Counties

The Early Childhood Council of Logan, Phillips, and Sedgwick Counties (ECCLPS) awarded four (4) quality improvement grants to licensed child care programs. ECCLPS conducted the following activities to promote parent engagement in their community:

- Developed a social emotional toolkit to share with providers and families.
- Provided family resources through social media, which increased the number of families visiting their website.
- Provided Love and Logic training to families and providers, both virtual and in person.

Early Childhood Council of the San Luis Valley

The Early Childhood Council of the San Luis Valley (ECCSLV) awarded 12 quality improvement grants to infant and toddler programs, providing coaching and materials to enhance their quality. One (1) family child care home provider was awarded a capital improvement grant to build a wheelchair ramp to serve children with disabilities. The council increased family engagement with early childhood providers and their community by providing them with resources regarding early childhood education

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 three (3) licensed child care programs. The ECCYWKC promoted parent engagement by:

- 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 67 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:

- Worked with new family partners to align efforts with the Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families.
- Engaged 4 new family partners to attend a focus group related to an expanded family resource center hub model and 2 of these families have become engaged in the action team working on this new model. This has increased family partners by 28%.
- Coaches provided multiple resources and also warm handoffs to providers in order to keep families connected with resources in the community.

First Impressions of Routt County

First Impressions of Routt County awarded three (3) quality improvement grants to licensed child care programs. First Impressions promoted family engagement in Routt County by doing the following activities:

- Assisted families with the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) application.
- Created The Online First Impressions Tuition Assistance application, providing tuition assistance to families.

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:

- Assisted families to find early education, family support, health and/or mental health programs that meet their needs and for which they qualify.

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 (CCCAP) to provide subsidy and assist families looking for child care.
- Provided Colorado Shines QRIS and Early Learning and Development Guidelines (ELDG's) 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. 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:

- Provided information and resources to families through an enhancement to the council website.
- Outreach to families and provide information about Colorado Shines and the importance of choosing quality care for your child.

Huerfano-Las Animas Counties Early Childhood Advisory Council

The Huerfano-Las Animas Counties Early Childhood Advisory Council (HuLA) awarded a quality improvement grant to one (1) licensed child care provider. HuLA provided family engagement opportunities monthly both virtually and in person, which included:

- Providing programs with holiday themed family activities reaching 180 children.
- Cooking Matters for families reaching over 120 families.
- Partnering with VROOM to provider family activities.

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:

- Provided outreach to families via regular email newsletters, webinars that were shared throughout the online community and posting relevant information on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media.
- Enhanced the resources on their website to better serve families in their community.

Montelores Early Childhood Council-Montezuma and Dolores Counties

The Montelores Early Childhood Council (MECC) awarded eight (8) quality improvement grants to licensed child care programs in Montezuma County. MECC performed the following activities to increase parent engagement in Montezuma and Dolores counties:

- Provided parent information in the Council newsletter, Facebook page and at community events.

Morgan County Partnership for Children and Families

The Morgan County Partnership for Children and Families (MCPCF) awarded three (3) quality improvement grants to provide quality coaching and materials to infant and toddler classrooms. One (1) child care center was awarded a capital improvement grant to put in a tricycle path so that toddlers can develop their gross motor skills. 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 21 licensed programs in Weld County. Seven (7) capital improvement grants were awarded to early childhood programs to increase quality and health and safety in their learning environments. PFC performed the following activities to increase parent engagement in Weld County:

- Offered Family Business Solutions to the community.
- Had 750 subscribers to Bright by Text, a text messaging service that provides early childhood education resources and information.

Pueblo Early Childhood Council

The Pueblo Early Childhood Council (PECC) awarded quality improvement grants to 12 licensed child care programs. To promote family engagement, PECC provided information to families regarding services and supports within the community such as vaccine information, mental health services, nutrition, and training opportunities.

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 two (2) programs to expand and increase slots for infants and toddlers. RMECC provided the following activities to promote parent engagement:

- Launched recorded webinars to distribute information to families.
- Council staff connected families with resources.
- Assisted programs in meeting the individualized needs of diverse families.

Summit County Early Childhood Council

The Summit County Early Childhood Council (SCECC) awarded quality improvement grants to three (3) licensed child care programs in Summit County. SCECC performed the following activities to support family engagement in their community:

- Shared the Early Learning and Development Guidelines (ELDG's) and Colorado Shines QRIS information with families on the council website.

Teller/Park Early Childhood Council

The Teller/Park Early Childhood Council (TPECC) awarded quality improvement grants to 11 licensed child care programs in Teller and Park counties. TPECC increased parent engagement in their community by:

- Providing health screenings for young children at a local elementary school. During these screenings families were provided with educational resources for their children.
- Offering virtual screenings of videos for families. These videos were directly related to child social and emotional development.

Triad Early Childhood Council

The Triad Early Childhood Council (TRIAD) awarded quality improvement grants to 86 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 two (2) programs in Jefferson County to enhance the safety in existing classrooms by replacing the flooring and windows. TRIAD provided the following activities in Jefferson, Gilpin and Clear Creek Counties to promote parent engagement:

- Resource information was posted on the website and was shared with coaches to assist programs.
- Council participated in the Helping Kids Thrive event, a free parenting conference with hands-on practical information to help children grow in a positive way.
- Participated in a resource fair where health and educational materials were provided.

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 660 licensed child care programs in 48 of Colorado's 64 counties. This is an increase of an additional 92 programs served over prior year. This grant program supported the increased quality and access for approximately 25,139 young children within the grant cycle. Early Childhood Councils reported that many of the family engagement activities had to be conducted online or through other virtual methods due to the pandemic. Despite this challenge, all grantees successfully implemented strategies to increase quality, access and family engagement within their communities. With the infusion of stimulus funds in fiscal year 2022-2023 supporting higher CCCAP reimbursement rates, more licensed programs, and quality bonuses, the State expects to see continued and higher engagement of programs being served by ITQA funding.