



Updates on Universal Preschool

Joint Budget Committee
September 20, 2023



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Department of Early Childhood



Presentation Overview

- Key Highlights
- Online Application and Matching System
- Serving Children with Disabilities and Ensuring Adequate Funding
- Additional Hours for Children with Qualifying Factors
- Quality Standards
- Projections of Children Served



Universal Preschool Colorado Highlights

- Colorado is now **8th** in the country in terms of 4 year olds enrolled in preschool, up from 26th in the 2021-22 school year
- **38,171** 4 year olds enrolled (as of 9/18) - **60%** of all 4 year olds in the state
- Families are saving an average of **\$6,000** per year
- **1,905** Universal Preschool Providers
- Total enrollment of 3 and 4 year olds in Universal Preschool in 2023-24 is projected to be **~70% higher** than enrollment of 3 and 4 year olds in Colorado Preschool Program and Preschool Special Education in 2022-23

**<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cpp>*

***Current, estimated as of September 2023, estimated projections based on rolling enrollment and uptake through 2023-24.*



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38,171 Four Year Olds Receiving Universal Preschool

“Our family’s experience with Colorado’s Universal Preschool has been wonderful thus far. Applying was quick and easy. We are thrilled that UPK works in tandem with our child’s Individualized Education Program to keep our childcare/school costs low while supporting our local program.”

Alex Willis
Leadville, Colorado



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1,905 Providers in A True Mixed Delivery Universal Preschool System

"Universal preschool has been a support to me in allowing me to retain 4-year-olds in my family child care program as a preschool. I have lost students when they are 4 years old in the past because I lacked the funding to offer full tuition to those families. UPK has allowed me to be competitive and have the funding I need so I can pass that benefit on for the family. It has also helped me to afford to stay in the family childcare business."

Jennifer Reyelts

Academy de las Estrellas (A Dual Language Preschool in Garfield County)



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Online Application System

What Worked Well

- Launched online application to allow families easy and equitable access to a range of providers, as required by statute
- Fielded more than 43,000 family applications, with no outages
- Families ranked their preferred providers - of those matched, 94% received one of their top 2 choices (82% received their top choice)

Concerns

- Providers had to navigate a new system that was a big departure from direct enrollment by each provider
- Initial iteration of the system could have better met provider needs



Online Application System

How We Are Improving

- Made improvements to the system when possible
- Implemented manual processes, centralized call center, and support from Local Coordinating Organizations (LCOs)
- Collecting user feedback for Year 2 enhancements to the system, including improved provider experience



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Supporting Preschoolers with Disabilities

How We Are Improving

- Worked with Colorado Department of Education (CDE) on manual processes for placements of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- Sent out guidance in July with direct placement and data access processes for Administrative Units (AUs) and providers that clarified that districts/AUs can directly and immediately enroll and start serving students with IEPs, and that AUs would be compensated starting from the date of enrollment
- Maintained constant communications with families to ensure proper notification and placement
- Planned enhancement for next year for direct placement of students with IEPs



Ensuring Adequate Funding - Students with Disabilities

- In both the prior preschool system and the current Universal Preschool system, a student with a disability is funded at a per pupil rate. In the 2022-23 school year, CDE paid \$38 million to fund this per pupil rate for students with disabilities. Under Universal Preschool, that per pupil rate is paid by CDEC. However, both the old per pupil funding and the new per pupil funding can be used the same way - to cover general education and special education costs for students with disabilities.
- CDEC estimates that it will distribute \$45 million to Universal Preschool providers this year for per pupil funding for students with disabilities.
- CDE will continue to distribute additional state and federal special education funding to Administrative Units.
- For an Administrative Unit that receives less total per pupil funding this year than last year for their students with disabilities, CDE will be distributing additional funding to fill the gap. This will ensure that districts/Administrative Units are able to meet their federal maintenance of effort (MOE) obligations to not reduce their level of special education expenditures.



Ensuring Adequate Funding - All Students

- The legislature guaranteed that public providers who participated in the former Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) **will not see a decrease in funding from the 2022-23 school year**. (With the only caveat that they are not guaranteed to receive the dollars that they previously passed through to private providers under the old system.)
- The two “level funding” (or sometimes called “hold harmless”) provisions ensure that providers can budget based on known figures -- what they received last year in total per pupil funding from CPP and for students with disabilities is the floor of what they will receive this year.



Full-Day Services for Children with Qualifying Factors

Concern

- Families with only one qualifying factor did not receive full-day preschool services

Statute

- “Subject to available appropriations, a child who is in a low-income family or who meets at least one qualifying factor may receive additional preschool services...” (emphasis added) [26.5-4-204(3)(a)(v)]
- “In allocating funding for additional preschool services [] the department shall first allocate funding for [] eligible children who are in low-income families and meet at least one qualifying factor and then allocate funding [] for the remaining eligible children who are in low-income families.” (emphasis added) [26.5-4-208(3)(b)]



Timeline of Communications on Full-Day Services

- January 2023: Family Application

“Children with certain qualifying factors may have access to more free hours of preschool services funded by the state.”

- April 2023: Match Day Email

“This initial match does not include information regarding any additional hours you may already be eligible for based on income or other risk factors, as that determination will be made upon verification of the qualifying factors and funding. If you attested to qualifying factors in your child’s application, you will receive a separate communication addressing the potential for additional funding and hours.”



Timeline of Communications on Full-Day

- July 2023: After reviewing initial enrollment data and funding projections, CDEC determined full-day services could be provided to all children who are low-income (270% Federal Poverty Level) *and* have an additional qualifying factor
- All providers and families with qualifying factors were notified
- Families with only one qualifying factor were informed of how to change to a half-day program, if desired
- Families who were low-income and had an additional qualifying factor were informed of how to switch to a full-day provider, if desired



Full-Day Services for Children with Qualifying Factors

How We Are Improving

- Clarified language on the application and website
- Equipped with data from Year One, our projections for applications and enrollment numbers will continue to be refined and will allow us to more precisely identify funding availability
- Considering approaches to provide the full-day funding information earlier in the year to better enable families and providers to plan
- Some districts will use their CPP historical allocation to provide full-day to students



Quality Standards

- Through an intentional process informed by stakeholders, CDEC recently released draft concept for the Universal Preschool Colorado Quality Standards. Available at: cdec.colorado.gov/public-notice-information
- Standards are designed to support providers in a variety of settings across the state to deliver high-quality preschool services that prepare children for kindergarten, support healthy development, and engage families
- Teacher qualifications and standards are being established on a longer timeframe to build on existing early childhood workforce quality efforts
- After reviewing all stakeholder input, the quality standards will go through CDEC's formal public rulemaking process
- Quality Standards rules are expected to be established Spring 2024 to go into effect for Universal Preschool providers in school year 2024-25





Projections of Children Served

Updated Projections based on <u>September 2023</u> Provider Payments	Estimated Children Served in 2023-24
Children w/o IEPs in the year before eligibility for kindergarten (10 hours) & Specified purposes (5 hours)	31,841
3- and 4-year-olds w/disabilities	8,185
3-year-olds with a qualifying factor and under 3 in a waiver district	7,870
Additional 15 hours in the year before kindergarten with income & one other qualifying factor	6,035





THANK YOU!



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