



COLORADO
Department of Human Services

November 1, 2021

The Honorable Dominick Moreno
Chair, Colorado General Assembly Joint Budget Committee

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

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

The Honorable Barbara McLachlan
Chair, Colorado House of Representatives Education Committee

The Honorable Rachel Zenzinger
Chair, Colorado Senate Education Committee

Senator Moreno, Representative Michaelson Jenet, Senator Fields, Representative McLachlan, and Senator Zenzinger:

The Colorado Department of Human Services, in response to reporting requirements set forth in Section 24-1-136 (11)(a)(I), C.R.S., respectfully submits the attached Early Intervention Services Report.

“Notwithstanding section 24-1-136 (11)(a)(I), by November 1, 2008, and by November 1 each year thereafter, the department shall submit an annual report to the general assembly regarding the various funding sources used for early intervention services, the number of eligible children served, the average cost of early intervention services, and any other information the department deems appropriate. The department shall submit the report to the joint budget committee as part of the department's annual budget request. The department shall also submit the report to the health and human services committees and the education committees of the senate and house of representatives, or any successor committees.”

If you have any questions, please contact Kevin Neimond, Policy and Legislative Affairs Director at, 303-620-6450.

Sincerely,

Director, Office of Early Childhood





COLORADO

Office of Early Childhood

Department of Human Services

FY 2020-21 ANNUAL REPORT OF EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

SUBMITTED TO

**JOINT BUDGET COMMITTEE
AND**

**SENATE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
HOUSE PUBLIC HEALTH CARE AND HUMAN SERVICES
COMMITTEE**

**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

NOVEMBER 1, 2021

BY

**COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
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EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES FY 2020-21 ANNUAL REPORT

The Department of Human Services is submitting the following report in accordance with C.R.S. Section 27-10.5-710:

(1) By November 1, 2008, and by November 1 each year thereafter, the department shall submit an annual report to the general assembly regarding the various funding sources used for early intervention services, the number of eligible children served, the average cost of early intervention services and any other information the department deems appropriate. The department shall submit the report to the joint budget committee as part of the department's annual budget request. The department shall also submit the report to the health and human services committees, the education committees of the senate and house of representatives, or any successor committees.

(2) The department shall request, and certified early intervention service brokers and qualified early intervention service providers shall provide, information regarding early intervention services that the department needs to prepare the annual report required by this section or other required federal or state reports.

BACKGROUND AND PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In FY 2020-21, the Early Intervention (EI) Program was administered by the Division of Community and Family Support (DCFS) under the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) of the Colorado Department of Human Services (Department). DCFS provides EI services to infants and toddlers, birth through two years of age, who have been determined to have a developmental delay or disability, have been diagnosed with a physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in a significant delay in development, or are living with a parent who has a developmental disability. These services provide eligible infants and toddlers, and their families, with the interventions needed to enhance child development in the areas of cognition, speech, communication, physical development, motor development, vision, hearing, social and emotional development, and self-help skills.

The Department is the lead agency in Colorado for the Part C EI program under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In order for Colorado to be eligible for a grant under IDEA Part C for any fiscal year, the state must ensure that "appropriate early intervention services . . . are available to all infants and toddlers with disabilities in the State and their families including- (i) Indian infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families residing on a reservation geographically located in the State, (ii) infants and toddlers with disabilities who are homeless children and their families, (III) and infants and toddlers with disabilities who are wards of the State. IDEA section 634 in 20 U.S.C. 1434 and 34 C.F.R. 303.101(a)(1)."

DCFS contracts with 20 Community Centered Boards (CCBs) to deliver the statewide, community-based EI services. CCBs are private, non-profit organizations and are responsible for intake, eligibility determination, providing service coordination that includes Targeted Case Management, Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) development, arrangement for services, delivery of services, monitoring of services, and many other functions.

CCBs deliver services, such as speech therapy and physical therapy, directly and/or contract with qualified individual EI professionals to provide EI services to eligible infants and toddlers.



FY 2020-21 UTILIZATION DATA

The numbers for eligible children served were submitted by the CCBs to the DCFS through data entered in the DCFS Early Intervention Statewide Data System. Throughout the report this will be referenced as the EI Data System.

1) The number of eligible children served

Due to the narrow window of eligibility for EI services, birth through two years of age, and the variety of characteristics of developmental needs of the children, the program experiences a high churn rate. The measure of the ongoing demand for direct services is a monthly average.

7,782 = The total unduplicated average count of children served each month.

2) The average cost of EI services considering all funding sources used

\$7,866.00 = The average annual cost per child in FY 2020-21 for all EI services and service coordination based on the average amount paid per child with all available funds. The rate is calculated by the total expenditures from all sources divided by the average number of children enrolled per month $\$61,217,514$ direct service, service coordination, operations and indirect \div **7,782**). The average cost figure includes expenditures reported in the Medicaid interChange payment system.¹ Additionally, this cost reflects EI services provided and paid through private insurance included in the Early Intervention Services Trust (EIST).

In accordance with C.R.S. Section 27-10.5-706, the Department must use a coordinated system of payment for EI services. The Department has developed a funding hierarchy that is used by the CCBs during the IFSP development process to identify the possible funding sources that may be available to each child. The funding hierarchy is arranged in the order in which funding sources are accessed for service payment. Beginning from the top of the hierarchy and moving downward, if a funding source is not available then the next source down on the list is considered until an appropriate funding source is located. The funding hierarchy is as follows:

- Use of Private Pay (voluntary, at discretion of parent)
- Private Health Insurance Plan (with written consent of the parent)
- TRICARE, a Military Health System
- Medicaid (Title XIX), Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Medicaid Waivers, and Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+)
- Child Welfare and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- Other local, state or federal funds, including mill levy funds (as may be made available)
- State General Funds (GF)
- Federal Part C of IDEA Funds

FY 2020-21 was the thirteenth year in which the EI Colorado program tracked the utilization of funding sources. Under the coordinated system of payment, one of the goals is "to ensure that available public and private sources of funds to pay for Early Intervention Services for eligible children are accessed and utilized in an efficient manner." Therefore, additional funding sources are accessed to either fully fund a child's EI services through these other funding sources or to supplement the use of state or federal funds, thus requiring fewer or no state or federal funds to be used. Only funds that can be tracked back to an individual child are reported in this document.

As a result of the previous FY 2016-17 over-expenditure and reports from the CCBs that they were not fully funded to provide EI services, the Department implemented a cost reimbursement methodology to ensure that CCBs are being fully compensated for all EI services being provided to the infants and toddlers they serve and families are receiving the highest quality experience. This is in alignment with all contracts managed within the OEC. For the first time, for FY 2018-19, CCBs were required to submit budgets with line item expenses related to the provision of service coordination and program administration, and the remaining funds were placed in a General Accounting Encumbrance (GAE) to allow for flexibility in the distribution of funds for direct services. Implementing this cost reimbursement methodology resulted in more accurate data to manage the EI program and all costs associated with the provision of EI services to infants and toddlers and their families.

¹ This Medicaid figure uses FY 2019-20 figures. Medicaid amounts do not change significantly year-to-year.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Overall, the EI program continues to successfully meet the needs of infants, toddlers and their families. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of children with significant delays in development who received EI services in FY 2019-20 showed improvement in their acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (motor, cognition, speech, language, etc.). Ninety-seven percent (97%) of parents participating in EI services reported that the services helped their family to help their children develop and learn. Additionally, per the EI Data Systems, 50% of the children who exited EI services in FY 2020-21 did not go on to need preschool special education (Part B) services. This supports the tenets of EI to intervene early and improve the developmental outcomes for young children with developmental delays.

For FY 2020-21, the EI program changed definitions in rule to increase the eligibility requirements from a 25% delay in one or more areas to a 33% delay in one or more areas of development. This change was necessary because of budgetary constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The change in eligibility served to both flatten the growth typically experienced by the program and decreased overall the number of children being served in the EI program. It is anticipated that overall about 2,200 children will not meet the newer, more stringent eligibility requirements of the program.

A definition was added in rule which will allow the development of an Early Intervention Early Start Program. This program, as private funding is secured and future budget corrections occur, will provide support for children who previously would have been eligible for EI services through a menu of options separate from the EI Part C services provided to children eligible for the EI program. The definition of "Risk Factor" was also added in rule to define which children will be eligible for the Early Start Program and broadens even further which children can receive support.