



COLORADO

NOVEMBER 2021

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION PLAN



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is the culmination of intensive work by stakeholders across the state of Colorado, including the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC); the Transition Advisory Group (TAG); the four Subgroups: 1. Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding, 2. Special Education Service Delivery, 3. Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability, 4. Universal Preschool Implementation; the Transition Working Group (TWG); and participants of ECLC listening sessions, town halls, and other engagement events. The work of these teams and individuals built upon the strong foundation of engagement by organizations such as the Colorado Children's Campaign, the Women's Foundation of Colorado, and Early Milestones Colorado.

Transition Working Group (TWG): HB21-1304 created the TWG and required this group to develop a Transition Plan for the Department of Early Childhood and make recommendations for a new statewide, universal, voluntary preschool program.

ECLC CO-CHAIRS:

Pamela Harris, Ph.D. - President & CEO,
Mile High Early Learning

Susan Steele - President & CEO, Buell Foundation

Tom Massey - Deputy Executive Director,
Department of Health Care Policy and Financing

Transition Advisory Group¹ (TAG):

As required by HB21-1304, the ECLC convened the TAG to advise the TWG and ensure that this process is grounded in the recommendations of a diverse group of stakeholders. The TAG is composed of 56 community leaders who offer a wide array of diverse public and private perspectives to ensure the recommendations reflect the full spectrum of early childhood programs and services. This includes parents, members of the early childhood workforce, providers, school districts, human services leaders, local Early Childhood Councils, and other stakeholders representing under-served and under-resourced communities.

¹ See Appendix 3 for more detailed information about TAG members.

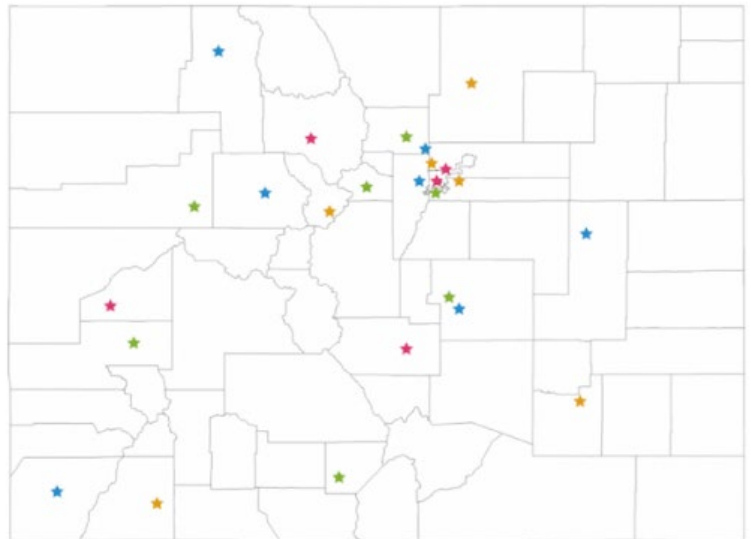
REPRESENTATIVES FROM EXISTING DEPARTMENTS

Ben Henderson - Director of Operations and
Cabinet Affairs for Governor Jared Polis

Carrie Cortiglio - Director of Prevention Services
Division-Colorado, Department of Public Health
and Environment

Katy Anthes, Ph.D. - Colorado Commissioner of
Education

Michelle Barnes - Executive Director, Colorado
Department of Human Services



TAG Members¹

Amber Bilby • Angela Fedler • Angela Mills • Anji Gallanos • Anna Jo Haynes • Ashley Henshaw • Ayelet Talmi, Ph.D. • Betty Dalton • Brandon LaChance • Carol Woods • Carsten Baumann • Cassandra Johnson • Debra Locke • Deidre Johnson • Diane Price • Dustin Elliott • Elisabeth Lawrence • Elsa Holguin • Floyd Cobb, Ph.D. • Gerie Grimes • George Davis V • Gina Robinson • Jade Woodard • Jamie Ulrich • Kallie Leyba • Kate Brunner, MA/LIS • Khatira Amn • Ki`i Powell, Ph.D. • Kirsten Yang • Kristie Kauerz, Ph.D. • Laurie Noblitt • Leigh Pytlinski • Lisa A. Hill • Lorena Garcia • Maegan Lokteff, Ph.D. • Maria Tarajano Rodman • Mary Alice Cohen • Mat Aubuchon • Megan Burch • Melissa Buchholz, PsyD • Melissa Mares • Michelle Shiffman • Moira Hawks • Nami Bhasin • Penny Harris • Robert A. DeHerrera • Robert McDaniel • Scott Bright • Sherri Valdez • Sherri Wright • Sondra Ranum • Tara Manthey • Tom Brinegar • Tracey Lucero • Ty Johnson • Whitney LeBoeuf

Subgroups: Four Subgroups were convened and open to the public to offer comprehensive insight in key areas:

- Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding
- Universal Preschool Implementation
- Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability
- Special Education Service Delivery

Facilitators from Early Milestones Colorado, in partnership with Marzano Research and the Colorado Education Initiative, then elevated themes and concerns from these sessions to the TAG, which made recommendations to be considered by TWG.

The Special Education Service Delivery Subgroup, specifically named in the legislation, included 37 seated members and offered reports directly to the TWG.

Special Education Service Delivery Subgroup Members²

Alisha Lacombe-Emile • Alison Hargarten • Amy Kilgour • Bill Jaeger • Cheryl Caldwell • Christy Scott • Clare Vickland • Corinne DePersis • Dana Richardson • Danae Davison • Dawn Klco • Diana Herrera • Dinah Frey • Eileen Sullivan Kratzer • Heather Hicks • Heidi White • Jane Miyahara • Jennifer Levin • Jennifer Yates • Jon Paul Burden • Julie Knowles • Kayla Marcella • Linda Meredith • Lisa S. Franklin • Lisa Trautwein • Liz Costaldo • Lucinda Hundley • Moe Keller • Nazia Hasan • Olivia Coyne • Paul Foster, Ed.D. • Rashida Banerjee • Rhonda Palic • Rick Simms • Shannon Secrest • T Vail Shoultz McCole • Tammy Johnson • Taran Schneider

This report was prepared by Watershed Advisors.



¹ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Q3WaeLf6BjuoW2ikvW9CFsHJ2erAw6Bu/view>

² <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1N-lxM9PI9VwHYjzt06Rr1ffwyBArGwf/view>

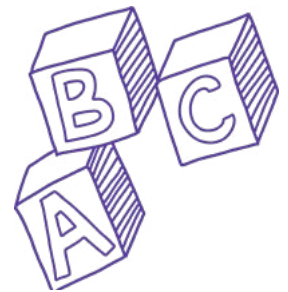
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Colorado has a decades-long commitment to improving the early care and education experiences of young children and families. In June 2021, HB21-1304 established the state Department of Early Childhood (DEC) and required the creation of a Transition Plan to be presented to the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC), the Governor, and the Joint Budget Committee of the Colorado General Assembly. This Transition Plan is the culmination of months of work by stakeholders, the Transition Advisory Group (TAG), Subgroups, and the Transition Working Group (TWG). A second report with recommendations on the new statewide universal, voluntary preschool program will be presented to the ECLC on January 1, 2022, and will be submitted to the legislature no later than January 15, 2022.

Key Recommendations

The Transition Report recommends DEC:

- **Adopt mission, vision, values, and guiding principles.** These statements will help ground the new department in a vision set forth by stakeholders across the state.
- **Maintain the advisory role of the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC).** The ECLC should serve in a key advisory role to the leadership of DEC, as well as continuing its advisory capacity to state policymakers, other departments, and the Governor's office.
- **Establish a Rules and Regulations Advisory Council.** This diverse and well-supported group should develop meaningful advice, consultation, and collaboration regarding DEC rulemaking guidance. DEC should also be advised by the ECLC and existing advisory structures. To maintain a unified and cohesive vision, the Executive Director should hold final rulemaking authority for the DEC programs.
- **Build an equity-focused leadership team.** Under an Executive Director, with significant experience in early childhood and systems management, the Department of Early Childhood should have a culturally diverse leadership team with a comprehensive set of skills, a strong equity focus, and significant expertise. Program delivery should be organized around functions of the early childhood system and user experience, rather than around administration of individual programs and grants, to create more cohesion for the field.
- **Administer the following programs beginning July 2022:**
 - All programs currently located in the Department of Human Services - Office of Early Childhood (OEC)
 - All services administered by the Early Childhood Workforce Development team
 - Colorado Preschool Program (CPP)/Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE), which will be unified with the new statewide universal, voluntary preschool program by the start of the 2023-2024 school year.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (continued)

- **Acquire the legislative authority and regulatory power of the funding streams tied to the programs moving to the department.**
- **Reconsider additional programs by July 2025.** In coordination with relevant departments and stakeholders, DEC should review legal requirements and, if federal law allows, review the cross-agency partnership and reconsider the transition of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, and potentially other early childhood programs to DEC.
- **Address stakeholder feedback on Preschool Special Education Services.** Ensure strong coordination and collaboration to address the concerns raised by stakeholders before the new statewide, universal preschool program begins in the 2023-2024 school year.
- **Establish close collaboration with other departments to strengthen coordinating functions and to promote alignment.** To best support children and families, collaboration is needed among higher education, health care, oral health care, mental health care, human services, and education.
- **Address funding challenges identified by families and providers by:**
 - Revising rules and regulations to ensure more flexibility with funds and reduce administrative burden while ensuring equitable use of those funds.
 - Creating and utilizing a single application and eligibility verification for families.
 - Blending and braiding state dollars before releasing allocations to localities. Empowering communities to lead and innovate based on their local context.
 - Evaluating and building community readiness for launching the universal preschool program.
 - Ensuring DEC is prepared to advocate for and strategically use future additional investments in an historically underfunded system, including ensuring adequate funding of DEC.
- **Utilize technology and data to make informed decisions for children and families in Colorado by:**
 - Collecting data that provides additional information on system capacity, including number of open or closed classrooms, number of current teachers and workforce shortages, and overall availability of slots and current vacancies.
 - Implementing a child count process that provides insight into the unique number of children served at every publicly-funded site, across programs and funding sources, including unique identifiers when available, to encourage seamless K-12 integration while fully respecting the privacy of every student and family.
 - Ensuring the child count process captures the number of children served by Colorado Shines quality level.
 - Coordinating and requiring the collection of data in a way that does not burden providers and families.
 - Ensuring the data privacy and security of all data collected by all participants in early childhood systems.
 - Leveraging technology in innovative ways to create efficiency and digital transformation in the system.
- **Prioritize supporting the growth and development of its early childhood workforce.**

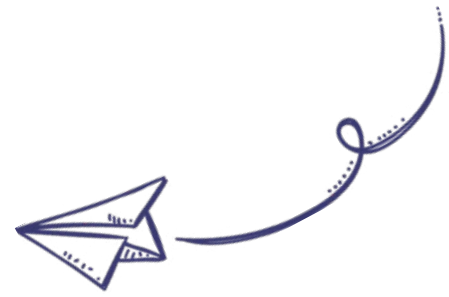
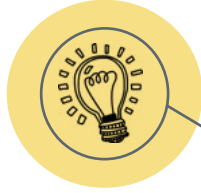


DEC has an opportunity to change the way families and children interact with government systems. The unification of early childhood programs and services under one governing structure meets families and children where they are, offering them a single place where they can gain access to all aspects of the early childhood system. While these recommendations will require state support, if they are fully funded and implemented, the community envisions a future in which all Colorado children, families, and early childhood professionals are valued, healthy, and thriving.

TIMELINE

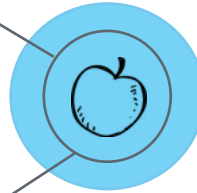
November 1 - 15, 2021 Submission of Transition Plan

Governor's budget will be submitted November 1. After approval by the ECLC, by November 15, TWG will submit the approved plan to legislature.



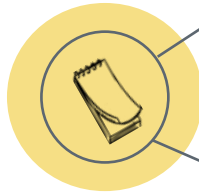
December 1, 2021 Presentation to Legislature

TWG presents approved transition plan to the Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission.



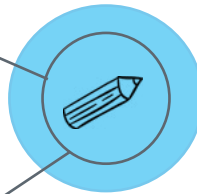
January 1 - 15, 2022 Submission of New Preschool Program Recommendations

By January 1, 2022, the TWG will submit its recommendations for the new statewide voluntary preschool program to the ECLC. After approval, TWG will submit the plan to the legislative commission.



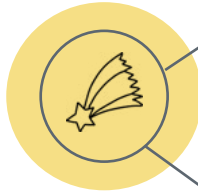
January - May 2022 Legislative Action

Between January and May, the legislature will convene to determine actions to operationalize the movement of all programs and funding to DEC.



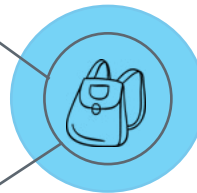
July 2022 Launch of DEC

DEC becomes operational with the initial group of programs transitioning to the new department.



July 2023 Launch of New Preschool Program

DEC is responsible for the launch of the statewide, voluntary preschool program that provides 10 hours of free, high quality preschool to all 4 year olds in Colorado. CPP financial administration will move to DEC from CDE.



July 2025 Re-Evaluation of DEC

After three years of operation, DEC shall review governance structure and consider the movement of additional programs to the department.



BACKGROUND ON EARLY CHILDHOOD IN COLORADO

HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Research is clear: Investing in early childhood is essential to supporting working families, child development, and a prosperous economy. The window from birth to age 5 is critical in a child's development. In the first few years of life, more than 1 million new neural connections form every second.¹ The experiences children have in the first five years of their life lay the foundation for their future. Research shows when those experiences are not high quality, children are less likely to perform well in school, graduate on time, and have healthy and successful adult lives.²

Due to inequitable access to resources during this critical period in a child's life, children from under-served and under-resourced communities often enter kindergarten behind their more affluent and better resourced peers. Investments in the early childhood system that increase access to services have shown to mitigate this opportunity gap and the generational cycle of poverty.³ The benefits of high-quality early childhood services extend beyond gains in early reading and math, with longitudinal studies also illustrating reduced grade retention, reduced placement in special education, increased likelihood of attending a four-year university, better earnings, and reduced crime.⁴

For more than 30 years, the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP), within its limited capacity, has benefited child outcomes, and the creation of this new department seeks to build upon these successes. Research on children enrolled in programs receiving CPP funding shows: (1) reduction in grade retention, (2) fewer children identified with significant reading deficiencies, and (3) higher high school graduation rates than children with risk factors that did not participate in a CPP funded program.⁵

In addition to the benefits for children, increased access to early childhood programs has enormous implications for working families. The opportunity for accessible and high-quality care and learning experiences for children empowers caregivers, who are mostly women, to remain in or re-enter the workforce, advance skills, and earn income, which boosts the economy as a whole.⁶

"The early childhood development system has not only done wonders for [my daughter], her education, and her socialization with other children, but also myself."

-George Davis V, Parent, TAG Member and Clayton Parent Ambassador

1 <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/brain-architecture/>

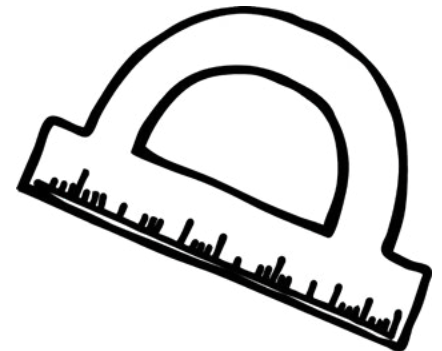
2 <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/aer.103.6.2052>

3 https://www.policymattersohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/pre-kpinch_Nov2008_report.pdf

4 https://www.policymattersohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/pre-kpinch_Nov2008_report.pdf

5 <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cpp/2021cpplereport>

6 <https://www.ffyf.org/why-it-matters/support-working-families/>



Overview of Early Childhood Accomplishments in Colorado

Colorado has a decades-long commitment to improving the health, well-being, early care, and education experiences of young children and families. Throughout this history, early childhood stakeholders have remained focused on all aspects of the Early Childhood Colorado Framework by ensuring quality early development and learning experiences, prioritizing the health and well-being of all children, and providing support and education for families. Highlights include:¹

- **1988:** Created the Colorado Preschool Program, a high-quality preschool program for children experiencing risk factors.
- **1989:** Created the Colorado Children’s Trust Fund to prevent child abuse and neglect.
- **1993:** Established family resource center pilot
- **1995:** Established a child care quality rating system that identified indicators of a quality setting and ensured families understood their early childhood care and education options.
- **1997:** Formalized the first legislative commission on early childhood education policy to provide a leadership role for the General Assembly in early childhood.
- **1998:** Established Consolidated Child Care Pilots.
- **2000:** Enacted state funding to local communities implementing the Nurse Family Partnership generated from the state’s share of the tobacco master settlement agreement.
- **2007:** Charged Early Childhood Councils with positively impacting services through local coordination, capacity building, and quality improvement.
- **2008:** Established the [Early Childhood Colorado Framework](#).
- **2010:** Established the Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program by federal law.
- **2012:** Consolidated 23 funding streams administered through five state agencies into the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS)-Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to more efficiently and effectively support quality services to promote the well-being of children and families.
- **2013:** Updated the Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission² to solidify the General Assembly’s strong leadership on early childhood issues.
- **2013:** Revised Colorado’s Early Childhood Colorado Framework
- **2018:** Established a P-3 Office at Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to align the department’s early childhood programs with its K-12 initiatives.
- **2019:** Implemented full day universal kindergarten and saw a 25% increase in enrollment the first year.

While this is not an exhaustive list of accomplishments, it illustrates the progression of successes that has made Colorado a national leader in early childhood (a more detailed history of early childhood in Colorado is in Appendix 1). The new state department is the next step to better aligning the early childhood system, supporting quality early development experiences, and building a more accessible early childhood system for children, families, and program providers.

Colorado has committed state funding for preschoolers with disabilities for over three decades through embedded funding in the School Finance Act for preschoolers with disabilities as a mechanism to ensure access to general education programming, in addition to specialized instruction and related services under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Colorado Exceptional Children’s Education Act (ECEA).

¹ https://earlymilestones.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/EarlyChildhood_FINAL.pdf

² http://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/images/2019_ecsrlc_committee_charge_memo.pdf



Overview of Early Childhood Accomplishments in Colorado (continued)

Despite Colorado's recognition of the importance of early childhood and its track record of success, families with young children continue to face significant challenges. According to KIDS COUNT, a project by the Annie E. Casey Foundation:

- Of the nearly 322,400 children under age 5 in Colorado in 2019, an estimated 35,000 are living in poverty.¹
- In 2019, less than two-thirds of all young children in need of early care and education were able to access a licensed slot.²
- Between 2008-2019, the percent of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in any type of preschool increased only from 49% to 51%.³
- In 2019-2020, less than one-quarter of 4-year-olds were able to be served in the Colorado Preschool Program.⁴
- As of 2019, Colorado provided home visiting to only 8,198 families of an estimated 310,900 pregnant women and families with children under 6 years old not yet in kindergarten who could benefit from home visiting.⁵



¹ <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=colorado%20under%205%20poverty&tid=ACST1Y2019.S1701>

² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

⁴ <https://www.coloradokids.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/2021-KC-Final-low-res-8.18.21-1.pdf>

⁵ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5679be9605f8e24bd8be467a/t/6064b92f0b2587640e58f083/1617213782693/DRAFT+Home+Visiting+Investment+Plan.pdf>



Proposition EE

Recognizing the critical importance of high-quality preschool, in 2020, proponents Anna Jo Haynes and James Garcia filed a ballot initiative, which ultimately was referred by the legislature (HB20-1427), to increase the state tax on tobacco, establish a nicotine products tax, and direct 73% of the funding to a universal, voluntary preschool program. In November 2020, Colorado voters overwhelmingly passed this ballot initiative¹ (Proposition EE) by a 2-to-1 margin. Beginning in July 2023, all Colorado children, regardless of family income, will have access to 10 hours per week of voluntary, high-quality preschool in a system with options that accommodate diverse family needs and choice in the year prior to kindergarten.

Knowing that stakeholder input would be critical to the success of universal preschool, Colorado Governor Jared Polis asked the Colorado Children's Campaign to convene a process that would ensure the diverse interests of Colorado's stakeholders were reflected in the policy development process. This process led to the creation of two formal groups: the Preschool Policy Leadership Committee (PPLC) and the Preschool Policy Advisory Group (PPAG). From July 2020 to January 2021, these groups convened and developed considerations for policymakers regarding preschool programs. This process² culminated in a report outlining key learnings and conclusions. Throughout this process, stakeholders focused not only on the opportunity to expand preschool but on the historic opportunity Proposition EE presented to elevate and fundamentally improve all of Colorado's early childhood programs through a new cabinet-level state early childhood agency.

ECLC Recommends the Establishment of the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (DEC)

While Proposition EE was a significant advancement, the Preschool Policy Development process unearthed a set of challenges underlying the entire early childhood system, including fragmentation and misalignment, which make it difficult for families and providers to navigate the system. For many years, Coloradans across a broad spectrum have advocated for the creation of a cabinet-level state department dedicated to early childhood to elevate, better align, and support the state's early childhood programs. During the 2021 legislative session, the ECLC, the state's federally authorized state advisory council on early childhood, recommended the creation of a department that would "consolidate the various authorities, programs, and funding streams that currently exist across state agencies and focus on a unified vision of comprehensive early childhood service delivery for all children birth to age 5." Stakeholders recognized the establishment of a unified department would help ensure access to quality and comprehensive whole-child, whole-family experiences, advance equity, prioritize family and community engagement, and provide transparency and accountability.³



¹ https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/initiative%2520referendum_proposition_ee_title_and_text.pdf

² <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CLUSD4QtCV3oJwmAFmqoSAEfp9jibgx2/view?usp=sharing>

³ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5679be9605f8e24bd8be467a/t/606cceb28188da7a1525592b/1617743539248/ECLC+Governance+Recommendation+-+Final.pdf>

HB21-1304: The Anna Jo Garcia Haynes Early Childhood Act

The Colorado legislature recognized this historic moment as one in which all children could be better served by a unified early childhood system for all of the services that support children and families. Colorado Representative Emily Sirota (D-Denver), House Speaker Alec Garnett (D-Denver), Senate Majority Leader Stephen Fenberg (D-Boulder), and Senator Janet Buckner (D-Aurora) used this momentum to sponsor HB21-1304,¹ to create a new state Department of Early Childhood (DEC) to coordinate a unified early childhood system and ensure the equitable distribution of resources and programming, including the new universal, voluntary preschool program. The bill passed unanimously in the Senate and by an overwhelming margin in the House. Testimony by advocates, providers, and families focused on how stronger alignment across early childhood programs and funding would ultimately provide a foundation for greater coherence across age ranges and additional facets of child development and family supports.

The bill was named after Anna Jo Garcia Haynes, a leading visionary for early childhood in Colorado, who has advocated for Colorado's children for decades. Her achievements include founding Mile High Early Learning, bringing the Head Start program to Denver, and co-founding the Colorado Children's Campaign and the Women's Foundation of Colorado.



Recognizing the importance of stakeholder engagement in driving this historic opportunity, legislative leaders created three groups focused on advising and making recommendations on DEC and the universal preschool program:

Transition Advisory Group (TAG): The ECLC convened the TAG to advise the Transition Working Group (TWG) and ensure this process was grounded in the recommendations of a diverse group of stakeholders.² TAG is composed of 56 community leaders who offer a wide array public and private perspectives to ensure the recommendations reflect the full spectrum of early childhood programs and services. This includes parents, members of the early childhood workforce, providers, school districts, human services leaders, local Early Childhood Councils, and other stakeholders representing under-served and under-resourced communities. In accordance with HB21-1304, more than half of TAG members were parents, early childhood programs and services providers, or members of the workforce who represented geographically and programmatically diverse perspectives.

Special Education Service Delivery Subgroup: The legislation called for the creation of a subgroup dedicated to developing recommendations for the administration of preschool special education services within the new preschool program. Recommendations from this group were presented to the TWG and informed the recommendations in the Transition Plan.

Transition Working Group (TWG): The TWG includes the ECLC co-chairs and representatives from existing departments and the Governor's office. The TWG was charged with the development of this Transition Plan for the DEC as well as recommendations for a new statewide, universal, voluntary preschool program.

¹ https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/2021a_1304_signed.pdf

² See Appendix 3 for more detailed information about TAG members

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION PLAN

In response to the requirements of HB21-1304, the Transition Working Group (TWG), taking into account the advice of the Transition Advisory Group (TAG) and subgroups, offered recommendations in this Transition Plan to the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) and Colorado policymakers. By November 1, 2021, the Governor’s office, on behalf of the TWG, is required to submit the Transition Plan to the Joint Budget Committee with the Governor’s budget request, and the TWG shall submit the Transition Plan to the ECLC for approval. The TWG is required to work with the ECLC regarding any changes the commission may request before approving the plan by November 15, 2021. After approval by the ECLC, the Governor’s office, on behalf of the TWG, will submit the Transition Plan to the legislative committees called out in HB21-1304 no later than November 15, 2021.

The Transition Plan is just the beginning of a continued planning and implementation process. The TWG realizes there are many critical transitional decisions that will not all be enumerated in this first plan. The TWG recognizes the need for this process to be flexible and nimble as the new Department of Early Childhood (DEC) develops over the next several years, relying on an iterative process. In this context, the Transition Report recommends the DEC commit to continually reviewing, evaluating, and making updates far into the future.

Vision, Mission, Values, and Guiding Principles

Stakeholders drafted vision and mission statements and defined values and guiding principles to serve as a north star for DEC. Together, they should guide the department’s commitment not only to children and families but to the providers and workforce who enable the early childhood system to function.

| VISION | MISSION | VALUES | GUIDING PRINCIPLES |
|--|---|--|---|
| All Colorado children, families, and early childhood professionals are valued, healthy and thriving. | The Colorado Department of Early Childhood ensures the delivery of a comprehensive, community-informed, data-driven, high-quality and equitable early childhood system that supports the care, education and well-being of all Colorado’s young children, their families and early childhood professionals in all settings. | <p>We value equity across the early childhood system and are committed to utilizing an equity-focused lens to drive priorities and decision making.</p> <p>We believe formal and informal care environments can provide high-quality, developmentally appropriate care and learning.</p> <p>We respect and appreciate the diversity and strengths of all of our communities in Colorado.</p> <p>We believe accessibility to early childhood services considers affordability, cultural responsiveness, and parent choice.</p> <p>We value an innovative and expansive approach to our early childhood system.</p> <p>We value a whole-family approach.</p> | <p>Child, Family, and Community Centered</p> <p>Equity Driven</p> <p>All Children Served</p> <p>Holistic Services Approach</p> <p>Mixed Delivery System</p> <p>Thriving, Effective Workforce</p> <p>High-Quality Standards</p> <p>Streamlined Efficiency</p> <p>Data-Driven Outcomes, Focused Decisions</p> <p>Accountability</p> <p>Innovation</p> |

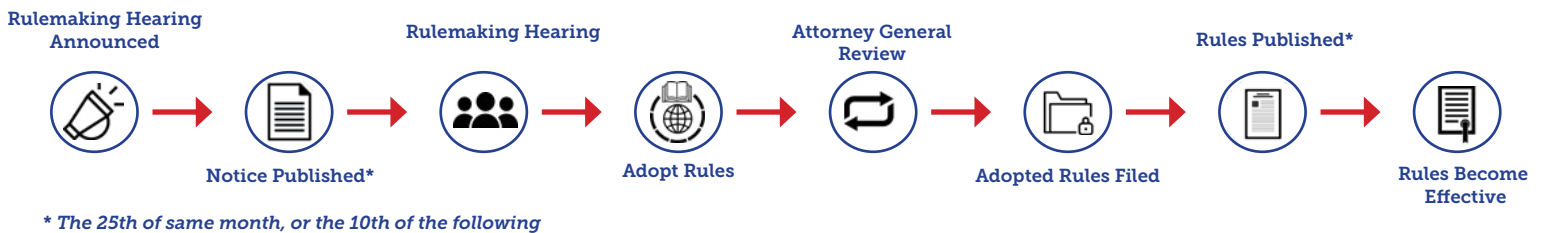
RECOMMENDATION: The Department of Early Childhood should adopt the mission, vision, values, and guiding principles. These statements will help ground the new department in a vision set forth by stakeholders across the state.

Governance

The diversity of stakeholders in early childhood necessitates a robust governance process that is informed by multifaceted and diverse perspectives. As the federally authorized state advisory council, the ECLC has advised Colorado leaders on strategies to promote strong and research-backed early childhood practices across the state since its creation in 2010. In moving to the new department, the ECLC should also serve in a key advisory role to the leadership of DEC, as well as continuing its advisory capacity to state policymakers, other departments, and the Governor's office.

In addition to the ECLC, DEC should be guided by many other existing engagement structures currently advising the OEC and the CDE, including but not limited to: Alliance for Kids, Appeals and Waiver Review Panel, Child Abuse Prevention Board, Colorado Association of Family Child Care, Colorado Association of School Boards, Colorado Association of School Executives, Colorado BOCES Association, Colorado Community Response Implementation, Consortium of Directors of Special Education, Colorado Education Association, Colorado Head Start Association, Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council, Colorado Rural Schools Alliance, Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance, Early Childhood Education Association, Early Childhood Mental Health Program Model Advisory Board, Early Intervention Evaluations Task Force, Family Resource Center Association, Family Voice Council, Fatherhood Steering Committee, Home Visiting Coalition, State Board of Education, State Board of Human Services, Strengthening Families Network, and State Intermediaries. DEC should also build upon CDHS's efforts to engage meaningfully with counties and ensure their partnership in decision making.

As a state agency in the Executive Branch, DEC must adhere to the rulemaking process outlined in the Administrative Procedure Act or APA (Section 24-4-101, Colorado Revised Statutes). The rulemaking process involves four stages: 1) Notice of Proposed Rulemaking; 2) Comment Period on Proposed Rule; 3) Hearing on Proposed Rule; and 4) Final Adoption of Proposed Rule.



RECOMMENDATION: The Early Childhood Leadership Commission should serve in a key advisory role to the leadership of DEC, as well as continuing its advisory capacity to state policymakers, other departments, and the Governor's office.

Building upon this established process, the Transition Report recommends that the Executive Director hold final rulemaking authority for DEC to maintain a unified and cohesive vision. Based on stakeholder feedback that the rulemaking process should be balanced, the Transition Report also recommends the creation of a Rules and Regulations Advisory Council (RRAC) to facilitate meaningful advice, consultation, and collaboration. The DEC RRAC should have no more than 15 members and at a minimum should include:

- Parents, families, or caregivers of children who are enrolled in a variety of public and private early childhood programs;
- Members of the early childhood workforce, including community and school-based educators;
- Representatives of geographically and programmatically diverse community and school-based public and private early childhood programs and Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) providers;
- County and school district officials, including preschool directors and charter schools;
- Representatives from foundations, business, and advocacy organizations;
- Experts in finance and/or regulations;
- Representation from culturally and linguistically diverse communities;
- Representation from higher education; and
- Representation from health / mental health / oral health care professionals.



Governance (continued)

To ensure equity is at the center of all rulemaking processes, at least 50% of the RRAC should represent stakeholders with lived experience in the early childhood system (e.g., parents, providers, members of the workforce) and/or represent historically under-served and under-resourced communities.

As part of DEC's RRAC launch, DEC should ensure supports are provided, both financial and informational, that will equip every member to engage thoughtfully and contribute their expertise.

Recommendations from the DEC's RRAC should be made by a majority vote, and the Executive Director should demonstrate that each of these recommendations is thoroughly considered. Additionally, the Executive Director may create issue-specific committees of the RRAC to advise on specific departmental rules or guidance, including representatives from other state departments, local leaders, and experts on the issue being considered.

While this is the ideal and recommended structure for the next several years, the future will likely look different than today's early childhood landscape. Governance structures may need to be adjusted, additional stakeholder voices may need to be included, and the federal government may expand programs and mandates which could necessitate revisiting this report's recommendations. By July 2025, DEC should complete an evaluation of its governance structure to determine if additional support or structures are needed.

RECOMMENDATION: To facilitate meaningful advice, consultation, and collaboration about rulemaking guidance, the Transition Report recommends the creation of a diverse and well-supported Rules and Regulations Advisory Council. To maintain a unified and cohesive vision, the Executive Director should hold final rulemaking authority for the Department of Early Childhood programs.



Structure of Department of Early Childhood

While the intention of the TWG and stakeholders is not to limit the ability of the Executive Director to determine the structure of the department, stakeholders have elevated several functions as essential for DEC to successfully execute its mission, vision, values, and guiding principles:

- Under an Executive Director, with significant experience in early childhood and systems management, DEC should have a culturally diverse leadership team with a comprehensive set of skills, a strong equity focus, significant expertise, and an understanding of trauma-informed care. This team should focus on DEC’s legislative charge to streamline and enhance the child, family, workforce, and provider experience.
- DEC’s mission necessitates an **expert in policy and governmental affairs** to develop equitable and effective regulatory alignment, and ensure legislative engagement.
- To maximize funding sources to achieve a unified vision, DEC should have a **finance expert** who is oriented toward using their significant understanding of financial regulations to find innovative solutions that meet Colorado’s funding needs. This type of deeply strategic financial alignment is essential to implement the state’s unified plan to increase equitable access to quality early care and education slots, services, and supports, including workforce quality, recruitment, development, and retention.
- To create cohesion for the field, the new department should **organize program delivery and budget around functions of the early childhood system and user experience**, rather than around administration of individual programs and grants, with a lead who is charged with improving the coherence of experience for children, families, providers, and workforce throughout the system. This lead should have a customer service mindset and be responsive to the needs of users, and of all communities, including urban, frontier, and rural.
- A dedicated workforce lead should be part of the program delivery team to ensure that recruitment, preparation, compensation, and additional supports for the early childhood workforce are prioritized.
- To ensure high-quality experiences for children and families regardless of where programs are located, DEC should establish **meaningful cross-agency and community partnerships**, which extend beyond agreements and updates to foster collaboration and alignment among programs and systems located in various departments and at the local level. DEC should have a lead who is charged with maintaining these partnerships and collaborations and having an expansive and bold approach to the early childhood system that includes exploring new funding and investment strategies, creative public/private partnerships, and other programs and policies.
- To fulfill its statutory responsibility, DEC must also maintain **a commitment to data, state-level data systems, and a strong, responsible data collection process** that includes data privacy and security requirements.
 - DEC should have a team with an effective leader to develop a robust data collection and analysis system that is used to inform future strategies and guide decision making. This team should also ensure the ability and legal support to share data with other agencies as needed.
 - DEC should also have a team to manage the department’s technology needs and systems, managed by a lead who has expertise in digital transformation and is adept at using technology to streamline systems.

“To fully realize the potential of the new Department of Early Childhood, the creation and implementation of DEC must be seen as an ongoing, dynamic process. A holistic, comprehensive, and responsive approach to the state’s early childhood system is critical to the success of this new state agency. Throughout the Transition Plan, programs for future consideration have been identified. However, the potential for additional federal funds, creative public/private partnerships, and opportunities not yet imagined remind us that innovation is key to creating an early childhood system that truly serves and uplifts children, families, and the workforce.”

-Pamela Harris, ECLC Co-Chair

RECOMMENDATION: Under an Executive Director, with significant experience in early childhood and systems management, the Department of Early Childhood should have a culturally diverse leadership team with a comprehensive set of skills, a strong equity focus, and significant expertise. Program delivery should be organized around functions of the early childhood system and user experiences, rather than around administration of individual programs and grants, to create more cohesion for the field.

Programs and Services to Transition to DEC Beginning July 2022

Colorado's commitment to early childhood is evident in its vast array of programs that serve children and families, starting before birth and continuing through age 5 and beyond. Despite unification efforts over time, these programs continue to be administered across various agencies. This fragmentation results in unnecessary duplication and inconsistencies in rules and regulations that make it difficult to operate programs, including for school district and community-based programs utilizing multiple funding streams to serve children and families.

A central focus for the creation of DEC is the unification of the early childhood system to ensure a streamlined experience for families that allows them to access whole-family and whole-child services without a heavy administrative burden. In doing so, this will also reduce administrative burden for providers who have to navigate a difficult early childhood landscape. In addition, by law, DEC will be responsible for implementing the new universal, voluntary, statewide preschool program adopted by Colorado voters. HB21-1304 calls for this new preschool program to align all existing preschool funding to create a single state-level preschool program.

HB21-1304 created DEC to ensure Colorado can improve outcomes for all children, fully implement the new preschool program, and effectively support all Colorado families to access voluntary, high-quality child care, early education, and other early childhood services. To execute this statutory responsibility, stakeholders took the following criteria into account when considering program movement:

- The alignment of the program's purpose to the mission, vision, values, and guiding principles of DEC;
- The importance of aligning the current early childhood system with the new universal, voluntary, statewide preschool program;
- The efficiencies of reducing duplicative oversight through the unification of programs; and
- Federal limitations on the movement of the programs (e.g., Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children [WIC] and IDEA, Part B).

Given these criteria, it is recommended the following programs and services begin transition to the DEC starting in July 2022:

- From CDE
 - CPP/Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE)
 - All services administered by the Early Childhood Workforce Development team
- From CDHS
 - All programs and services administered by the OEC

The purpose of each of these programs aligns with the mission, vision, guiding principles, and values of DEC to create a comprehensive, community-informed, effective, high-quality, and equitable early childhood system. The movement of these programs means that the breadth of the department's reach includes infants and toddlers, as well as all children cared for by FFN providers.

To ensure continuity of programming for children, families, and school districts, during the 2022-2023 school year, the recommendations include:

- CPP/ECARE should remain steady in the school year 2022-2023, including funding through the current formula.
- Funding administration for CPP/ECARE should continue at CDE for the school year 2022-2023.
- Existing rules and regulations for CPP/ECARE should remain at CDE and continue to be overseen by the State Board of Education for the school year 2022-2023.
- DEC and CDE should develop a memorandum of understanding that outlines how both agencies will collaborate to administer all other functions including programmatic support for CPP/ECARE for school year 2022-2023, and to launch the new voluntary, universal preschool program for school year 2023-2024, including determining an appropriate plan for staffing DEC.
- Strong collaboration between DEC and CDE will be necessary during this period of transition and over the long term.

Programs and Services to Transition to DEC Beginning July 2022 (continued)

Throughout the engagement process, these programs were determined to be the most critical to move to DEC from the outset in order to prevent a disruption in services and prepare for the launch of Colorado's new preschool program. Appendix 2 contains a full overview of the recommendations for which programs and services should transition to DEC and which should remain under the administrative purview of other state departments.

- For example: An important question was whether programs concerning child maltreatment prevention should transition to DEC. This transition is recommended because it is believed that locating child maltreatment prevention programs under DEC and separate from child welfare in CDHS-Office of Youth, Children, and Families (OYCF) will result in reduced stigma for customers, increased program engagement, and an increase in family strengthening protective factors in a whole-child, whole-family approach. To ensure coordination between the child maltreatment prevention programs at DEC and the OYCF at CDHS, investments should be made for interoperable referral pathways and continued seamless services for families with children of all ages.

RECOMMENDATION: Beginning in July 2022, the Colorado Preschool Program/Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement, the Early Childhood Workforce Development team, and all programs and services currently located in the CDHS Office of Early Childhood should transition to the Department of Early Childhood.



Fiscal Structures and Funding Transition to DEC Beginning July 2022

In order for this transition to be successful, there must be sufficient funding available to build the department's infrastructure. As programs shift to the new department, DEC should also acquire the authority and regulatory power of the funding sources tied to these programs. During the unification process, existing rules, regulations, statutes, and budget structures of these programs may need to be amended to ensure consistency in regulations across the landscape, thus some of these transitions may take some time. This includes initiating a process with federal agencies to transition appropriate funding and authority to DEC. In addition, until the DEC has promulgated rules for the programs under its oversight, the sending agencies' rules and waivers should continue to be in effect to ensure consistency across programs.

DEC should oversee the administration of all early childhood funding, including but not limited to:

- Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), including Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)
- Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP)
- Cash funds from the Early Intervention Trust Fund
- Preschool Cash Fund (Prop EE)
- Preschool Development Grant (PDG)
- Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)
- Federal Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention funds (CBCAP)
- Federal Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) funds
- Early Intervention (IDEA, Part C)
- Federal funds from the Head Start Collaboration grant
- Federal funds from the Family Support through Primary Prevention (FSPP) grant
- Federal funds from the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) grant
- Federal funds from the Retention and Recruitment of Early Intervention Professionals grant
- Marijuana cash funds used for Incredible Years
- Cash funds from Records and Reports Fund
- Child Care Licensing Cash Fund
- Colorado Children's Trust Fund
- Nurse Home Visitor Program Fund
- Child Care Cash Fund



RECOMMENDATION: The Department of Early Childhood should acquire the legislative authority and regulatory power of the funding streams tied to the programs moving to the department. The structure of the Long Bill should be designed to ensure maximum flexibility and equity in program delivery.

Re-Evaluation of Transition by July 2025

Establishing and maintaining a strong DEC requires a cycle of continuous evaluation and improvement. After the department is established in July 2022, stakeholders recommended an ongoing review of the programs overseen by DEC. Community members elevated the following programs for an initial round of review, which should be completed by July 2025.

- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
 - CACFP, which is currently administered by the Colorado of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), provides reimbursement for healthy meals and snacks served to Colorado’s children and adults in licensed child care centers and homes, afterschool programs, emergency and homeless shelters, Head Start, Early Head Start, outside-school-hours programs, and adult day care centers.
- Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
 - WIC, which is currently administered by CDPHE, provides free healthy food, breastfeeding support, nutrition education, and referrals to other care for pregnant and breastfeeding women and children younger than age 5. The USDA has advised Colorado that the WIC program is required to be administered by the state health department or its equivalent pursuant to federal law. The Transition Report recommends DEC monitor the national context of this program and any federal law changes that would allow this program to shift out of the state public health department before reengaging on whether this program should move to DEC.
- IDEA Part B 619
 - The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal special education law that provides federal assistance and authorizes funding to states and school districts to provide early intervention, special education, and related services for children from birth through age 21. IDEA, Part B Section 619 provides preschool grants to programs serving children ages 3-5. Per legal interpretation, IDEA Part B is currently required to be administered by the state agency responsible for K-12 education.
 - CDE will continue to administer and oversee IDEA, Part B, including Section 619 for preschool, in coordination with Administrative Units (AUs) to ensure compliance with IDEA and the Exceptional Children’s Education Act (ECEA). DEC, with relevant insight from CDE to ensure compliance with federal laws and rules, should set regulations and guidance for all preschool programming, including classrooms serving students receiving services through IDEA, Part B.



While these programs offer key supports and services to young children, their scope requires the consideration of federal laws and regulations, as well as additional consideration for the populations they serve and the purposes of the programs. To avoid a disruption of services presently, the transition of these programs should be reconsidered in no more than three years by the ECLC, the Executive Director of DEC, and other relevant entities, including CDE and CDPHE, through a comprehensive stakeholder process that includes all relevant expertise. During the rulemaking process, DEC should collaborate with CDE to ensure that any rules are aligned with ECEA and IDEA .

Throughout the engagement process, many stakeholders noted that families and providers experience fragmentation in accessing these programs. Thus, in the interim, strong interagency collaboration between DEC and the Departments that oversee these programs should support seamless access to these services for families.

RECOMMENDATION: By July 2025, the Department of Early Childhood and the Early Childhood Leadership Commission, in coordination with relevant departments and stakeholders, should review legal requirements and if federal law allows, review the cross-agency partnership and reconsider the transition of CACFP, WIC, IDEA, Part B, and potentially other early childhood programs to DEC.

Stakeholder Feedback on Preschool Special Education Services

Colorado is lauded nationally as the state with the highest rate of serving preschool children in inclusive classrooms (92%).¹ There are also many innovative school districts working closely with community-based partners to provide high-quality special education services to all children in a mixed delivery system. Throughout the stakeholder engagement process that resulted in this Transition Plan, families and advocates identified areas of potential improvement. In addition, school district leaders identified both successes and challenges they face in building capacity to offer special education services across a diversity of settings. Clear themes emerged from the conversations within the Special Education Service Delivery Subgroup, including the following:²

- There is a “lack of parent choice in where their child gets services (largely only in public schools).”
- “Parents/caregivers are uncertain where to bring concerns they have about children’s potential special needs.”
- There is “a lack of coordination between systems (especially the transition between Part C to Part B services).”
- There are “real challenges in recruiting and retaining staff responsible for special education delivery, including occupational therapists and physical therapists.”
- “There are large amounts of paperwork required for children to receive special education services.”
- There is a “need for year-round services for children with special needs.”
- “Challenges around capacity are even more critical in rural areas where there are very few qualified special education teachers and specialists.”
- “Providers often are not prepared to seek Child Find support and refer children when needed.”



Due to the federal landscape and legal requirements, it is recommended that IDEA Part B administration stay at CDE. However, stakeholders identified serious challenges and recommended possible solutions for special education service delivery in Colorado, emphasizing:

- **Parent choice:** Increase equitable access for families by providing full-day and year-round care and education opportunities as well as access to specialized services in mixed delivery settings to the extent possible as determined by a child’s individualized education plan (IEP) team that includes specialists, parents/families, and teachers.
- **Communicating with families:** Improve supports and expectations for communication to parents and families.
- **Blending and braiding funding sources:** Promote strategies to blend and braid funds seamlessly across school districts and community-based programs so they can offer early care and education that meet the needs of working families and ensure children with IEPs receive the supports to which they are entitled.
- **Supporting teachers:** Provide accessible professional development across early childhood programs to prepare teachers to better support the growth and development of children with special needs.
- **Building staff capacity:** Providing incentives and supports to recruit and retain special education teachers and specialists, including occupational therapists and physical therapists.

1. https://drive.google.com/file/d/17Lw_NZhyCMLxhD4dIRA35o9eRUKmT_MV/view?usp=sharing

2. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eoG_NcIsEwSUvsWGaexnOi4ilzKz6W7f/view



Stakeholder Feedback on Preschool Special Education Services (continued)

As the agency that will continue to administer and oversee IDEA, Part B, CDE should make a plan to engage with and address the concerns raised by stakeholders before the new statewide, universal, preschool program begins in the 2023-2024 school year. The intent is that preschool special education does not operate in isolation and that Colorado remains fully compliant with all federal regulations. CDE should maintain IDEA, Part B administration and oversight and DEC should oversee and regulate all early childhood programming. CDE and DEC should work closely to ensure they are supporting children with special needs so that all children can experience free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

CDE, in partnership with DEC and stakeholders, will utilize the input from the Special Education Service Delivery Subgroup to develop a preschool special education implementation plan to support districts, administrative units, and other providers working in partnership to fulfill the requirements of IDEA and Colorado's ECEA. This plan will include:

- Best practices of mixed delivery currently occurring across Colorado and nationally to provide lighthouse examples;
- Optional training for 619 district coordinators on the legal obligations and opportunities related to mixed delivery for students; and
- Ongoing support for the universal preschool program rulemaking process to ensure it can be easily delivered in compliance with IDEA and in support of all students in all settings.

During the rulemaking process, DEC should collaborate with CDE to ensure that any rules are aligned with ECEA and IDEA, Part B regulations and can be easily delivered in compliance with federal law and in support of all students in all settings.

RECOMMENDATION: As the agency that will continue to administer and oversee IDEA, Part B, CDE should make a plan to engage with and address the concerns raised by stakeholders before the new statewide, universal, preschool program begins in the 2023-2024 school year.



Ongoing Alignment and Collaboration with Other State Agencies

Colorado is committed to building a cohesive early childhood landscape. Currently, there are many state agencies that provide services that support young children and their families, including CDHS, CDE, and CDPHE, and Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF). The Department of Higher Education (CDHE) also works closely with these agencies to help recruit and train the early childhood workforce. For decades these agencies have worked collaboratively to provide Colorado's children with the resources they need to thrive. This co-management of the system has been done through a variety of ways, including:

- Collaboration and coordination through membership on the ECLC
- Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council
- Professional Development Information System (PDIS) and workforce development efforts
- Data sharing agreements across CDE and OEC
- OEC Interagency Agreements:
 - Interagency Agreements with the Governor's Office of Information Technology for IT System development, operations, maintenance, and software costs.
 - Interagency Agreements with Community Colleges to support local Early Childhood Councils, Licensing, and strategies implemented by the Preschool Development Grant.
 - Interagency Agreements with public institutions of higher education to conduct program evaluation activities, and to support the implementation of a variety of programs, including the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP), Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visitation (MIECHV) grant, SafeCare, and the Preschool Development Grant.
 - Interagency Agreement with CDE for activities related to the professional development and credentialing of the early childhood workforce.
 - Interagency Agreement with CDPHE for evaluation and data activities required by the MIECHV grant, and for support of the ECLC.
 - Interagency Agreements with CDHE for scholarships for introductory early childhood education classes to support the early childhood workforce.
 - Interagency Agreement with the HCPF for Medicaid services provided in conjunction with NHVP, and for the support of the ECLC.



With the unification of programs under DEC, it will be important to continue and strengthen these coordinating functions and promote alignment among higher education, health care, oral health care, mental health care, human services, and education, including initiatives in the K-12 sector. Though many of the early childhood programs and services families access will be located in DEC, there are a variety of other early childhood programs that will continue to be administered at other state agencies. DEC should closely collaborate with these departments to ensure the consistency of family experience and to promote whole-child and whole-family well-being.



Ongoing Alignment and Collaboration with Other State Agencies (continued)

To ensure the appropriate collaborations occur, DEC should use the following structures:

- DEC, in partnership with CDE, CDHS, CDHE, and CDPHE, should provide an annual report to the legislature, the Governor, and the ECLC. In this report, the agencies should provide updates on the progress and challenges, as well as cross-agency collaboration related to:
 - Administration of special education services for children prior to K-12, specifically IDEA, Part C and Part B, 619
 - Administration of CACFP for programs administered by DEC (i.e., child care centers, family child care home providers)
 - Administration of WIC, in support of families with children younger than 5 years of age
 - Connecting early childhood care, learning, and supports with K-12, to ensure children enter kindergarten ready to learn and are successful in school
 - Administration of the state's universal, voluntary, preschool program, which will be integrated with CPP/ECARE
 - Alignment of the early childhood system with the child welfare system
 - The flexible use of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding to support child care
- DEC should establish cross-agency MOUs, data sharing requirements in legislation, or other collaborative structures necessary to ensure effective, efficient administration of early childhood programs and funds.
- DEC should create a plan for tribal engagement to ensure alignment of the early childhood system across nations, which includes building on efforts currently underway.

As part of the review process to be completed by July 2025, DEC and their partners should evaluate their collaboration structures to determine strengths, improvements, and additional structures that may be necessary to better support families, children, the workforce and program providers.

RECOMMENDATION: The Department of Early Childhood should establish close collaboration with other departments to strengthen coordinating functions and to promote alignment among higher education, health care, oral health care, mental health care, human services, and education, including initiatives in the K-12 sector.



Blending and Braiding Funding

Colorado's early childhood funding landscape is vast, complex, and difficult to navigate. At the state level there are multiple funding streams, including CPP/ECARE, CCCAP, TANF, Title I, and preschool special education that are currently administered by different state departments. In addition, there are many local funding sources that support the early childhood system and help communities meet the needs of children and families. Frequently, blending and braiding are techniques used by program providers, local entity staff, and families to combine the dollars available to help pay for all of the services a child needs.

Blending¹: "Financial assistance is combined under a single set of reporting and other requirements, and resources contributed from each individual funding stream lose their original award-specific identity."

Braiding²: "Financial assistance from several sources is coordinated to support a single initiative or strategy, while individual award maintains its award-specific identity."

In the early childhood system where funding is largely the limiting factor to the growth and scale of services, blending and braiding provide a clear path to maximize available funds and minimize costly administrative work. The passage of Proposition EE adds an additional funding source to the system and necessitates alignment within the system. Stakeholders have expressed five key challenges they face when blending and braiding funding that need to be solved by the new department to allow localities and communities to maximize dollars and serve all children.

1. Regulations (e.g., program quality, monitoring, eligibility, operations) attached to different funding streams are complex to navigate, not always aligned, and burdensome.
2. Separate funding streams have separate technology structures that can be a barrier for any type of access and make it complicated for families and providers.
3. Different funding sources flow to different community entities (e.g., counties, school districts, early childhood providers), with no one charged with ensuring cohesion or efficient maximization of blending and braiding capability.
4. Each community has differing current levels of coordination and implementation.
5. There is a lack of visibility into systems statewide. Clear, real time data on access, need, demand, and capacity by demographics and locality are unavailable to community leaders or state policymakers, making it challenging to address regulatory concerns or burdens related to using funds, including to blend and braid funding at all levels of the system.

¹ <https://www.agacgfm.org/Intergov/More-Tools/Blended-and-Braided-Funding-A-Guide-for-Policy-Ma.aspx>

² <https://www.agacgfm.org/Intergov/More-Tools/Blended-and-Braided-Funding-A-Guide-for-Policy-Ma.aspx>



Blending and Braiding Funding (continued)

To achieve its mission and address these challenges, the DEC should commit to the following:

- As soon as possible, DEC should revise and streamline existing regulations (e.g. licensing, eligibility, program standards, qualifications, reporting requirements) across state funding sources to ensure that families and providers have more flexibility with funds and less administrative burden, while maintaining compliance with state and federal laws.
 - Licensing reforms should take into account feedback from providers, including school-based and community-based providers, about duplication in order to streamline monitoring wherever safely possible.
- DEC should utilize one streamlined application for universal preschool and related early childhood programs that is user-friendly and easily accessible for families and early childhood education providers. Over time, additional programs should be added to the unified application as it is beneficial for families and children.
- DEC should itself blend and braid dollars before allocations are released to the greatest extent possible. DEC should build or identify and fund local expertise and capacity to blend and braid local and federal-to-local funding with state funds across slot-based programs, using an equity focused lens and ensuring systems are ready for additional federal or other dollars should they become available.
- DEC should structure itself, its funding, and its programs, where regulations allow, to empower local communities to lead and innovate based on their local context. DEC should elevate and scale local exemplars to build statewide solutions, and should provide resources, feedback, and support for all communities, ensuring responsiveness to rural and frontier communities. Immediately, DEC should commence a review of community readiness to determine necessary support for the successful launch of universal preschool, early childhood unification, and innovation. Where possible, DEC should promote and support community leadership within the early childhood system.

Historical investments in early childhood - in Colorado and across the United States - are not nearly enough to fully fund the needs of families, even when fully maximized.¹ DEC should use existing funds more efficiently, work towards the cost of quality care, leverage the newly-available Proposition EE funds effectively, and ensure that the department leadership is prepared to advocate for and use future additional investments strategically and equitably in an historically underfunded system.

RECOMMENDATION: To address funding challenges identified by families and providers, the Department of Early Childhood should:

- Revise rules and regulations to ensure more flexibility with funds and reduce administrative burden while ensuring equitable use of those funds.
- Create and utilize a single application and eligibility verification for families.
- Blend and braid state dollars before releasing allocations to localities.
- Empower communities to lead and innovate based on their local context.
- Evaluate and build community readiness for launching the universal preschool program.
- Ensure DEC is prepared to advocate for and strategically use future additional investments in an historically underfunded system.

¹ <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/transforming-financing/landscape-of-early-care-and-education-financing>

Technology and Data Systems

To achieve its mission of providing an effective, high-quality, and equitable early childhood system, DEC should collect thorough, relevant data on slots, services, and needs for families and children both at the community level and statewide, while meeting the data privacy and security requirements under state and federal law. Collecting this data should allow for a real-time needs assessment of various regions and enable staff from DEC to offer individualized and targeted supports for different populations.

HB21-1304 calls for an analysis of Colorado's existing data to:

- Address the extent to which existing early childhood programs and services are available to and used by the child and family populations they are designed to serve;
- Identify the groups of children and families, based on location within the state and on family demographics, including socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, gender, language, and disability, who are accessing the existing early childhood programs and services; and
- Provide specific information concerning groups of children that have historically encountered barriers to school readiness.
- Also, the legislation requires the Transition Plan to address early childhood data system strategies to inform planning, leverage resource allocations, maximize children's access to programs, and support data-driven decision-making.

This analysis of Colorado's existing data on all early childhood programs finds:

- Currently, Colorado is only able to measure system capacity through collecting licensed capacity, which does not provide real insight into the system's capacity.
- Because of how data is collected and aggregated across program types, it is impossible to know how many unique children are being served by publicly-funded early childhood programs.
- Colorado Shines, the current quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) does not measure the experiences children are having across all sites and all programs, and there is no way to know the number of children served by each Colorado Shines level.



Technology and Data Systems (continued)

Colorado should prioritize safely collecting both qualitative and quantitative data that provides insight into the fundamental questions needed for policymakers and state leaders to address gaps and better direct resources in the system. To allow for informed decision making, at a minimum, Colorado should be collecting the following data elements for all its early childhood programs and services:

| CHILD AND FAMILY DATA | PROGRAM AND FUNDING TYPE DATA | PROVIDER AND WORKFORCE DATA |
|--|--|--|
| <p>The number of children under age 6 years in Colorado by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demographics (e.g., age, race, socio-economic status, gender identity, language, disability status) Eligibility for various early childhood programs <p>The number of children accessing programs for which they are eligible by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program (e.g., funding source, location, etc) Hours of care received Program quality <p>The number of children not able to access programs for which they are eligible.</p> | <p>The number of programs that exist in Colorado that provide subsidized early childhood slots:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of children able to be served in each early childhood site The availability of programs and the number of children able to be served by geographical area <p>The quality level of each program, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of children served by quality level Funding streams that support programs based on Colorado Shines quality level <p>Long term outcomes for children served by program, as available, including measures that show correlation with academic success in grade 3.</p> | <p>The number of early childhood professionals by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Childhood Professional Credential and other attainment types Employment status Geographic location The comparison between supply and demand of professionals <p>Retention rates of professionals by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credential attainment type Program Outcome (e.g., retained, working at a different center, leaving the early childhood workforce) |



Technology and Data Systems (continued)

In addition to this data collected by DEC, ECLC should coordinate a review of data related to social determinants of health as well as oral, physical, mental, and behavioral health, in partnership with CDHS, CDE, CDPHE, and HCPF. Data sharing agreements, which ensure data privacy and security for children and families, and interoperable data systems - including through a unique identifier - across state agencies for both historical and future data will be instrumental in ensuring that DEC and other departments have a comprehensive view of all early childhood data across the state.

The DEC Executive Director should prioritize a review of the existing technology structures to identify gaps in the systems and strategies to minimize duplication of efforts. Currently, these systems and structures to collect and manage data are complex to navigate internally and difficult for many families and providers to use. DEC should work to simplify technology systems where possible and create a streamlined experience for families, providers, and communities in collecting and accessing public data, both aggregated and disaggregated, on the whole early childhood system. Additionally, as the new statewide, universal, voluntary preschool program is established, and more families are accessing early childhood services, DEC should work to create a single application that is accessible for all families.

RECOMMENDATION: To inform decisions for children in Colorado, the Department of Early Childhood should:

- Collect data that provides additional information on system capacity, including number of open or closed classrooms, number of current teachers and workforce shortages, and overall availability of slots and current vacancies.
- Implement a child count process that provides insight into the unique number of children served at every publicly-funded site, across programs and funding sources, including unique identifiers when available, to encourage seamless K-12 integration while fully respecting the privacy of every student and family.
- Ensure that the child count process captures the number of children served by Colorado Shines quality level.
- Coordinate and require the collection of data in a way that does not burden providers and families.
- Ensure the data privacy security of all data collected by all participants in early childhood systems.
- Leverage technology in innovative ways to create efficiency and digital transformation in the system.



Early Childhood Workforce

The early childhood workforce is an incredibly diverse field, including teachers, speech and occupational therapists, health services providers, cooks, bus drivers, home visitors, FFNs and family support staff. The success of all early childhood programs and systems relies on the strength of this workforce which has been historically underpaid, and often excluded from benefits. As DEC launches, it must prioritize addressing the state’s early childhood workforce concerns, including the need to recruit, train, and fairly compensate the entire profession.

To administer a comprehensive early childhood system, launch universal preschool, and continue to provide services for young children and their families, DEC must prioritize supporting the growth and development of its early childhood workforce. Subgroups and the TAG raised key challenges that DEC must begin addressing immediately to ensure its success across the programs it will be responsible for administering, as well directional recommendations for DEC to focus on:

| CHALLENGES | RECOMMENDATIONS |
|--|--|
| <p>There are not enough members across the spectrum of the early childhood workforce due to challenges with recruitment and retention.</p> | <p>Early Childhood Workforce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review qualification pathways for opportunities to reduce complexity while also maintaining a diverse workforce in all settings. Work with higher education to develop pathways and recruitment strategies for specialists needed in the early childhood workforce, including early childhood teachers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech language pathologists, mental health consultants, home visitors, family service providers and others critical to meeting the needs of children and families. Support and increase approved pre-service and in-service training opportunities, including training on trauma-informed care. <p>Early Childhood Educators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplify, promote, and measure achievement using Colorado’s Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Professionals (revised 2021). Support individuals to achieve these competencies through ongoing, accessible professional development. |
| <p>There are not enough Black/Indigenous/People of Color entering the early childhood field or serving in leadership roles.</p> | <p>Identify and implement strategies that recruit and retain a diverse workforce and support greater diversity in leadership positions.</p> |
| <p>Members of the workforce are not compensated at a liveable wage.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and elevate innovative compensation strategies for the early childhood workforce across all settings at the program, community, and state levels which should include pursuing compensation benefits and a liveable wage. Ensure true cost of quality early childhood services is part of all funding models |
| <p>It is challenging and complex to be determined qualified to teach in licensed early childhood education programs.</p> | <p>Review the process for meeting early childhood workforce entry requirements to reduce barriers, increase retention, and minimize administrative burden at all levels of the system.</p> |

RECOMMENDATION: The Department of Early Childhood should prioritize supporting the growth and development of its early childhood workforce by implementing the above recommendations.

CONCLUSION

The establishment of a cabinet-level Department of Early Childhood (DEC) is a monumental step for Colorado. DEC builds upon the decades of bold and innovative work the state has undertaken to best serve its youngest children. With the passage of Proposition EE and the new statewide, universal, voluntary preschool program beginning in July 2023, Colorado has a unique opportunity to further strengthen its early childhood system and increase support and services for children and families during this critical period in children's development.

Hundreds of stakeholders offered input into this process to build on the existing successes in Colorado and share opportunities for the early childhood system to better serve children and families. The recommendations in this Transition Plan are based on the themes identified by these stakeholders to improve the current experiences of children, families, providers, and the early childhood workforce. These recommendations seek to guide DEC in its innovative work and ensure the department is fully prepared to achieve its mission and vision. In addition, as the new agency is created, we will undoubtedly learn new things and need to pivot and make adjustments. Flexibility and learning will be key to success as the new agency is created.

DEC has an opportunity to fundamentally transform the ways in which Colorado serves the needs of children and families through the unification of early childhood programs and services under one governing structure. These recommendations lay the groundwork for DEC and the state to lead the country in establishing a fully supported early childhood system that prioritizes the whole-child and whole-family. If these recommendations are executed, the community envisions a future in which all Colorado children, families, and early childhood professionals are valued, healthy, and thriving.



APPENDIX

1. Early Childhood History in Colorado

Colorado's transformational early childhood advancements in the past year establishing high-quality, universal preschool for all four-year olds and creating a new cabinet-level early childhood department are built on decades of significant legislative and policy actions. These policy changes set the ground for the state's commitment to providing young children with opportunities to succeed in school and life, while supporting their families' economic security.

The modern era of the Colorado early childhood movement essentially began in the mid-1980s with Governor Roy Romer's First Impressions initiative in 1987, which increased awareness of early childhood issues, developed a statewide agenda, and built community coalitions to promote key investments. Advocates had started to prioritize early childhood, including as a policy emphasis of the Colorado Children's Campaign, when it was formed in 1985. One of the first important actions resulting from this increased focus was the establishment of the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) in 1988. This program targeted services to three- and four-year olds with risk factors, including low family income as well as other conditions that research has shown reduces children's learning readiness, such as low parental education levels and history of family violence or substance use disorder. CPP set extensive quality standards and regular evaluations that 33 years later continue to demonstrate the program's effectiveness by revealing participating children's outcomes later in school, such as reduced retention rates, higher test scores and improved high school graduation rates. With strong legislative support over the years, CPP has grown significantly since its inception, expanding its reach to many more children.

Over the next several years, Colorado policymakers, advocates, foundations, and businesses developed policies, systems, and funding to advance early care and education. With congressional enactment of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) in 1990, the state moved forward early childhood issues by expanding access to child care for more low-income children. This expansion brought forward the need for quality services to ensure children had positive experiences and outcomes, and in 1991-92 First Impressions established the Professional Standards Task Force to examine quality practices for early childhood educators.

Colorado leaders during the 1990s also connected early childhood issues to larger systems, such as family support, business success, crime prevention, health, and education. Important examples of the family support connections included the creation of Parents as Children's First Teachers Project in 1991 and Family Resource Center pilots in 1993. During this time, employers nationally and in Colorado were increasingly recognizing stable child care was instrumental to their business success and the state's economic health, and thus formed the Colorado Business Commission on Child Care Financing. With many national studies finding quality early education led to reduced delinquency and crime, the state in 1996 established the Youth Crime Prevention Initiative that funded early childhood programs to prevent crime. This effort was later expanded and became known as the Tony Grampas Youth Services program. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the state linked child care and preschool programs more closely with health-related initiatives, including creating early childhood mental health pilots, which led to more comprehensive strategic mental health support in the system, namely the statewide early childhood mental health consultation initiative. The state's early childhood health connections also included funding the Nurse Family Partnership, which led to greater investments in comprehensive evidence-based home visiting programs.



APPENDIX

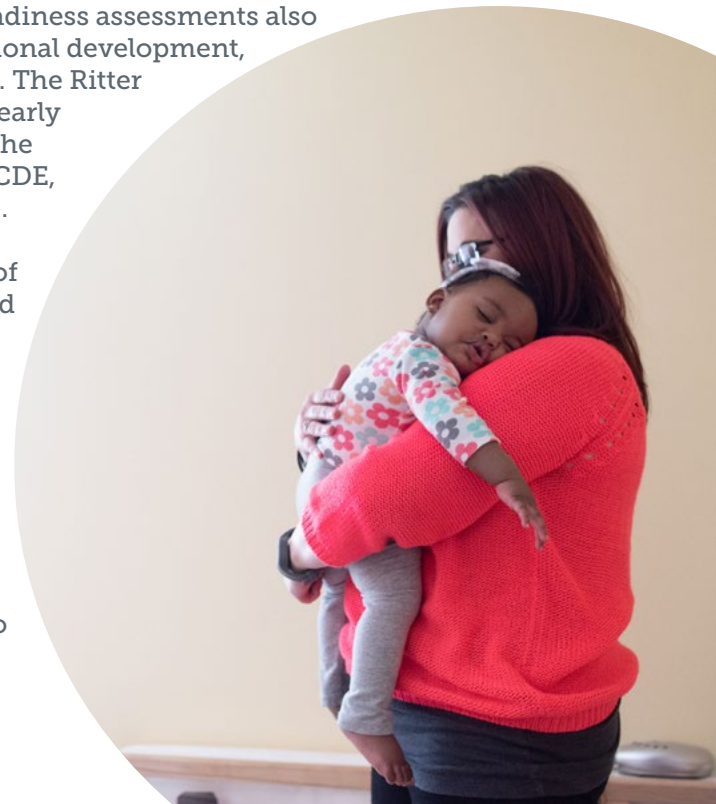
1. Early Childhood History in Colorado (continued)

Local leaders also contributed to the momentum for increased support in the early years and, by the mid-1990s, recognized the need to better coordinate the array of early childhood programs that had grown across the state. Working with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), the legislature funded several early childhood pilots in specific geographic regions to support and improve the local coordination of programs and services. The success of these pilots led to the legislative establishment of Early Childhood Councils statewide a decade later.

As Colorado early childhood policies and programs expanded in the late 1990s, early childhood leaders worked with advocates, administrators, and the philanthropic communities to engage policymakers in systemic consideration of state funding and policy needs. This effort led to the development of several state commissions and committees that provided strategic direction to child care and preschool policies throughout the state. Several of these entities included the active engagement and leadership of state legislators. One of the key areas that this examination clarified was the need to better integrate early childhood with K-12 education, as Colorado and all states were implementing the education reforms required by No Child Left Behind in the early 2000s. In 2002, the state legislature established school readiness subsidies and ratings for early childhood programs and required them to develop quality improvement plans. In 2005, the legislature expanded the Early Childhood Professional Credential statewide to ensure that all professionals caring for and educating young children have the same core early childhood competencies regardless of setting. The legislature created this credential five years earlier on a pilot basis.

In 2008, Governor Bill Ritter introduced the preschool to 20 (P-20) initiative, which recognized the systemic linkages between all education aspects, including preschool. The resulting legislative effort was known as Colorado's Achievement Plan For Kids (CAP4K), which sought to align preschool, K-12, and postsecondary education to help Colorado students graduate with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and careers. Specific components of CAP4K included school readiness plans and assessments to measure school readiness and provide teachers and families with information to support children's skills and development. Early literacy was a critical piece of these assessments and later grew into the Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act, enacted in 2012. These kindergarten readiness assessments also include physical well being, motor development, social and emotional development, language and comprehension, cognition, and general knowledge. The Ritter Administration also focused on updating and aligning the state's early childhood Professional Development Information System under the leadership of Lt. Governor Barbara O'Brien, in collaboration with CDE, CDHS, and the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE).

Another crucial aspect of CAP4K was the legislative requirement of a unique identifier for all children participating in publicly-funded early childhood programs, including the CCDF and Head Start. The purpose of the identifier, which is used in K-12 education, is to help administrators and policymakers understand the impacts of particular programs on child outcomes without revealing the identity of any child, including outcomes by language, geographic regions, income, race, and ability. The identifier also helps state leaders know which child is receiving which services under different programs, helping to maximize state dollars and inform equitable decision-making for all children. The state later determined that establishing an early childhood identifier was too costly and complex, so it was never implemented.



APPENDIX

1. Early Childhood History in Colorado (continued)

With the state's extensive early childhood progress, Colorado legislators recognized the need for further systematic consideration of policies and programs and in 2009 created the Early Childhood and School Readiness Commission. This annual interim legislative committee increased state legislators' engagement, providing them with a greater opportunity to consider and pass key changes. In the Commission's first year, the legislature proposed and enacted several bills, including requiring continuous 12-month eligibility for children receiving services under the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP). It also enacted a common application form for publicly funded early childhood programs, support for professional development, and wage incentives, but none of them were funded because of fiscal constraints during the recession.

To support the state's early childhood policy making efforts, the state established the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) in 2010 as the State Advisory Council required under the federal Head Start law. The ECLC created the Early Childhood Colorado Framework, grants programmatic waivers, and advises state policymakers on policy matters. The ECLC helped guide the state's use of the federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant it was awarded in 2012 and established subcommittees to support other priorities, such as workforce and data. To enhance the state's focus on early childhood, the legislature in 2013 created the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) in CDHS, which consolidated many key early childhood programs.

Throughout the 2010s, the state expanded early childhood services in many ways, including creating and funding the Infant and Toddler Quality and Access Grant Program; establishing more than 3,000 new preschool/full-day Kindergarten slots under ECARE also in 2013; enacting several tax credits to help parents and early childhood providers better afford child care; and regularly increasing funding for child care subsidies. In 2014, the legislature set statewide CCCAP reimbursement rates, eligibility levels, and copayment schedules, and clarified the 12-month continuous CCCAP eligibility requirement. In 2016, the state expanded child care resources for vulnerable populations, such as teen parents, domestic violence survivors, and children needing mental health support. In 2018, the legislature established an equitable formula for county CCCAP Block Grants and expanded CCCAP eligibility levels.

After a couple decades of substantial early childhood expansions, Colorado was well-positioned to win two rounds of the federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG), to identify the state's biggest early childhood needs and help address them. The grants support the state's creation of strategic plans to better coordinate, expand, and improve services, increase meaningful and equitable access, maximize family engagement and support, strengthen business practices, and promote child health and well-being.

In 2019-2020 under the leadership of Governor Jared Polis and the legislature, the state continued to increase early childhood funding and access. The state funded free, voluntary full-day kindergarten, added more than 5,000 full-day CPP slots under Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE), allowed local governments to form special districts to secure additional early childhood revenues, and established a strategic plan for family child care homes that later resulted in prohibiting homeowner associations and local zoning authorities from restricting family child care home operations. In 2020, the legislature referred a measure to the statewide ballot to increase the state's tobacco tax and establish a state nicotine tax, to provide revenues to quality, universal preschool in a mixed delivery system, beginning in 2023. This measure, Proposition EE, was passed by the voters by a two-to-one vote in November 2020.

The transformational early childhood movement Colorado is experiencing today has its seeds, roots, stalks, and branches in more than 30 years of statewide policy, funding, and system-level improvements and expansions. These actions provide an important context of the great changes for young children and families that the state is now moving forward.



APPENDIX

2. Program Information

| Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) Office of Early Childhood (OEC) | Population Served | Purpose of Program | Is Program recommended to transition , revisit, or stay? | Rationale for Recommendation |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) | Children up to age 13 years, and for children with special needs up to age 19 years. | CCCAP provides subsidized child care benefits to eligible families that are working, searching for work, in school or training, or experiencing homeless. | Transition | The new statewide, universal, voluntary preschool program will offer 10 hours of free, high-quality preschool per week. Many families will still need additional hours to meet their needs for early care and education. CCCAP, as a program that largely serves the early care and education needs of young children, will connect closely with universal preschool providers to ensure all income-eligible families have a seamless experience accessing high-quality care. Aligning this major funding stream with other early childhood care and education program streams is a precondition for a more seamless child, family, workforce, and provider experience. |
| Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) | Early Childhood Providers | Colorado Shines is the statewide quality rating and improvement system for Colorado’s licensed early care and learning programs and connects families with quality child care and preschool programs. | Transition | A goal of the universal preschool program is to ensure children have access to high-quality early care and education. Engaging providers who participate in universal preschool with Colorado Shines will support these providers in offering high-quality education and care, and will help families find and select quality programs that meet their needs and support children’s healthy growth and development. |

2. Program Information

| Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) Office of Early Childhood (OEC) | Population Served | Purpose of Program | Is Program recommended to transition , revisit, or stay? | Rationale for Recommendation |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Early Childhood Councils & Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R)</p> | <p>Early Childhood Workforce Families with children up to 18 years</p> | <p>The Early Childhood Council system covers 63 of 64 Colorado counties and is charged with building the foundations of a locally based early childhood system so that more high quality services are available to children and families.</p> | <p>Transition</p> | <p>Early Childhood Councils are vital local partners in supporting the early childhood workforce and other early childhood efforts. Keeping the Councils and the funding stream that supports their work in line with other state-level early childhood efforts ensures that local and state efforts will remain aligned.</p> <p>CCR&R specialists help families by providing referrals to child care, financial assistance information, and education about the quality and availability of care.</p> |
| <p>Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System (PDIS)</p> | <p>Early Childhood Workforce</p> | <p>The Colorado Shines PDIS is a web-based system providing free and easy access to professional development courses and credentialing to the early childhood workforce.</p> | <p>Transition</p> | <p>Without a highly qualified workforce, there can be no high-quality care and early learning programs. Including the Early Childhood Workforce Development programs in the new department will help align professional development work with high-quality program work, to ensure early childhood educators can support children in their learning and growth.</p> |

2. Program Information

| Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) Office of Early Childhood (OEC) | Population Served | Purpose of Program | Is Program recommended to transition , revisit, or stay? | Rationale for Recommendation |
|--|------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund | Families with children of all age | The Fund focuses on efforts to strengthen families before the first occurrence of child maltreatment. | Transition | The Trust Fund currently provides resources to support upstream primary prevention so that children never experience child abuse or neglect in the first place. These strategies are community-based, designed to support all children and families without stigma, and promote family well-being right from the start. The statute was modernized in the last legislative session and starting in 2022 will take on the additional role of increasing capacity for Family First Prevention Services across the state. Supporting families with risk factors outside of the child welfare system is cost-effective, less traumatic for families, and increases community and philanthropic support for sustainability of these programs. All of these strategies build protective factors to increase family well-being, reduce entry and reentry into the child welfare system, and ensure safe and nurturing environments in the home so that children and families can show up to kindergarten ready to learn. |
| Colorado Community Response (CCR) | Families with children of all ages | CCR is a voluntary prevention program serving families who have been screened out from child welfare as the allegations did not meet the statutory definition of abuse or neglect. | Transition | Licensed early care and education is a very important piece of ensuring young children are supported in their growth and development, however, ensuring children have safe, stable, nurturing, and enriching environments in the home is vital. CCR provides families with the resources they need to support their children's growth and development and build protective factors to keep families strong. These strategies reduce entry or re-entry into the child welfare system and prevent adverse childhood experiences so children thrive. |
| Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Program | Children under 5 years | The federal formula funding for community-based child abuse prevention, from Part II of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, supports strategies to keep families strong from the start so they don't ever need to touch the child welfare system. | Transition | Title II of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) established the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Program to ensure resources for child abuse and neglect prevention programs for families before an initial occurrence of maltreatment. The funds are intended to flow to community-based agencies that are accessible and feel safe to families. In Colorado, much of this funding flows through Family Resource Centers because they exist as a single point of entry for many services. This funding builds protective factors in communities and families to increase family and economic well-being, ensure safe and nurturing home environments that bolsters children's growth and development, reduce entry into the child welfare system, and ensure children are ready to learn in kindergarten. |

2. Program Information

| Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) Office of Early Childhood(OEC) | Population Served | Purpose of Program | Is Program recommended to transition , revisit, or stay? | Rationale for Recommendation |
|---|------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) | Children under 5 years | ECMH Consultants program provides consultation in early care and learning settings for children ages birth to-5 years. | Transition | Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants provide an important support service for child care programs, as they work in child care settings. Children and early care and education providers have many social-emotional health needs as we continue to navigate through the pandemic. Bringing Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants into the new department will continue their alignment with early care and education providers, to ensure children and the early childhood workforce are getting the mental health support they need. |
| Early Intervention (IDEA, Part C) | Children ages birth-3 years | The Early Intervention program (IDEA, Part C) provides services for children with developmental delays or disabilities from birth to their third birthdays. | Transition | Early Intervention services (IDEA, Part C) are a key part of ensuring all children have access to the support they need. When children can be identified and receive services early, they are less likely to need more intensive support as they get older, helping them to be more ready to participate in kindergarten. |
| Family Resource Centers | Families with children of all ages | Family Resource Centers provide family support services to vulnerable families with children of all ages, including building protective factors to keep families strong, coordinated case management, resource referrals, and system navigation with the ultimate objective of increasing that family's well-being and economic stability. | Transition | Family Resource Centers provide access to basic needs, social capital, family driven goal setting, system navigation, and case management to families across Colorado. These supports are a significant factor in helping families meet children's basic needs, so they can develop to their potential. Many offer child care and other early childhood supports, like home visiting services and play groups. Family Resource Centers are also a vital part of the network of partners that provide connection and community to those with young children. Enhancing economic and family well-being increases safe and nurturing home environments thus reducing entry and reentry into the child welfare systems and ensuring children and their families are thriving. |

2. Program Information

| Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) Office of Early Childhood (OEC) | Population Served | Purpose of Program | Is Program recommended to transition , revisit, or stay? | Rationale for Recommendation |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Colorado Fatherhood Program (CFP) | Fathers who are over the age of 18 years who have children or custody of children ages 24 years and younger are eligible for services. | CFP does additional specialized outreach to priority populations that include male caregivers who are receiving government aid, living in rural areas, non-custodial and custodial single fathers, veterans, fathers without a high school diploma, unemployed fathers, and fathers re-entering after incarceration. | Transition | Parents are children’s first and best teachers, and fathers are an important part of children’s growth and development. CFP helps fathers feel confident and competent in their role, builds family protective factors to keep families strong, and connects dads with needed resources to meet the needs of the family. The outcomes are children get the benefit of an engaged father, are able to live in nurturing and safe environments, and there is a reduction in entry to the child welfare system. |
| Head Start Collaboration Office | Children under 5 years | The Head Start Collaboration Office facilitates partnerships between Head Start agencies and other state entities that provide services to benefit low-income children and their families. | Transition | Head Start and Early Head Start offer high-quality early childhood education and care and comprehensive services to qualifying families. Together with child care programs licensed through the state of Colorado, Head Start programs are important in ensuring the children they serve are ready for success in kindergarten. The Head Start Collaboration office facilitates partnerships between Head Start agencies and other state entities that provide services to benefit low-income children and their families. Moving this office will ensure continued collaboration in the federal-to-local funding program. |
| Home Visiting Programs (e.g., NFP, SafeCare, PAT, Healthy Steps, Child First, HIPPY) | Children under 5 years | Current evidence-based home visiting programs approved in Colorado include Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), Safe Care, HealthySteps, Home Instruction for the Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), Child First, Family Connects, and Parents as Teachers (PAT). These programs, while each unique, all provide services to families in their homes. | Transition | Home visiting programs, like other programs in the Division of Community and Family Support, are key to ensuring safe and healthy home environments for children. Linking programs that support parents and family, friend, and neighbor caregivers with programs that support child care providers helps align and ensure that all children, regardless of where they are cared for, are healthy, valued, and thriving. |

2. Program Information

| Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) Office of Early Childhood (OEC) | Population Served | Purpose of Program | Is Program recommended to transition , revisit, or stay? | Rationale for Recommendation |
|--|---------------------------|--|--|--|
| Incredible Years | Children under 5 years | Incredible Years encompasses three programs that work to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors by leveraging positive parent-child and teacher-child relationships to promote preschool-aged children’s social-emotional skills and prevent behavior issues that can lead to expulsion and suspension from early childhood programs. | Transition | Incredible Years programs work both in classrooms and with parents to foster stronger relationships with children. These programs are specifically designed to help children be ready to engage in school, and support children who come from all different care settings (licensed, Family, Friend, and Neighbor, or home). |
| Promoting Safe and Stable Families | Children under 5 years | The purpose of the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program is to enable states to develop and establish, or expand, and to operate a continuum of coordinated community-based family support services, family preservation services, time-limited family reunification services, and adoption promotion and support services. | Transition | The Promoting Safe and Stable Families program acts as leverage for counties to support community-based programs that promote safe, nurturing, and quality environments in the home. Building family protective factors keep families strong, improves family and economic well-being, reduces entry or reentry into the child welfare system, and supports children’s growth and development so they are ready for kindergarten. This program works best in partnership with other programs like Child Abuse Prevention, and should be part of a continuum of programs working together to achieve their goals. |
| Background Investigation Unit | Early Childhood Workforce | The Background Investigation Unit processes Colorado child abuse and neglect check requests and reviews the results of required state and federal criminal background checks for individuals working with children or in unsupervised contact with children. | Transition | The Background Investigation Unit is closely linked with child care licensing, as all individuals working in licensed child care facilities must be background checked. Thus, this unit will also be very important to the implementation of universal preschool, and ensuring all providers offer a safe environment for children. OEC will lead a process to ensure that just the relevant components of the background investigation unit are moved to DEC. |
| Child Care Licensing | Early Childhood Providers | Child Care Licensing ensures child care programs, including preschools, child care centers, and family child care homes, as well as children’s resident camps and school-age programs, meet health and safety standards and the developmental needs of children in care. | Transition | Child care licensing will be an integral part of supporting current and new child care providers who will participate in the new universal preschool program. Child care licensing will work in close partnership with the implementation of universal preschool and other efforts to ensure children are in high quality education and care that prepares them for kindergarten. DEC will collaborate with other state departments to ensure licensing regulations remain appropriate and relevant. |

2. Program Information

| Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) Office of Economic Security (OES) and Children Youth and Families (OCYF) | Population Served | Purpose of Program | Is Program recommended to transition , revisit, or stay? | Rationale for Recommendation |
|---|-----------------------------|--|--|---|
| Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in the Office of Economic Security (OES) | Children until age 18 years | TANF in OES supports participants to become self-sufficient by strengthening their family's economic and social stability. | Remain | While families with young children may be supported by TANF funding for child care, this program aims to help all families gain economic stability. Although states can transfer up to 30% of TANF funding to the CCDF fund (federal funding source for CCCAP), the two funding sources do not need to be at the same department for this to continue to occur. When TANF funds are transferred to CCDF, they are treated as CCDF dollars and must be spent according to CCDF rules. TWG urges that any TANF dollars that are being spent on CCDF should continue to do so. |
| Child Welfare (aside from child maltreatment prevention programs) (OCYF) | Children until age 18 years | Child Welfare within the OCYF works with families with children birth to age 18. | Remain | Having child welfare in a separate department may reduce stigma for families accessing child maltreatment prevention programs in DEC. |



2. Program Information

| Colorado Department of Education (CDE) | Population Served | Purpose of Program | Is Program recommended to transition , revisit, or stay? | Rationale for Recommendation |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| Colorado Preschool Program (CPP)/ Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE) | Children ages 3 - 5 years | <p>The Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) is a state-funded preschool program by the Colorado General Assembly, that provides high-quality early learning experiences for children who have risk factors that may affect achievement later in school. Children served through CPP attend early childhood programs located in district-operated preschools, local child care centers, community based preschools, and Head Start programs. Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE) slots are a type of CPP slots which can be used more flexibly than standard CPP.</p> | Transition | <p>HB21-1304 requires DEC to “incorporate the existing preschool program into the new preschool program to operate as a single state-level preschool program and align with other relevant early childhood programs.” Integrating CPP into the larger universal preschool program, while maintaining an equity focus, will help to ensure a more seamless experience for children, families, and providers.</p> |
| Preschool Special Education (IDEA, Part B 619) | Children ages 3-5 years | <p>The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), is the federal education civil rights statute that protects the rights of students with disabilities by governing how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services from birth through age 21. IDEA authorizes federal funding to support special education and early intervention services for children with disabilities. IDEA, Part B has 2 sections: Section 619 addresses the various services to children with disabilities, 3-5 years of age while section 611 provides services for ages 3-21 years of age.</p> | Revisit | <p>Currently federal regulations make moving administration of IDEA, Part B out of the state department of education not possible. CDE will continue to oversee IDEA, Part B so that Colorado remains in compliance with federal regulations.</p> |
| Early Childhood Assessment and Results Matter | Children 3 and 4 years old served in CPP and preschool special education | <p>Results Matter is a nationally recognized model for child assessment and professional development.</p> | <p>All data associated with these assessments should be provided to the new department.</p> | <p>The functions, data systems, and data of Results Matter assessments should move to DEC, as part of its role to oversee preschool programming in the state.</p> <p>As CDE continues to collect data related to preschool special education, DEC and CDE should work together to ensure alignment across data collected, and to reduce burdens in the process.</p> |

2. Program Information

| Colorado Department of Education (CDE) | Population Served | Purpose of Program | Is Program recommended to transition, revisit, or stay? | Rationale for Recommendation |
|--|---------------------------|--|---|---|
| Early Childhood Workforce Development team | Early Childhood Workforce | The Early Childhood Workforce Development team manages the Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System (PDIS) and provides early childhood professional development training aligned with the Colorado's Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Professionals. The team also oversees the Early Childhood Professional Credential. | Transition | The Early Childhood Workforce Development team is central to work DEC is leading to ensure that children accessing early childhood programs are benefitting from a workforce that is well-prepared, well-compensated, and well-supported. This team should work with CDE, CDHE, and any pertinent departments when solving the challenges of the early childhood workforce. |



2. Program Information

| Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) | Population Served | Purpose of Program | Is Program recommended to transition , revisit, or stay? | Rationale for Recommendation |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) | Eligible children include infants and children through age 12 years in licensed child care centers and child care homes. Children of migrant workers are eligible through age 15 years. In afterschool care centers and emergency shelters, children through age 18 years are eligible. Adults over 60 years and adults with disabilities. | CACFP provides reimbursement for healthy meals and snacks served to Colorado's children and adults in child care centers and homes, afterschool programs, emergency and homeless shelters, Head Start, Early Head Start, outside-school-hours programs, and adult day care centers. | Revisit | The new department will be focused on the delivery of early childhood services and the creation of the new universal, statewide preschool program. For continuity of services, maintaining CACFP and its current services and supports at CDPHE will minimize disruptions for families and programs at this time. Note: If at a future date it is decided that CACFP should move, there are administrative and technology infrastructure considerations that should be discussed. |
| Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) | Children under age 5 years | WIC provides free healthy food, breastfeeding support, nutrition education, and referrals to other care for pregnant and breastfeeding women and children younger than 5 years of age. | Revisit | Federal law currently requires the WIC program to be administered by the state health department or its equivalent. |

APPENDIX

3. Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities

In the five months following the passing of HB21-1304, there were a large variety of ways that stakeholders were engaged including:

- 3 town halls led by the ECLC
- 32 meetings of 4 subgroups
- 6 TAG meetings
- 5 TAG feedback forms
- 4 ECLC meetings
- 6 user-centered listening sessions
- More than 45 agency subgroup meetings
- Statewide listening tour with 11 stops: Alamosa, Denver, Durango, Edwards, Fort Collins, Fort Morgan, Grand Junction, Montrose, Pueblo, and 2 virtual sessions.
- Feedback form on the ECLC transition website that was continuously reviewed (see Appendix 5)



TAG Composition:

- 15 parents
- 7 school-based early childhood program providers
- 13 community-based program providers
- 7 Head Start/Early Head Start providers
- 2 family child care home providers
- 2 community-based early childhood teachers/educators
- 2 school-based early childhood teachers/educators
- 4 health and mental health program providers

Additional Information:

- 23 Black/Indigenous/People of Color (BIPOC) members (41%)
- 17 members from rural communities (30%)
- 17 individuals have family members with a disability (30%)

Below is a chart detailing all of the ways stakeholders were engaged with their relevant materials. For more materials such as any pre-reading please visit the [ECLC transition website](#).

| Meeting Date | Meeting Name | Topics Covered and Key Questions | Meeting Materials / Resources |
|--------------|---------------------------------|---|--|
| July 7 | Kick-Off - Cross Agency Webinar | This cross agency webinar helped to kick-off the transition planning process. It served to provide stakeholders with additional information about the planning process and how they can get involved. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 pager (English) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spanish • Recording here • Slides |
| July 14 | Kick-Off - TAG Meeting #1 | In this kick-off meeting for the Transition Advisory Group (TAG), members introduced themselves, reviewed the legislation, the TAG charge, and discussed a draft mission and vision of the new DEC. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Slides • Recording • Meeting Note |

3. Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities - Meeting Calendar

| Meeting Date | Meeting Name | Topics Covered and Key Questions | Meeting Materials / Resources |
|-----------------------------|---|--|---|
| July 21 | <p>Subgroups Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability</p> <p>Special Education Service Delivery</p> | <p>Data & Tech: How is the early childhood system serving families well? Where are improvements necessary?</p> <p>Special Ed: What are the current experiences of children and families receiving special education services in the early childhood system? What is working? How should it improve?</p> | <p>Data & Tech:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p>Special Ed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording 1 • Recording 2 • Meeting Notes |
| July 22 | <p>Subgroups Universal Preschool Implementation</p> <p>Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding</p> | <p>Universal Preschool: What should be the outcomes/goals of the new universal, voluntary preschool program? What does successful implementation of this look like for families? For providers?</p> <p>Governance: What programs should be part of a truly unified early childhood system to meet the needs of families? What factors/criteria should be considered when deciding which programs should be part of the new department?</p> | <p>Universal Preschool</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p>Governance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes |
| July 28 | <p>Subgroups Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability</p> <p>Special Education Service Delivery</p> | <p>Data & Tech: How is the early childhood system serving providers well? Where are improvements necessary?</p> <p>Special Ed: What are the current experiences of providers serving children receiving special education services in the early childhood education system? What is working? How should it improve?</p> | <p>Data & Tech:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p>Special Ed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes |
| July 29 | <p>Subgroups Universal Preschool Implementation</p> <p>Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding</p> | <p>Universal Preschool: Brainstorm factors that should be considered when aligning or integrating the Colorado Preschool Program and the universal voluntary preschool program. With which other early childhood programs must a successful preschool program interact?</p> <p>Governance: What factors/criteria should be considered as governance is decided for the new department?</p> | <p>Universal Preschool</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p>Governance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes |
| August 3, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. | Provider Listening Session | <p>Providers shared about what was going well within the current system as well as areas they would like to see improved. Additionally they envisioned what a new system that would meet their needs would include.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Powerpoint Notes |
| August 3, 5:30 - 6:30 | Provider Listening Session | | |

3. Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities - Meeting Calendar

| Meeting Date | Meeting Name | Topics Covered and Key Questions | Meeting Materials / Resources |
|--------------|---|---|--|
| August 4 | TAG Meeting #2 | New TAG members were introduced; TAG reviewed mission, vision, values, and guiding principles and prior stakeholder engagement and feedback, and began to discuss which programs to transition. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes |
| August 10 | ECLC Town Hall | Stakeholders were provided an update on the process to date and given information on the ways they can get involved. The most up to date mission/vision/values/guiding principles were shared as well as updates from the Subgroups. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint • Recording |
| August 11 | <p>Subgroups Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability</p> <p>Special Education Service Delivery</p> | <p>Data & Tech: Building on discussions from the last meeting, how can the evaluation and accountability systems/tools/regulations better support families? Better support providers?</p> <p>Special Ed: Review the regulations for IDEA Part B to understand legal obligations and establish a shared understanding.</p> | <p>Data and Tech</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p>Special Ed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes |
| August 12 | <p>Subgroups Universal Preschool Implementation</p> <p>Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding</p> | <p>Universal Preschool: What local infrastructure exists to support implementation of the new preschool program? Brainstorm additional supports that might be valuable to implementing a successful preschool program.</p> <p>Governance: Brainstorm how blending/braiding of funds could be improved to maximize the use of public dollars. What factors/criteria should be considered when deciding how to align funding sources?</p> | <p>Universal Preschool:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p>Governance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes |
| August 18 | <p>Subgroups Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability</p> <p>Special Education Service Delivery</p> | <p>Data & Tech: In what ways might the new department use data/evaluation/accountability to ensure ongoing/improved alignment with kindergarten and beyond?</p> <p>Special Ed: Review the regulations for IDEA Part C and the transition from Part C to Part B to set a common understanding of legal obligations.</p> | <p>Data and Tech</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p>Special Ed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes |

3. Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities - Meeting Calendar

| Meeting Date | Meeting Name | Topics Covered and Key Questions | Meeting Materials / Resources |
|------------------------------|--|---|--|
| August 19 | Subgroups: Universal Preschool Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding | <u>Universal Preschool</u> : What should be considered when balancing universality of programming, serving children of greatest need, and ensuring access to half day or full day care (beyond 10 hours/ week)? <u>Governance</u> : What local entities in the community do families currently interact with in order to access the early childhood system? What works well? Where could it improve? | <u>Universal Preschool</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <u>Governance</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Powerpoint • Recording • Meeting Notes |
| August 24, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. | Family Listening Session | Families discussed what is working well for them within their current interactions with the early childhood system. They also identified challenges they have faced in this process. Finally, families worked together to envision a successful system in which all of their needs and concerns were met. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint • Recording |
| August 24, 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. | Family Listening Session | | |
| August 25 | TAG Meeting #3 | TAG engaged in the following discussions: a review of the feedback from the stakeholder engagement process to date; program movement; preview of local community structures and partnerships. | <u>Universal Preschool</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Chat • Meeting Notes |
| August 26 | ECLC Meeting | The ECLC reviewed HB21-1304, pre-reading materials, and stakeholder feedback and discussed programs to move to the new DEC. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording |



3. Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities - Meeting Calendar

| Meeting Date | Meeting Name | Topics Covered and Key Questions | Meeting Materials / Resources |
|--------------|--|---|---|
| September 1 | <p>Subgroups Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability</p> <p>Special Education Service Delivery</p> | <p>Data & Tech: What data/technology exists or is needed to support families to find and enroll in services that meet their needs across the early childhood system?</p> <p>Special Ed: Who, in communities, supports seamless delivery of services for families and providers? What is working and what could be improved? What are our thoughts and considerations for coordination of Part B 619 and Part C of IDEA?</p> | <p>Data and Tech</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p>Special Education :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes |
| September 2 | <p>Subgroups Universal Preschool Implementation</p> <p>Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding</p> | <p>Universal Preschool: Brainstorm ideas to encourage mixed delivery of the new preschool program services (e.g., quality standards, supports, funding rates).</p> <p>Governance: What does an ideal enrollment process look like for families? For providers?</p> | <p>Universal Preschool:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p>Governance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes |
| September 8 | <p>Subgroups: Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability</p> <p>Special Education Service Delivery</p> | <p>Data & Tech: What should be considered when building from current state agency data systems? Note: This meeting included presentations from staff at CDE, CDHS, and CDPHE to help build understanding of what current state agency data systems look like and how they function.</p> <p>Special Ed: What are thoughts and considerations for the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Early Childhood and CDE in the administration and oversight of special education services in early childhood education?</p> | <p>Data and Tech</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p>Special Education :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes |
| September 8 | ECLC Town Hall | <p>Stakeholders were provided an update on the transition process and given information on the ways they can get involved. The most up to date versions of the mission/ vision/values/guiding principles were shared, the programs movement proposal was presented and a timeline for this transition, as well as updates on the discussions the other subgroups have been engaging in to date.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides • Recording |

3. Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities - Meeting Calendar

| Meeting Date | Meeting Name | Topics Covered and Key Questions | Meeting Materials / Resources |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|
| September 9 | Subgroups Universal Preschool Implementation Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding | <u>Universal Preschool</u> : Brainstorm ideas to ensure adequate teachers, staffing, and facilities to implement the new statewide, universal preschool program. <u>Governance</u> : What programs within the new department can best incorporate the voices of families, early childhood professionals, and direct service providers? | <u>Universal Preschool</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <u>Governance</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes |
| September 15 | TAG Meeting #4 | TAG engaged in the following discussions: a review of the stakeholder engagement process thus far, programs movement for the final time, governance structures for the new department, and the challenges of blending/braiding funding that stakeholders have identified. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Chat • Meeting Notes |
| September 21, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. | Workforce Listening Session | Providers, professionals, and early childhood staff were invited to share what about the current system is working well for them and what could be improved and then were asked to think about what success in the new DEC looks like. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint • Notes |
| September 21, 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. | Workforce Listening Session | | |
| September 22 | TAG Meeting #5 | TAG members continued to discuss what governance of the new department could look like, heard presentations from Summit County and Denver Preschool Program on how they blend/braid funding in their communities, and discussed solutions to the blending/braiding challenges raised by stakeholders throughout the process. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Chat • Meeting Notes |
| September 23 | ECLC Meeting | The ECLC discussed programs to transition to the new department and governance of the new department and began a preliminary discussion on blending/braiding funding and technology/data. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Slides • Recording |
| September 29 | Subgroups: Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability Special Education Service Delivery | <u>Data & Tech</u> : Representatives from the Governor's Office (Scott Groginsky) and CDE (Melissa Colmsan) gave a presentation that reviewed the history of the UID in Colorado. Whitney LeBoeuf, Director of Data Integration & Analytics at Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab presented recommendations for Building Knowledge in Colorado's Department of Early Childhood. <u>Special Education</u> : Heidi White (CDE) began the meeting with a presentation that: reviewed definition of mixed delivery from Every Student Succeeds Act, addressed what compels an AU to partner to meet their obligations to provide FAPE/special education, and reviewed the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Cañon City Schools and Centennial BOCES with their community partners presented in a community based organizations panel. | <u>Data & Tech</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <u>Special Education</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes |

3. Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities - Meeting Calendar

| Meeting Date | Meeting Name | Topics Covered and Key Questions | Meeting Materials / Resources |
|--------------|---|--|---|
| September 30 | <p><u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation</p> <p>Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding</p> | <p><u>Universal Preschool:</u> Aside from the family solutions presented, what still needs to be figured out to implement UPK?</p> <p><u>Governance:</u> How can we be sure to integrate Health, Mental Health, and Family Support into the new department?</p> | <p><u>Universal Preschool:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Governance:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes |
| October 5 | ECLC Town Hall | Stakeholders were provided an update on the transition planning process thus far and given information on the ways they can continue to stay engaged. Stakeholders were also presented with a review of the Human Centered Design work that Gary Community Ventures has been leading. They were also notified of the release of the draft Transition Plan and the statewide listening tour. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides • Recording 1 • Recording 2 |
| October 6 | <p><u>Subgroups</u> Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability</p> <p>Special Education Service Delivery</p> | <p><u>Data & Tech:</u> Watershed Advisors presented a data analysis associated with the draft transition plan for DEC. The subgroup then discussed ideas for fostering data use culture in DEC.</p> <p><u>Special Education:</u> Following a presentation from LEAs about inclusive classrooms in public school settings, subgroup participants reflected on common goals of special education delivery in Universal Preschool. Participants prioritized the following guiding principles:</p> | <p><u>Data & Tech:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Special Education:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes |
| October 7 | <p><u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation</p> <p>Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding</p> | <p><u>Universal Preschool:</u> Brainstormed how a unified enrollment system could support all students accessing the universal voluntary preschool program.</p> <p><u>Governance:</u> How can we ensure, and embed equity into the new department?</p> | <p><u>Universal Preschool:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes <p><u>Governance:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • PowerPoint • Recording • Meeting Notes |
| October 11 | ECLC Statewide Listening Tour Events in Eagle, Grand Junction | <p>The ECLC met with hundreds of parents and caregivers, members of the early childhood workforce, providers, school districts, human services leaders, Early Childhood Councils, and other stakeholders in communities across Colorado to share the draft Transition Plan and hear feedback.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides • Recording <p>(one of the virtual listening sessions)</p> |
| October 12 | ECLC Statewide Listening Tour Events in Montrose, Durango | | |
| October 13 | ECLC Statewide Listening Tour Events in Alamosa, Pueblo | | |
| October 14 | ECLC Statewide Listening Tour Events in Denver and virtually | | |
| October 15 | CLC Statewide Listening Tour Events in Fort Collins, Fort Morgan | | |
| October 20 | TAG Meeting #6 | TAG members discussed feedback on the draft transition plan and began preliminary discussions on the voluntary universal preschool program. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Slides • Recording • Meeting Chat • Meeting Notes |

APPENDIX

4. Subgroup Takeaways

| Subgroup | Topics Covered | Participants | Summary Materials |
|---|--|--|---|
| Universal Preschool Implementation | The Universal Preschool Implementation Subgroup identified strategies and recommendations to align the Proposition EE funding with CPP/ECARE into a new statewide, universal, high-quality, voluntary preschool program in a mixed-delivery system. | Open to the public | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Webpage Reporting slides |
| Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding | The Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding Subgroup focused on the opportunities to align the governance, funding, and operations of the new department. This group was tasked with discussing the following topics: movement of existing programs to the new department, governance of the new department, alignment of funding sources, and restructuring enrollment process for families. | Open to the public | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Webpage Reporting slides |
| Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability | The Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability Subgroup focused on the opportunities to enhance the data and technology needed to support a fully aligned early childhood system. | Open to the public | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Webpage Reporting slides |
| Special Education Service Delivery | The Special Education Service Delivery Subgroup is developing recommendations for the administration of preschool special education services in collaboration with DEC. | Seated 37 members; also open to the public | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Webpage Reporting slides |



APPENDIX

5. General Feedback

Throughout this entire process, the ECLC collected feedback from stakeholders through a public form on the ECLC Transition website. Responses from these forms were included as pre reading for all TAG meetings. Collected feedback can be reviewed [here](#).

In addition to the feedback form, several letters were received by the TAG and TWG that offered specific recommendations or considerations:

- [Family Resource Center Association](#)
- [Home Visiting Coalition](#)
- [Colorado Counties Inc. and the Colorado Human Services Directors Association](#)
- [UPK Universal Screening Recommendation](#)
- [Trust for Learning](#)
- [Early Childhood Braintrust](#)
- [Colorado Succeeds, EPIC, and Council for Strong America/Ready Nation](#)
- [Public Schools Directors Consortium](#)
- [Colorado Head Start Association](#)
- [Rocky Mountain Preschool Coalition](#)
- [The Kempe Center](#)
- [Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning](#)
- [Gary Community Ventures](#)
- [Children's Hospital Colorado](#)
- [Education Partners: CASE, CASB, BOCES Association, CO Educators Association, Consortium of Directors of Special Education, Rural Schools Alliance](#)
- [Early Childhood Funders](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics – Colorado Chapter and Assuring Better Child Health & Development](#)
- [Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance](#)
- [Early Childhood Higher Education Partnership](#)

APPENDIX

6. Strategies to Support Implementation

Key strategies - called for in the law, critical to the success of the early childhood system, and listed below - bolster the work for DEC articulated in this plan. Specific examples of how and where these strategies serve to strengthen the DEC, which are listed below, are based on feedback from stakeholders throughout the process.

| Strategies to Support | Recommendations from TAG and Subgroups |
|---|---|
| <p>Elimination of the duplicative oversight and regulation of early childhood care and learning programs and other relevant early childhood programs, which promotes administrative efficiency;</p> | <p>The new department should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review all regulations and rules by 2025 with an eye towards reducing burdens for providers and families. Some of this work already began with the most recent SB 19-104 commission to eliminate duplicate regulations summary report but a more in depth review should be conducted. Reduce duplication of efforts with local entities by creating connected technology |
| <p>Continuing efforts to align the increasingly unified early childhood system with the elementary and secondary public education system, especially kindergarten and grades one through three and the early literacy initiatives implemented at these levels, including strategies to reduce bureaucracy and ensure alignment with programs that are not unified under the new department;</p> | <p>The new department should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define experiences for children within the early childhood system that prepare them for kindergarten-3rd grade and then define the supports that teachers need to be able to provide these experiences Collect data on the extent to which children are receiving those experiences, and provide analysis on how to enhance services. Focus on transitions into kindergarten and how DEC and CDE can support families and providers. Identify existing and future opportunities for increased alignment across the early childhood system and K-3 space and report to ECLC/Governor on progress. |
| <p>Continuing efforts to align the early childhood system with the child welfare system and child maltreatment prevention initiatives, including efforts to ensure alignment with prevention services under the federal "Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018", as defined in section 26-5-101 (4.5);</p> | <p>As named in the report, alignment of the early childhood system with the child welfare system and child maltreatment prevention initiatives should be included in DEC and other departments' annual report to the legislature.</p> |
| <p>Program and service alignment among the new department and the existing departments, including entering into memoranda of understanding and shared initiatives that achieve alignment across programs and services;</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEC's vision, mission, and guiding principles provide the foundation for creating a clear singular goal for the experiences for children in early childhood programs. As noted in the report, DEC will have an extensive list of structures in place to encourage cross agency collaboration. |
| <p>Alignment with multi-generation strategies used by the new department and the existing departments to support child and parent outcomes that improve overall family well-being;</p> | <p>One of DEC's core values is a whole child/whole family approach, which is reflected in the recommendation for program movement that includes several programs serving families.</p> |
| <p>Coordination and collaboration with state agencies that oversee or operate programs that are not moved to the new department to maximize the effectiveness of the new department's early childhood services and programs;</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As noted in this report, DEC will collaborate closely with programs in other departments that also serve children and families. Cross agency liaisons, MOUs, and routine report outs will strengthen alignment across departments. |

APPENDIX

6. Strategies to Support Implementation (continued)

| Strategies to Support | Recommendations from TAG and Subgroups |
|--|---|
| <p>Robust stakeholder involvement in developing and implementing early childhood policies, which must include involvement of parents in developing policies and program decisions that affect them and their children;</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• As noted in the governance section of this report, the Rules and Regulations Advisory Council must include representation from families and caregivers of young children.• Existing structures currently utilized by OEC will serve in an advisory role to DEC |
| <p>Education and training regarding how to identify and address child and family trauma and support a trauma-informed approach to early childhood.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the existing set of supports related to trauma-informed care including mental health consultation and curriculum to ensure all funding is being leveraged efficiently and effectively to support identifying and addressing child and family trauma in early childhood environments. |



APPENDIX

7. Glossary of Terms

Delivery Method: Delivery method is how and where programs or services are being provided--in a public school setting, in a home, private care facility, etc.

Early Childhood Educator: Early childhood educators are those who work with children birth through age eight and are responsible and accountable for planning and implementing developmentally appropriate experiences that advance their cognitive, physical, and social-emotional development. Also included are those who provide support and/or leadership for these activities. Early childhood educators may work in schools, centers, or family child care settings and may include teachers, assistant teachers, directors, family child care professionals, FFN providers, and others.

Early Childhood Workforce: Early childhood workforce include those who provide services to support young children birth through age 5 and their families. This includes early childhood educators, home visitors, early intervention specialists, health services providers, early childhood mental health providers, preschool teachers, kindergarten through third grade teachers, infant-toddler teachers, family child care professionals, and family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.

Equity: Equity means fairness and justice and focuses on outcomes that are most appropriate for a given group, recognizing different challenges, needs, and histories. It is distinct from diversity, which can simply mean variety (the presence of individuals with various identities). It is also not equality, or same treatment, which doesn't take differing needs or disparate outcomes into account. Systemic equity involves a robust system and dynamic process consciously designed to create, support and sustain social justice.

Mixed Delivery (Every Student Succeeds Act): The term "mixed delivery system" means a system -- (A) of early childhood education services that are delivered through a combination of programs, providers, and settings (such as Head Start, licensed family and center-based child care programs, public schools, and community-based organizations); and (B) that is supported with a combination of public funds and private funds.

Program: A program offers early childhood services to children and families within specific parameters such as child and/or family eligibility requirements specific to that program (e.g. Head Start, Colorado Preschool Program, Early Intervention, Home Visiting).

Provider: The owner and/or primary administrator of one or multiple early child care and education sites and/or services. Providers can also offer services outside of early care and education sites such as those groups that provide health care, mental health services, home visitation, speech language pathology, occupational therapy in the child's home.

Provider Type: License type based on type of service (e.g., early care and education center, preschool, family child care home, etc.).

Services: Includes any and all services provided to the public by a Colorado government entity.

Site: A facility that provides early childhood services that children attend (e.g. a school, child care center, family child care home).

Slot: A space located at an early childhood site that a child can enroll in for early childhood care or education or services.

Under-served communities: Communities that include members of populations or individuals who have experienced disparities in access to services.

Under-resourced communities: Communities with high poverty and low income rates that may be located in traditional urban centers, small cities, suburbs, or rural areas and have historically faced greater barriers in accessing resources when compared to more affluent communities.

