



COLORADO
Department of Early Childhood

Colorado General Assembly
200 E Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

January 16, 2024

The Honorable Rhonda Fields
Chair, Colorado General Assembly Senate Health & Human Services Committee

The Honorable Lindsey Daugherty
Chair, Colorado General Assembly House Health & Human Services Committee

The Honorable Janet Buckner
Chair, Colorado General Assembly Senate Education Committee

The Honorable Barbara McLachlan
Chair, Colorado General Assembly House Education Committee

Members of the General Assembly:

The Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) respectfully submits the attached report in response to the requirements set forth in Section 26.5-1-112, C.R.S.,:

(2) (a) The department, in collaboration with the departments of education, higher education, human services, public health and environment, and health care policy and financing, shall prepare an annual report concerning the progress made and challenges encountered by the department of early childhood in transitioning and implementing programs and providing services and by the departments as a group in implementing cross-agency collaboration related to, at a minimum:

- (I) Administration of part C of the federal "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act", 20 U.S.C. sec. 1400 et seq., as amended, and coordination with the department of education of the transition of children from part C to part B as agreed to in the interagency operating agreement described in section 26.5-3-404 (3) between the department and the department of education;*
- (II) Implementation of the memorandum of understanding described in section 26.5-4-206 between the department and the department of education concerning administration of special education services for children prior to kindergarten, specifically implementation of part B, section 619, and part C of the federal "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act", 20 U.S.C. sec. 1400 et seq., as amended;*
- (III) Administration of the child and adult care food program in collaboration with programs administered by the department;*
- (IV) Administration of the supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children in collaboration with programs administered by the department;*
- (V) Operation of early childhood and family support programs and services that the department administers, including at a minimum, data concerning the children and families served and the use, availability, and capacity of programs throughout the state;*
- (VI) Interaction of early childhood care, learning, and supports with the public kindergarten and elementary education system to ensure children enter kindergarten ready to learn and are behaviorally and academically successful;*
- (VII) Alignment of the operation of early childhood programs and services with the child welfare system operated by the department of human services and local agencies; and*
- (VIII) The use of public funding to support child care.*





COLORADO
Department of Early Childhood

(b) The department shall submit the report prepared pursuant to subsection (2)(a) of this section as part of the presentation made to a joint committee of reference pursuant to the “State Measurement for Accountable, Responsive, and Transparent (SMART) Government Act”, part 2 of article 7 of title 2, in the 2023 regular legislative session and annually thereafter. In addition, the department shall annually submit the report to the governor; the early childhood leadership commission; the public and behavioral health and human services committee and the education committee of the house of representatives, or any successor committees; and the health and human services committee and the education committee of the senate, or any successor committees. Notwithstanding the requirement in section 24-1-136 (11)(a)(I), the requirement to submit the report described in this subsection (2) continues until repealed pursuant to subsection (2)(c) of this section.

If you have any questions, please contact Michele Stillwell-Parvensky, CDEC’s Legislative Liaison, at michele.stillwellparvensky@state.co.us.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lisa Roy
Executive Director
Colorado Department of Early Childhood





COLORADO

Department of Early Childhood

TRANSITION, PROGRAM REVIEW, AND AGENCY COLLABORATION REPORT

Submitted to

**House Public and Behavioral Health and Human Services
Committee**

House Education Committee

Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Senate Education Committee

**Governor's Office and the
Early Childhood Leadership Commission**

January 15, 2024

by

Colorado Department of Early Childhood

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BACKGROUND

The Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) was created in 2021 under HB21-1304; this legislation charged CDEC to coordinate a unified early childhood system and ensure the equitable distribution of resources and programming, including the new universal, voluntary preschool program. HB22-1295 subsequently codified CDEC, as well as the Colorado Universal Preschool Program, into law by relocating programs from the Colorado Department of Human Services' (CDHS) Office of Early Childhood and certain services from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to CDEC, effective July 1, 2022.

HB22-1295 also codified a new requirement for CDEC to submit annually an Annual Transition, Program Review, And Agency Collaboration Report outlining the progress made and challenges encountered in transitioning and implementing its programs and in collaborating with state agency partners. Per section 26.5-1-112, C.R.S., the full requirements are:

(2) (a) The department, in collaboration with the departments of education, higher education, human services, public health and environment, and health care policy and financing, shall prepare an annual report concerning the progress made and challenges encountered by the department of early childhood in transitioning and implementing programs and providing services and by the departments as a group in implementing cross-agency collaboration related to, at a minimum:

(I) Administration of part C of the federal "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act", 20 U.S.C. sec. 1400 et seq., as amended, and coordination with the department of education of the transition of children from part C to part B as agreed to in the interagency operating agreement described in section 26.5-3-404 (3) between the department and the department of education;

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(III) Administration of the child and adult care food program in collaboration with programs administered by the department;

(IV) Administration of the supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children in collaboration with programs administered by the department;

(V) Operation of early childhood and family support programs and services that the department administers, including at a minimum, data concerning the children and families served and the use, availability, and capacity of programs throughout the state;

(VI) Interaction of early childhood care, learning, and supports with the public kindergarten and elementary education system to ensure children enter kindergarten ready to learn and are behaviorally and academically successful;

(VII) Alignment of the operation of early childhood programs and services with the child welfare system operated by the department of human services and local agencies; and

(VIII) The use of public funding to support child care.

(b) The department shall submit the report prepared pursuant to subsection (2)(a) of this section as part of the presentation made to a joint committee of reference pursuant to the "State Measurement for Accountable, Responsive, and Transparent (SMART) Government Act", part 2 of article 7 of title 2, in the 2023 regular legislative session and annually thereafter. In addition, the department shall annually submit the report to the governor; the early childhood leadership commission; the public and behavioral health and human services committee and the education committee of the house of representatives, or any successor committees; and the health and human services committee and the education committee of the senate, or any successor committees. Notwithstanding the requirement in section 24-1-136 (11)(a)(I), the requirement to submit the report described in this subsection (2) continues until repealed pursuant to subsection (2)(c) of this section.

OVERVIEW OF CDEC CROSS-AGENCY COLLABORATION

The Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) is dedicated to increasing access to high-quality learning environments for young children, supporting early professionals across the sector, and strengthening families with the resources they choose to help nurture children in their care. CDEC operates a continuum of comprehensive programs and services for young children, families, and early childhood professionals. Working in partnership with families, caregivers, educators, and communities, CDEC strives to ensure the delivery of an inclusive, community-centered, data-driven, high-quality, and equitable early childhood system that supports the care, education, and well-being of all Colorado's young children, their caregivers, and early childhood professionals in all settings.

In order to achieve this vision, CDEC coordinates with other Colorado state agencies to align and enhance early childhood programs, services, and systems. CDEC's cross-agency collaboration primarily occurs with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE), the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE), and the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS). Additionally, CDEC coordinates specific services with the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE), the Colorado Department of Revenue (DOR), the Colorado Department of Personnel and Administration (DPA), and the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT). This cross-agency collaboration spans CDEC's administrative solutions, data and technology systems, system building initiatives, and program delivery.

Memorandums of Understanding and Interagency Agreements

Memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and interagency agreements (IAAs) guide cross-agency collaboration and outline the roles and responsibilities for the respective agencies in coordinating programs and services. CDEC is required in statute to complete MOUs with specific agencies, and CDEC has identified additional agencies with which to develop MOUs and IAAs. Since its launch on July 1, 2022, CDEC has executed MOUs with the following agencies:

- An MOU, required pursuant to section 26.5-3-404, C.R.S., between CDEC and CDE governing the coordination of transitions of children from part C child find to part B child find has been established. [Section 3\(a\): Administration of Part C and Transition of Part C to Part B](#) of this report details the content and execution of this MOU.
- An MOU between CDEC and CDHS's Division of Child Welfare governing the coordination and alignment of child abuse and neglect prevention programs and services has been established. [Section 3\(g\): Operational Alignment Between Early Childhood Services and Child Welfare System](#) of this report details the content and execution of this MOU.
- An IAA between CDEC and CDHS governing coordination regarding CDHS's Office of Children, Youth and Families, CDEC's Background Investigation Unit, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and Child Support collection has been established.
- A partnership agreement with the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) governing coordination for the provision of behavioral health and early childhood services has been established.

The following MOUs are in progress and expected to be completed by June 30, 2024:

- An MOU with CDPHE establishing responsibilities for the evaluation for the Maternal and Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting Program; the Colorado and Adult Child Care Food Program; and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.
- An MOU with CDHE ensuring alignment in the creation of pathways for higher education early childhood credits.
- An MOU with HCPF establishing responsibilities for Medicaid alignment with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C, Healthy Steps, and Nurse Family Partnerships.
- An MOU with OEDIT regarding the implementation of business classes for child care providers and a Facilities Grant program.
- An MOU with DOLA to establish partnership opportunities with local affairs, including housing projects that incorporate early childhood centers or learning spaces.

- An MOU with CDLE to outline opportunities for elevating the early childhood workforce as part of the state’s overall labor and employment investment efforts. The MOU will also delineate responsibilities to support fathers in the Colorado Fatherhood Program with career support.

Data Sharing Agreements

CDEC has extended its interagency agreement with CDHS to ensure that any agreements on data sharing, access, and handling that supported the CDHS Office of Early Childhood remain valid until CDEC is able to execute DSAs as an independent agency. CDEC has not yet established any interagency data sharing agreements. CDEC is in the process of finalizing an agreement with both CDHS and CDE which are expected to be executed by June 30, 2024.

CDEC is currently utilizing CDHS processes and templates to support broader data sharing practices, and CDEC’s Data Management, Privacy, and Government Unit works directly with CDHS’s Data Privacy Officer on any modifications or additional considerations necessary during this transition period. CDEC recently hired a Data Privacy & Security Specialist who partners with the Contracts & Procurements team to support all data sharing agreements.

Early Childhood Leadership Commission

The Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) is Colorado’s federally authorized state advisory council for early childhood. The role of the ECLC is to be a statewide leader, subject matter expert, and champion of best and promising practices throughout the state. CDE, CDHE, CDHS, CDPHE, HCPF, and CDEC, along with early childhood leaders across the state from various systems and sectors, are statutorily-designated members of the ECLC.

The ECLC played a pivotal role in the development of the [Transition Plan for the new Colorado Department of Early Childhood](#) as well as [Universal Preschool Recommendations](#). These guiding documents, endorsed unanimously by members of the ECLC, formed the basis for the legislation that created CDEC and set forward the parameters related to the administration of Colorado’s Universal Preschool Program. Foundational to these guiding documents was the recommendation that close coordination and collaboration across state agencies was necessary to promote alignment across the early childhood system in order to best support children and families in accessing and receiving services. The ECLC provides a critical forum for ongoing communication, coordination, and alignment across agencies. In addition, these agencies are involved in the various subcommittees and work groups of the ECLC, furthering communication and connection.

Tribal Liaison Collaboration

CDEC’s Tribal Liaison collaborates with state agencies through the work with the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs (CCIA), which is housed in the office of the Lieutenant Governor and serves as the official liaison between the State of Colorado, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. CDEC’s Tribal Liaison sits on the CCIA State Tribal Liaison team, along with liaisons at CDPHE, CDHS, BHA, HCPF, CDE, and other state agencies.

Each agency’s Tribal Liaison builds relationships with the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute tribes to understand tribal needs and opportunities for coordination between the State and tribes’ sovereign governments. Through this work, the CCIA State Tribal Liaison team gathers a multi-pronged understanding of tribal needs and collaborates to support access to services and programs which support tribal well-being.

The CCIA is an important avenue for CDEC’s Tribal Liaison to utilize a cross-agency approach in tribal engagement. The CCIA allows CDEC’s Tribal Liaison to collaborate with other agencies to understand and support the health, wellness, and education needs of families with young children in the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute tribes. This includes nutrition needs that could be supported through the Child Care and Adult Food Program, educational and child care resources that are linguistically responsive, and early childcare workforce support. As part of this work, the CCIA hosted a Behavioral Health Consultation with the tribes to understand behavioral health needs and to consider State collaboration in 2023. The CCIA is currently planning an American Indian and Alaska Native Educational Summit to be held in 2024.

CDEC's Tribal Liaison is also working with the State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) of the Office of Children and Families through an Impact Grant project. Through this grant, the SCBC provides technical assistance to support the relationship building initiatives of the Tribal Liaison across the state. This technical assistance equips CDEC's Tribal Liaison with additional knowledge of early childhood programs, initiatives, and events throughout all Indian Country in the nation.

Additionally, CDEC's Tribal Liaison is a member of the Health Equity Commission through the Office of Health Equity in CDPHE. Through this collaboration, CDEC is involved with health equity work across many agencies and initiatives, advocating for early childhood perspectives and preventative approaches. In partnership with the Health Equity Commission, CDEC is in the early stages of developing a strategic plan to address racial and ethnic inequalities in early childhood programming.

County Collaboration

CDEC collaborates with counties to enhance effective administration and alignment of programs and to gather counties' input on CDEC's policies, regulations, and operations. Avenues of CDEC's county collaborations are outlined below:

County Colorado Child Care Assistance Program MOUs

Pursuant to section 26.5-4-115, C.R.S., counties are required to enter into an annual performance contract with CDEC that identifies both parties' duties and responsibilities to work in a collaborative manner to administer, financially support, and implement the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP). This annual performance contract is in the form of a MOU, which is jointly signed by each county's Board of County Commissioners, or other elected governing body, and CDEC's Executive Director. The MOU shall be reaffirmed annually through an amendment that shall be signed by all applicable parties.

Policy Advisory Committee Co-Chair

CDEC's Chief Program Officer serves as a co-chair of the Policy Advisory Committee. Additionally co-chaired by leadership from CDHS, HCPF, and county leadership, this committee provides an opportunity for regular communication around policy and implementation of programs and to address challenges that impact county operations in a coordinated, cross-agency manner.

Rules Advisory Council (RAC) County Subcommittee

The Rules Advisory Council (RAC) County Subcommittee is composed of twelve representatives from geographically diverse county human service departments. The Subcommittee provides information on how proposed early childhood programs and administrative rules may potentially impact county department operations, and the Subcommittee advises CDEC on the development and implementation of proposed rules. The Subcommittee's review is built into CDEC's rulemaking process to enhance state and county alignment. Feedback received from the RAC County Subcommittee informs the Rules Advisory Council's official vote and recommendation on proposed rules, which is then considered by the Executive Director before promulgation of each proposed rule.

County Monthly Work Sessions

In order to ensure ongoing coordination and collaboration with county partners on a variety of topics, CDEC hosts a monthly CDEC and County Leadership Work Session to discuss challenges and opportunities for alignment. Topics have included alignment across the Universal Preschool Program and CCCAP, early childhood mental health supports, and ongoing coordination around family strengthening and prevention services. In addition to these monthly work sessions, CDEC leadership participates in weekly calls, alongside CDHS, HCPF, with counties to provide updates and address challenges or concerns.

Cross-Agency Collaboration on Early Childhood Access, Family Strengthening, and Workforce

As part of CDEC's five-year strategic plan, CDEC is committed to three mission-driven goals:

- **Expand Access to Early Childhood Services:** Ensure all families, regardless of their background or circumstances, have equal access to Colorado's comprehensive system of early childhood services.

- **Invest in Colorado’s Early Childhood Workforce:** Recruit, support, and retain highly competent, caring, and diverse professionals across the early childhood system.
- **Strengthen Families:** Recognize the crucial role families and communities play in creating supportive and inclusive environments for early childhood development and offer knowledge and skill-building opportunities that support families around their goals of raising happy and healthy children, despite the challenges that come their way.

These strategic goals guide and drive CDEC’s cross-agency collaboration on early childhood programs and services. The table below provides a snapshot of CDEC’s collaboration with state agency partners in achieving these goals. Many of these areas of collaboration are covered in-depth within the report; click on the links to read further about each area of collaboration. Any areas of collaboration which are not detailed in the report are expanded upon in the appendix.

Strategic Goal	Collaborating Agencies	Topic
Expand Access	CDE	Kindergarten Transitions Project Team
Expand Access	CDE	Universal Preschool Program
Expand Access	CDHS, CDPHE	Colorado Child Care Assistance Program
Expand Access	CDHS, CDPHE	Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Interagency Workgroup
Expand Access	CDPHE	Economic Mobility and Family Well-being Shared FTE
Expand Access	CDPHE	Rules and Regulations Governing the Health and Sanitation of Child Care Facilities in the State of Colorado
Expand Access	CDPHE	Child Care Immunizations Course
Expand Access	CDPHE	Quality Nutrition Workgroup
Expand Access	CDPHE	Farm to Child Program
Expand Access	CDHS, CDPHE	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children
Expand Access	CDPHE	Health Equity Commission
Expand Access	DPA	Employer Based Child Care
Expand Access, Strengthen Families	CDE, CDPHE, CDHS, DOLA, HCPF, CDLE, CDHE	Head Start
Expand Access, Strengthen Families	CDHS, HCPF	Policy Advisory Council (PAC)
Expand Access, Strengthen Families	CDE, CDHS, CDPHE, HCPF, DOI	Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council
Expand Access, Strengthen Families	CDHS, HCPF	Coordination with County Human Service Directors
Expand Access, Strengthen	CDHS, HCPF	Policy Advisory Council (PAC)

Families		
Strengthen Families	BHA	Early Childhood Mental Health
Strengthen Families	CDE, CDPHE, CDHS, CDLA, HCPF, Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman	Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund
Strengthen Families	CDE, CDHS, CDPHE, HCPF	Home Visiting Investment Task Force
Strengthen Families	CDHS Office of Economic Security, Office of Children Youth and Families, CDLE	Fatherhood Steering Committee
Strengthen Families	CDHS, CDPHE	Colorado Strengthening Family Network
Strengthen Families	CDHS	Delivery of Child Welfare Services Task Force
Strengthen Families	CDHS	Child Fatality Review Recommendation Steering Committee
Strengthen Families	CDHS, CDPHE, HCPF	Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families
Strengthen Families	CDHS	Family First Prevention Services Act Plan
Strengthen Families	CDPHE	Infant Safe Sleep Partnership
Strengthen Families	CDPHE, CDHS	Family and Community Engagement
Strengthen Families	CDPHE	Child Fatality Prevention System
Strengthen Families	CDPHE	Economic Mobility and Family Well-being Shared FTE
Strengthen Families	HCPF	Medicaid Billing
Strengthen Families, Invest in Workforce	CDHE, CDE, CDHS, CDPHE, HCPF, BHA	Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Advisory Council
Invest in Workforce	CDHS, CDHE, OEDIT, CDLE, CDE	Colorado Early Childhood Compensation and Capacity Building Project (ECCB)
Invest in Workforce	CDHE	Partnership on Scholarships and Free Courses

Invest in Workforce	DOR	Tax credits for early childhood professionals
Invest in Workforce	OEDIT	Business Training for Child Care Licensing and Business Planning Sustainability

TRANSITIONING, IMPLEMENTING, and COLLABORATING ON PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Administration of Part C and Transition of Part C to Part B

Under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Early Intervention (EI) Part C provides services for children from birth through two years of age (ending on the third birthday) who have developmental delays or disabilities and their families. EI Part C prepares children to be successful in their current learning environment before transitioning successfully to Part B preschool special education, community preschool, or other supports. Learning environments for children served by Part C encompass any place infants and toddlers spend their day, including at home, at child care, or with extended family.

CDHS administered Part C of IDEA between July 1, 2006 and June 30, 2022, at which point the Lead Agency changed to CDEC, pursuant to HB22-1295. CDEC’s EI Unit, also known as EI Colorado, is responsible for implementing EI services across the state. Additionally, effective July 1, 2022, SB21-275 transferred the responsibilities for EI Part C eligibility evaluations, which had previously been the responsibility of CDE, to CDHS; these responsibilities were then transitioned to CDEC under HB22-1295.

CDE is the designated Lead Agency and State Education Agency (SEA) for administering Part B under IDEA and ensures that a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is available to all eligible children with disabilities ages three through twenty-one.

Pursuant to section 26.5-3-404, C.R.S., CDEC and CDE entered into a [State Transition Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) in July 2022 to facilitate an ongoing, effective, and cooperative relationship that will enhance coordination of transitions for children and families as they move from Part C EI services into Part B special education services. The MOU outlines, in detail, the responsibilities of CDE and CDEC; these responsibilities are summarized below:

- Processes for notifying CDE and Special Education Administrative Units (AUs): AUs coordinate services at the local level concerning a child who is potentially eligible for Part B special education services. Per the agreement, CDEC is responsible for overseeing processes for parental opt-outs of these notifications; timely AU notifications for referrals of potentially eligible children to the Part B system; and transferring a child’s assessment, Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), and other necessary information for determining Part B eligibility. CDE is responsible for using these notifications as a referral and to initiate evaluations to determine Part B eligibility.
- Processes for a transition plan and conference: Per the agreement, CDEC is responsible for developing a transition plan as part of the ISFP and scheduling a transition conference with a representative of the AU and the family prior to the transition. CDE is responsible for AU participation in the transition conference and the sharing of Part B information.
- Requirements for including an EI services provider in the development of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP): Per the agreement, CDE must invite EI representatives if requested by the parent and coordinate an initial IEP meeting to ensure a smooth transition, and CDEC must ensure EI service providers make every effort to participate in these meetings.

- Processes for coordination and implementation of the Extended Part C Option in Colorado: Per the agreement, CDEC and CDE must ensure collaboration between EI entities and AUs in developing a system to communicate regarding parental decisions and timelines related to Part C implementation, as well as cross-departmental collaboration in developing and implementing the Extended Part C policy and procedural guidance. CDEC must ensure compliance with the Colorado policy as approved by the Federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).
- Process for the timely transfer of required data between the parties to be used to guide decisions about the efficiency and efficacy of program services delivery models.

Compliant with the MOU, the agencies have coordinated several initiatives to administer Part C and transition children to Part B. A number of the following initiatives and activities began before the launch of CDEC but have effectively continued throughout the transition:

- CDEC implemented the Extended Part C Option, which allows children who are eligible for Part B Preschool services and who turn 3 in late spring and summer to remain in EI services over the summer until the beginning of the next school year in the fall. The following strategies ensured successful implementation:
 - CDEC worked with the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to develop the required policy and secure additional Part C funding plus one FTE. From May 2021 to March 2022, CDE and the CDHS Office of Early Childhood collaborated by gathering and analyzing stakeholder feedback on the option of Part C, crafting the policy and budget, and shepherding it through the rulemaking process with the State Board of CDHS.
 - To ensure stakeholders were aware of the program change, CDEC distributed joint memos regarding the adoption of the Extended Part C Policy and Part C procedural guidance to local EI Program staff and AU staff.
 - CDEC worked with a contractor to develop technical assistance and training documents as well as public awareness materials for families regarding the Extended Part C Option. These materials can be found on the EI Colorado [website](#). Additionally, CDEC and CDE collaborated to develop additional technical assistance [resources](#), which can be found on both EI Colorado and CDE websites.
 - CDEC conducted two surveys for providers, service coordinators, and families to determine stakeholder satisfaction with the Extended Part C Option. These surveys received more than 500 responses, and the results indicated that the Extended Part C Option is valuable for families.
 - CDEC reviews enrollment, cost, and workforce capacity data and stakeholder input each year to determine the possibility of moving the eligibility birthdate earlier in the year in order to increase effectiveness. In August 2023, CDEC sent a survey to stakeholders, including service coordinators, direct service providers, and AUs, to gather feedback on whether the eligible birthdate should be changed from May 1st to April 1st. Based on the results of the survey, CDEC and CDE jointly decided to keep the eligible birthday as May 1st for 2024.
- In conjunction with CDE, CDEC hosted five joint statewide webinars regarding the transition and the Extended Part C Option between February 2022 and March 2023. These webinars provided opportunities for the public to understand and provide input on the Extended Part C Option and stay up-to-date on the process as the policy was being developed. Additionally, the webinars delineated the transition process as Part C moved to CDEC, helping local Early Intervention Programs and their Part B preschool Child Find partners understand the requirements as listed in the MOU.
- In December, 2022, CDEC reviewed potential changes to EI Program rules with CDE staff, AUs, and the Consortium of Directors of Special Education to ensure language aligned with the MOU transition requirements. The group determined that rule changes were not necessary.
- CDEC provides ongoing technical assistance to local EI programs and AUs as needed. Under the MOU, local systems must work together to develop processes for transition and Extended Part C. CDEC and CDE staff jointly address issues if they arise.

Additionally, CDEC operates the Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council (CICC), which is mandated by federal law. CICC members are appointed by the Governor to advise and assist the state's lead agency to implement the

requirements of Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The CICC meets quarterly, and every meeting includes time for public comment during which stakeholders can address the CICC about any relevant topic or concern. The CICC is co-led by two parent members and membership consists of:

- Six parent members
- Four EI provider representatives
- State agency representation:
 - CDE Part B Preschool Special Education
 - CDE Office of Homeless Education
 - CDHS Children’s Habilitation Residential Program Waiver
 - CDEC Finance
 - CDEC Child Care Licensing
 - CDEC Early Childhood Mental Health
 - CDEC Head Start Collaboration Office
 - Tribal Representative
 - University of Denver
 - CDPHE
 - HCPF Medicaid
 - Colorado Department of Insurance (DOI)

Implementation of CDEC/CDE Memorandum Of Understanding and Administration of Special Education Services

As mandated by statute, CDE remains the State’s Lead Education Agency for special education services and administers Part B special education services, while CDEC is mandated to collaborate closely to ensure all children with disabilities are served equitably in the Universal Preschool Program. An MOU between CDEC and CDE regarding preschool special education services, created pursuant to section 26.5-4-206, was executed on February 1, 2023. The MOU ensures all children with disabilities are served equitably in Universal Preschool, ensures access to classrooms that meet the individual needs of children with disabilities based on their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and ensures that preschool program providers operate in accordance with federal and state law concerning education for children with disabilities. This MOU outlines the agencies’ respective responsibilities related to reporting, procedures, communications, training, data, technical assistance and guidance, legal compliance, and interagency cooperation.

Universal Preschool launched on July 1, 2023, and, as of January 2024, is serving more than 39,165 four-year-olds in preschool, with 4,813 of these students having an IEP. The program is serving 9,424 three-year-olds in preschool, and 3,801 of these students have an IEP.

CDEC and CDE worked closely to support children with disabilities throughout the rollout of Universal Preschool, and continue to collaborate to continuously improve for the second year of Universal Preschool and beyond. The agencies established a workgroup to collaborate on Universal Preschool access, training, and technical assistance related to special education, as well as placements for students with IEPs. CDEC and CDE also hold weekly meetings to ensure ongoing, timely collaboration, and both agencies have led joint bi-weekly district town hall meetings and coordination of information in CDE’s Financial Policies and Procedures Advisory Committee Meetings. Both CDEC and CDE are committed to building a program that allows families to make informed choices about their child’s education and placements and to build processes for children with IEPs to be placed efficiently for Administrative Units (AUs) and families.

Matching Students with an Individualized Education Program

CDEC has collaborated with CDE and AUs on matching children with IEPs. In the very early stages of the Universal Preschool Program rollout, there were technical issues ensuring students with disabilities were matched to the provider as outlined in their IEP, and the agencies worked in close coordination to address the issue as quickly as possible so that no child with an IEP would be matched to a location unable to provide the proper services. CDEC and CDE worked to

develop manual workarounds, outside the matching system, for direct placement of children with disabilities. Additionally, the agencies developed processes for children under three-years-old and over five-years-old who require a special process to engage with the Universal Preschool Program application portal. Starting in July 2023, CDEC provided AUs with secure access to the application portal where they could access real-time lists of all students with IEPs within their boundaries as well as placement information. CDEC sent out guidance in July 2023 outlining the process AUs and school districts would utilize to directly place these students. This access and guidance, along with a dedicated staff member at CDEC to support direct placements for children with IEPs, has provided AUs the ability to begin serving the student immediately while CDEC makes changes in the system. CDEC and CDE continue to ensure AUs have access to information while protecting the privacy rights of children and families.

Funding for Students with Disabilities

Prior to the implementation of the Universal Preschool Program, Colorado provided funding for students enrolled in the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) and enrolled preschool students with IEPs. In this previous system and the current Universal Preschool system, a student with a disability is funded on a per pupil basis. In the 2022-23 school year, CDE paid \$38 million through the School Finance formula for preschoolers with disabilities. Under the Universal Preschool Program, the per pupil basis funding is paid by CDEC via the Universal Preschool rates. Both the former per pupil funding and the Colorado Universal Preschool Program per pupil funding can be used the same way—to cover general education and special education costs for students with disabilities.

CDEC projects, based on preliminary enrollment data, that it will distribute an estimated \$50 million to Universal Preschool providers this year for per pupil funding for students with disabilities. That number is projected to continue increasing throughout the school year 2022-23 as students with an IEP can enroll in the program on an ongoing basis. CDE will continue to distribute additional state and federal special education funding to AUs.

The legislature guaranteed that preschool providers who previously participated in CPP, including both school districts and community-based providers, will receive at least the same amount of funding in the 2023-24 school year, as what they received from CPP in the 2022-23 school year.¹ CPP funding that school districts previously passed through to community-based providers are not included in this CDEC-administered ‘CPP Historical Allowance’ for districts.

This ‘CPP Historical Allowance’ is one of two statutory provisions which ensure level funding for districts in the school year 2023-24, with the other provision being the ‘Maintenance of Effort Hold Harmless’ which is administered by CDE. This CDE-administered ‘MoE Hold Harmless’ provision ensures that for a district that receives less total funding through the Universal Preschool Program in 2023-24 than the amount of funding they received in 2022-23 for “total preschool funding for all preschool positions”² – even after taking the ‘CPP Historical Allowance’ into account – CDE will distribute additional funding to meet any difference. This funding is specifically designed to ensure that school districts and AUs are able to meet their federal maintenance of effort (MOE) obligations. The agencies have also established allowable uses and payment guidance as well as revenue and expenditure coding for calculating MOE expenditures.

These two “level funding” provisions ensure that providers can budget based on known figures through this first year of transition. The amount providers received and utilized for the direct provision of services in the school year 2022-23 in total per pupil funding from CPP and for students with disabilities is the base level of what they will receive this year per the combination of these two “level funding” provisions. Additional information regarding Universal Preschool funding is detailed later in the report ([Section 3\(h\): Use of Public Funding for Child Care](#)).

Quality Standards

CDEC is in the process of developing, stakeholdering, and promulgating rules for the Universal Preschool Program quality standards, as outlined and required by HB22-1295. The proposed Universal Preschool Quality Standards Rules reflect statutory requirements, incorporate findings from comprehensive reviews of 26 national and Colorado-specific standards, and include input and feedback from families, providers, school districts, Early Childhood Councils, and

¹ Section 26.5-4-208(4), C.R.S.

² Section 22-20-114(8)

early childhood community members. The rules are currently moving through CDEC’s rulemaking process with the goal of being promulgated by Spring of 2024 and implemented in school year 2024-25; some quality standards requirements will be implemented immediately while others will be phased-in over time.

In developing the quality standards and the accompanying provider resource bank, CDEC ensured alignment with CDE regulations for special education, as well as with the Exceptional Children’s Educational Act (ECEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). CDE provided input on the rules, and both agencies are committed to ensuring alignment with kindergarten readiness expectations and Results Matter—an authentic assessment administered by CDE for children three through five years old who have been identified with a disability.

Administration of Child and Adult Care Food Programs

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (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, and outside-school-hours programs and adult day care centers. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) funds the CACFP, and CDPHE administers the program. CDEC partners with CDPHE in order to increase awareness of and access to CACFP for all eligible child care providers in Colorado. Throughout its launch, CDEC maintained close collaboration with CDPHE in administering CACFP, primarily through participation in the Quality Nutrition Workgroup.

The Quality Nutrition Workgroup, started through the state’s Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Renewal Grant in 2020, meets biweekly to engage in cross-program alignment and strategies and to expand access to quality nutrition for underserved or vulnerable children in the early childhood system. The workgroup tracks CACFP participation trends, identifies barriers, and brainstorms outreach opportunities using department-respective dissemination mechanisms. The workgroup is convened by the State Systems Building Initiatives (SSBI) Program Access Administrator, CDEC’s staff authority on early childhood nutrition. Current membership includes representatives from:

- CDEC: Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), Licensing Division, Data Management Unit, Workforce Division
- CDPHE: CACFP and Farm to Child Program
- CDE: School Nutrition Unit
- Nourish Colorado, Southern Colorado Small Business Development Center, Grand Beginnings Early Childhood Council, Donnell Kay Foundation
- Other nutrition advocates

Prior to the development of the Quality Nutrition Workgroup, collaboration between CDPHE-CACFP and the then CDHS-OEC existed, but further understanding of each other’s programming was needed to maximize opportunities for cross-agency integration. The Quality Nutrition Workgroup was formed following work done through the state’s PDG B-5 Planning Grant in 2019 that revealed an opportunity to strengthen connections to and participation in early childhood nutrition programs. In the early childhood system, CACFP subsidizes eligible child care providers’ cost of providing quality nutrition to the children they serve. CACFP is the food program most often utilized in the early childhood system, as eligibility for CDE’s School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program, which similarly subsidize access to quality nutrition, is [limited to programs affiliated with school districts](#).

Since its inception in 2020, the Quality Nutrition Workgroup has created a number of resources to increase awareness of and participation in quality nutrition programming, thereby leveraging cross-agency work to understand and promote these programs even as they remain outside the CDEC. Resources include:

- [CACFP Participation GIS Story Map](#): CACFP, in partnership with CDE and the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger, developed a story map to visualize current participation in the Summer Food Service Program and CACFP. This map brings to light areas of opportunity for increasing access to and participation in these youth feeding programs and can be used by partners in informing strategic outreach efforts.
- The [Family Child Care Homes CACFP Brochure](#) ([Español](#), [العربية](#)) and [Child Care Centers CACFP Brochure](#) ([Español](#),

[العربية](#)) help licensed Family Child Care Homes (FCCH) and child care center providers understand the benefits of participating in CACFP for centers, children, and families.

- The CACFP Cost-Benefit Tools for [child care homes](#) and [child care centers](#) help licensed providers estimate monthly meal reimbursements through the program.
- [Meal Standards of Programs](#) crosswalks CACFP, National School Lunch Program/School Breakfast Program, Head Start/Early Head Start, and Colorado Licensing Regulations standards. The Workgroup distributed this resource widely to those who advise providers on participation in such programs in an effort to make areas of regulatory overlap and difference transparent.

The workgroup is currently finalizing a “Quality Nutrition Toolkit,” which compiles the above resources and other helpful tools so that those supporting child care providers locally can encourage participation in the programs that enhance access to quality nutrition for young children.

In addition to co-creating resources, the workgroup also identifies cross-entity intersections to elevate the importance of quality nutrition for young children. A few examples include:

- CDEC’s Division of Early Learning Licensing & Administration (DELLA) shares a list of pending, open, and closed providers participating in CACFP each month, enabling CACFP Food Program Sponsors to encourage providers that are becoming licensed or who are already licensed but not participating to learn more about the program.
- The CCCAP team asks counties to send out CACFP Brochures along with child care subsidy fiscal agreements to providers participating in CCCAP.
- The Southern Colorado Small Business Development Center hosts a business fair for its child care providers that includes presentations on CACFP.
- The pre-licensing curriculum for Family Child Care Home (FCCH) providers includes information about CACFP, and CACFP presented to the CDEC’s Family Child Care Home Navigators to increase navigators’ understanding of the program.
- CACFP Food Program Sponsors, who administer CACFP for organizations, connect child care providers with other professionals in the early childhood system, such as CDE’s School Nutrition Unit, Early Childhood Councils, and CDPHE’s Farm to Child Program.
- CDEC-DELLA presents to CACFP Food Program Sponsors at their biannual meetings on updates to licensing rules, mandatory abuse reporting requirements, and the various program types licensed by CDEC to ensure alignment between CDEC Licensing Specialists and CACFP Food Program Sponsors.
- CACFP is featured in the CDEC’s Child Care Business Guides which support people opening child care businesses in understanding requirements and getting connected to statewide resources.

The Quality Nutrition Workgroup’s biweekly meetings present an opportunity to continuously explore other areas of intersection in the work of CDEC, CDPHE, and CDE to provide nourishing food to Colorado’s youngest children as well as to keep agencies informed of important organizational or programmatic updates.

This strong foundation of shared work supported CDEC and CDPHE-CACFP in responding to nutrition advocates and obtaining federal approval to expand CACFP eligibility to Colorado’s CCCAP-Qualified Exempt providers. CDEC, CDPHE, and advocates from the Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition, Nourish Colorado, and other nutrition and early childhood advocates met virtually on a regular basis to advocate for expanding eligibility requirements to this specific population. As of June 6, 2023, this change was enacted and CCCAP-Qualified Exempt (QE) providers can now apply to participate in CACFP. Approximately 22 CCCAP QE providers are now participating. The aforementioned group of partners are continuing to work together to support this new population of providers in learning about CACFP and uncovering the participation barriers that exist for these providers.

Finally, the Quality Nutrition Workgroup initiated and maintains quarterly data sharing between CDEC, CDPHE-CACFP and CDE’s School Nutrition Unit to determine utilization rates of school nutrition programs among eligible early childhood providers ([see most recent data - Q3 2023](#)).³ The Workgroup then discusses action to take based on the data.

³ The percentage of participating CCCAP-Qualified Exempt providers will be added to this review when data becomes available.

For example, the data work informed the creation and dissemination of CACFP marketing materials in English, Spanish, and Arabic for both home-based and center-based child care providers. According to 2022 evaluation results, ongoing marketing efforts were effective as 85% of early care and education providers reported being aware of CACFP, and 80% reported knowledge of the eligibility requirements.

Quarterly data reviews reveal that Colorado’s licensed child care provider participation rates in CACFP have not changed significantly since tracking began in 2020. In 2020, 60.7% of family child care home providers and 73.6% of community-based child care centers with at least 25% CCCAP enrollment were participating in CACFP; in 2023, these figures are 57.2% and 73.5% respectively. National research indicates that barriers to participation include lack of understanding about eligibility, parental preference for sending lunch, and lack of eligible children from low-income households. National challenges with administering CACFP include food waste, meeting nutrition guidelines within budget, insufficient reimbursements, and challenges with parents returning income eligibility forms. The Quality Nutrition Workgroup has identified opportunities to encourage greater participation, such as paying for software to support compliance with CACFP—a strategy that proved successful for the Grand Beginnings Early Childhood Council—or supporting purchase of kitchen equipment to enable participation. At this time, the Quality Nutrition Workgroup does not have funding to pilot and evaluate these strategies.

In addition to convening the Quality Nutrition Workgroup, CDEC’s SSBI Program Access Administrator is the co-lead for the CDPHE-led Farm to Child Collaborative. Farm to Child, administered by CDPHE, enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food by changing food purchasing and education practices in early care and education settings. Center- and home-based providers who prepare meals on site might explore Farm to Child through CACFP so they can buy food from local farmers or grow their own food. Participating in Farm to Child can help build the provider’s connection to the community which could lead to more resources like grants or donations.

The Collaborative consists of more than 285 members representing 20 early childhood and food system organizations across the state. The Collaborative ensures that work across sectors, organizations, and communities is aligned and identifies appropriate funders to advance local and regional food systems. The Collaborative’s work is informed by the [Colorado Farm to Child Roadmap](#) strategic initiatives, which include advancing agency coordination, policy, and funding for local food procurement. The Collaborative has created many resources over the last four years which are intended to support the implementation of Farm to Child. These resources can be found on the [Farm to Child website](#):

- The Eating, Growing, Learning: Colorado Farm to Child Guide in [English](#) & [Español](#) explains the purpose of Farm to Child and highlights the core elements of the program.
- Farm to Child Harvest of the Month in [English](#) and [Español](#) is a monthly resource to help folks learn about eating healthy foods that are in season, including ideas for how to prepare such foods.
- The [Funding Farm to ECE Infographic](#) highlights the breakdown of funds spent for Farm to Child mini-grants.
- Developed in 2021, the [Colorado Farm to Child Roadmap](#) included over 150 [listening sessions](#) around the state with diverse groups and audiences. This document contains five strategic initiatives to advance Farm to Child in Colorado.
- The Colorado Farm to Child Roadmap Guides in [English and Español](#) outline actionable steps to engage in Farm to Child.

Administration of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) provides resources, knowledge, and tools to support families raising a child under the age of five. WIC is a no-cost federally funded program through the Department of Agriculture, and it is administered in Colorado through CDPHE. WIC aims to safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age 5, and its benefits include healthy foods, breastfeeding support, nutrition education, and supporting families through referrals to other programs and supports.

WIC refers families to programs administered and supported by CDEC, including CCCAP, Head Start, and various home visiting options to ensure families can access the resources they need for whole-family health. However, due to limitations in data collection, it is not possible to report the number of referrals by WIC and the number of clients utilizing WIC and participating in programs run by CDEC. The ability to collect, analyze, and share this type of coordinated data is dependent upon investments in an early childhood integrated data system, which would provide a comprehensive view of early care and education investments and families’ experience with services across programs. These investments have not yet been made by the State.

To support the successful administration of WIC, CDEC’s Head Start Collaboration Office (HSCO) and CDPHE’s Prevention Services Division collaborate regularly on outreach and partnerships. Meetings between CDEC’s Head Start Collaboration Director and CDEC’s WIC Outreach & Partnerships Coordinator occur on a quarterly cadence to discuss coordination of outreach messages between CDEC programs such as Universal Preschool, Family Friend and Neighbor (FFN) activities, child care, Head Start, and home visiting to bolster awareness of WIC and the benefits it provides. WIC and CDEC programs share outreach materials and recruitment information to enhance services that benefit families and children.

Operation of Early Childhood and Family Support Programs and Services

Many of CDEC’s early childhood and family support programs and services are administered within CDEC’s Division of Community and Family Support (DCFS). Within DCFS, the Family Strengthening Unit and Early Childhood Mental Health Unit operate a slate of programs and services focused on providing families, communities, and the early childhood workforce the skills and knowledge they need to support the development of healthy, happy children. [This resource](#) provides an overview of the programs and services housed within DCFS.

Family Strengthening Unit

The Family Strengthening Unit administers 13 programs through two funding streams. The unit consists of two teams: home visiting and family support. Programs administered by the unit focus on building protective factors among children, families, and communities; increasing child well-being and school readiness; preventing child maltreatment; and supporting the early childhood workforce.

Prior to HB22-1295, these programs were housed at CDHS’s Office of Early Childhood, and they transferred to CDEC-DCFS on July 1, 2022. Throughout this transition, CDEC’s central goal was to maintain services to local communities, families, and services without impacting service delivery. More than 18 months after the transition, CDEC is proud to have effectively transitioned these programs without disruption to the children and families served or to the workforce providing these vitally important services. The smooth transition of programs in the Family Strengthening Unit was made possible by retaining staff administering the programs, ongoing work with program intermediaries, and collaborative relationships with stakeholders, state agencies, and local organizations.

The effectiveness of this transition is demonstrated by the steady rates of service across home visiting and family support programs. The table below compares data on the use, availability, and capacity of each program between FY 2021-22, or prior to the transition, and FY 2022-23, after the transition.

Program	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23
Family Connects	0	415
HealthySteps (# of Visits)	2,694	3,140
Nurse Family Partnership	4,290	4,023
Parents as Teachers	795	786

SafeCare Colorado	1,142	1,154
Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)	312	305
Colorado Community Response	1,208	1,140
Family Resource Center Program	270	443
Promoting Safe and Stable Families	1,349	1,131
Colorado Fatherhood Program	272	343

Much of the cross-agency collaboration involving family strengthening programs is intended to support the alignment of child abuse and neglect prevention services across the child welfare system. These areas of work are covered in [Section 3\(g\): Operational Alignment Between Early Childhood Services and Child Welfare System](#). Additional areas of cross-agency collaboration for family support and home visiting programs include:

Home Visiting Investment Task Force

To collaborate on home visiting opportunities and strategies across the state, CDEC manages the Home Visiting Investment Task Force (HVITF, which was approved by the Early Childhood Leadership Commission in April 2020). There are currently 35 voting members on the HVITF which consists of home visiting state intermediaries, philanthropic partners, community organizations, parent voice, state legislature representatives, Early Childhood Councils, research partners, and representatives from CDE, CDHS, HCPF, CDPHE, and CDEC. In June 2021, HVITF released the [Home Visiting Investment Plan](#) which outlines a strategy to scale a continuum of home visiting services in Colorado, and the task force released a [progress report](#) in August 2022.

Colorado Strengthening Families Network

To enhance its family support programs, CDEC participates in the Colorado Strengthening Families Network (SFN); CDEC's Family Strengthening Unit Manager is the co-chair. SFN formed in 2007 to embed the Protective Factors Framework in child and family serving agencies across the state. The network comprises professionals from across Colorado who have an interest in learning more about new research and best practices related to protective factors. The group meets on a quarterly basis and engages in collaboration around utilization of protective factors as a strategy to prevent child maltreatment.

For example, SFN sparked the launch of the Strengthening Colorado Families and Communities Conference. Started in 2014 and taking place every two years, the conference is a joint collaboration across the family support continuum—from prevention and public health through restoration and child welfare—with a focus on building protective factors within organizations and communities. SFN, in partnership with Children's Trust Fund Alliance, also brought the "Bringing Protective Factors in Life in Your Work" curricula to Colorado. Funded through mini-grants, certified trainers offer trainings statewide in both English and Spanish,

Additionally, CDEC is a member of the Strengthening Families National Network which includes national partner organizations and cross-state leadership teams. This network allows CDEC to enhance its best practices on using protective factors to strengthen families.

Colorado Fatherhood Program and Colorado Fatherhood Steering Committee

The Colorado Fatherhood Program (CFP) serves fathers from all demographic and socioeconomic spectrums. Eligible CFP participants include any father over 18 years with children or caring for children up to age 24. The program performs specialized outreach to fathers who are single parents, noncustodial, receiving Medicaid, military veterans, without a high school diploma, participating in Head Start, post-incarceration, or experiencing unemployment. Participating fathers receive services and support in building healthy parent-child relationships, gaining economic

stability, and building social capital. Fathers receive coordinated case management, resource referral, and workshops. The program served 267 fathers in FFY 2022-23 and is on track to exceed those numbers during the FFY 2023-24. Services are provided by seven sites and available in eight counties.

From the beginning, this grant was designed as a collaborative approach to serving fathers in their local communities. During the development of CFP, the Fatherhood Steering Committee was created to support fatherhood sites and foster collaboration across various state departments, local implementing agencies, community stakeholders, and fathers. The Fatherhood Steering Committee meets on a quarterly basis and continues to collaborate across systems to reduce barriers to fatherhood engagement. Additional CFP collaborations include:

- The Colorado Fatherhood Network (CFN) functions as a resource for fatherhood programs throughout the state with the goal of enhancing peer-to-peer support, implementing father-friendly practices, and supporting professional development. Members of the Family Strengthening Unit support and participate in the network, and funding is provided by CDEC to the Family Resource Center Association to provide intermediary support to the network.
- The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment acts as a link with the local workforce centers which help fathers with career resources and job training programs. These connections promote economic stability, local workforce boards, and agency programs that can benefit participating fathers.
- CDHS's Office of Economic Security partners with local county departments in communities to decrease barriers to father engagement and supports county departments in linking participants to safety net programs such as TANF, child support, and food assistance.
- CDHS's Office of Children Youth and Families' Domestic Violence Program coordinates with the local domestic violence agencies participating in the CFP by providing domestic violence screening and assessment training and tools which lead to identification of domestic violence and services and interventions for victims.
- Financial Health Institute (FHI) provides innovative and effective financial health and economic education curricula to fatherhood sites.
- Illuminate Colorado, the Colorado chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America, collaborates with CDEC to award mini-grants and connect certified Strengthening Families trainers to fatherhood sites to offer protective factors workshops throughout the year.

Early Childhood Mental Health Unit

The Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Unit strengthens adult-child relationships and engages families in children's learning and development. This unit was lifted with the creation of CDEC to align with whole child principles and to ensure Colorado's children and families have access to holistic support needed to ensure children are healthy, valued, and thriving. The new ECMH Unit offers mental health programming, services, and resources from prevention and promotion through treatment, thus ensuring the full continuum of early childhood mental health is met. This is critical as early support can offset lifelong negative developmental trajectories which impact our economy, workforce, justice system, and more. The four programs operated by the ECMH Unit are:

Child First

Child First is a national, evidence-based, two-generation model that provides intensive, home-based services for families and young children. Child First helps families and the providers who support them to build strong, nurturing relationships that heal and protect young children from the impact of trauma and chronic stress.

CDEC began offering Child First after HB22-1369 appropriated \$2.0 million in FY 2022-23 from the Economic Recovery and Relief Cash Fund, which consists of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, to CDEC for investment in a children's mental health program. The Legislature specified that the program must be an evidence-based, two-generation, and home-based prevention and early intervention program for families with children from prenatal to six who are experiencing chronic stress and trauma. The investment enabled CDEC to offer this type of targeted mental health support and treatment for the first time.

In the first year of implementation, CDEC established nine new Child First sites, expanding program access for Child First from 13 to 24 counties. Child First is in the process of certifying each site, hiring and training staff, and building caseloads. As the program is new, additional data will be available starting in future years, including data on the counties and number of families served by each site.

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

[Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation](#) (ECMHC) is an evidence-based strategy that supports the mental health and healthy social and emotional development of young children. ECMH consultants are clinically trained mental health professionals who work closely with adults caring for children ages birth to six years. Consultants provide support and training that promote children’s healthy social-emotional development and effectively respond to behaviors adults may find challenging. These services are rooted in the philosophy that positive, secure relationships between caregivers, children, and families are essential to healthy child development. Currently, the ECMHC program operates in 21 agencies and is available to provide services in all 64 counties in Colorado.

Incredible Years

The Incredible Years® (IY) is a suite of prevention programs designed to increase a child’s success at school and at home by promoting positive parent, teacher, and child relationships. Colorado Teacher Classroom Management, Dinosaur School, and Parent Groups take place in school districts, mental health centers, family resource centers, and nonprofit agencies. IY prepares children for school by teaching them how to interact with others and solve problems in a healthy, positive way. This program has been available in Colorado for 20 years. The State added investment in 2019 to expand access and to support an additional 13-15 sites each year. In SFY 2022-23, 274 families were served through Parent Groups; 1,256 children participated in Dinosaur School; and 29 teachers received Teacher Classroom Management training.

Early Childhood Mental Health Support Line

The Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Support Line is a no-cost, confidential resource for anyone who provides care for children under six. It is available Monday through Friday from 10:30-5:30pm in all 64 counties. The mental health professional reached through the support line can discuss needs, brainstorm strategies, and connect callers to appropriate support services. Through the use of on-demand interpretation, the call line can support callers in over 200 languages. This resource was developed to increase equitable and timely access to early childhood mental health supports for families and providers across Colorado. The support line launched in March 2022 and has received approximately 512 calls as of December 31, 2023.

In addition to these four programs, CDEC also utilized stimulus funding to support two curriculums and trainings intended to enhance early childhood mental health: Investments in Conscious Discipline and Pyramid Colorado. These curriculums and trainings are provided to parents and caregivers to increase their understanding of and ability to support the well-being of the young children in their care. The programming recognizes that parents and other caregivers play an important role in building children’s social-emotional skills, such as making friends, caring for others, managing emotions, and resolving conflict peacefully. Helping children to develop these skills promotes their healthy development and reduces behaviors adults find challenging.

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Advisory Council

To collaborate on early childhood mental health opportunities and strategies across the state, CDEC staffs the newly formed Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Advisory Council. The Council launched in June 2023 and nominated a full Steering Committee as of October 2023. The IECMH Advisory Council is a collaborative of partners leveraging their expertise and experience to guide the ongoing development and implementation of a robust, equitable, accessible continuum of mental health services and supports in Colorado. This continuum ranges from promotion and prevention to intervention and treatment for expecting and pregnant persons, infants and young children through age 5, and their families and communities. The Council will make recommendations to improve the perinatal, infant, and early childhood system of care, including policy, workforce, capacity, strategy, and sustainable

funding approaches. There are 50 voting members on the IECMH Advisory Council, including clinical and consultation providers, state intermediaries, philanthropic partners, community organizations, parent voice, Early Childhood Councils, research partners, and representatives from CDE, CDHS, HCPF, CDPHE, CDHE, BHA, and CDEC.

Child Care Licensing and Access

Within CDEC, the Division of Early Learning Licensing and Administration is responsible for licensing and monitoring the State's more than 5,000 less-than-24-hour licensed child care facilities. In addition, DELLA promulgates regulations that set the minimum health and safety standards for all less-than-24-hour child care facilities in the state. Prior to the creation of CDEC, less-than-24-hour facility licensing services were administered through CDHS; these services and licensing rules have been transferred fully to CDEC.

DELLA executes strategies to expand the State's licensed child care capacity, with a current focus on expanding infant and toddler care capacity. Research shows that investing in infants and toddlers has the greatest impact on children's development and return on investment over time, due to the number of neural connections made in the first 3 years of life. Unfortunately, access to high-quality infant-toddler child care is out of reach for many families, particularly for low-income households. Colorado has the eighth-most expensive infant and toddler care in the country.⁴ An estimated 28,000 infants and toddlers whose parents would like to enroll in licensed care lack access. Colorado ranks 41st among the 50 states in the percentage of low- and moderate-income infants and toddlers receiving a child care subsidy.⁵ Nearly every area of the state lacks sufficient infant and toddler child care capacity—91% of Colorado counties have low infant child care capacity.⁶

CDEC operates programs and distributes funding to increase access to child care across the state. Some of these strategies include:

- The Emerging and Expanding Grant Program provided funding to support licensed child care in sustaining and expanding their businesses. Eligible providers are awarded grants ranging from \$3,000 to \$50,000 to cover expenses related to the expansion of current capacity or the opening of a new child care program. For example, funding could be used for coaching, professional development, learning and classroom materials, and capital improvements. In FY 2021-2022, the Emerging & Expanding Child Care Grant Program was successful in expanding capacity throughout Colorado by 5,459 new child care slots across 37 counties. Notably, 1,643 of the newly created slots were specifically designated for infants and toddlers.
- The Employer-Based Child Care activity targets employers looking to build child care on site. Grants are awarded to eligible entities to construct, remodel, renovate, or retrofit a child care center on or near the employer's site. These grants are intended to support workforce participation and provide safe, stable, quality, and accessible care for employed parents and families. CDEC also partners Executives Partnering to Invest In Children on the Employer-Based Child Care Design Lab, a unique opportunity for employers to gain the knowledge necessary to plan an on-site or near-site child care facility.

Early Childhood Workforce Recruitment and Retention

The launch of CDEC created the opportunity to stand up a new Division of Early Childhood Workforce dedicated to honoring, professionalizing, and growing Colorado's early care and education professionals. Colorado is experiencing an early childhood workforce crisis in communities across the state. The lack of available, qualified workforce is a major contributor to the lack of care for nearly 95,000 children across Colorado. From the start of the pandemic to fall 2021, the early childhood workforce lost nearly 7% of its workforce. The state would have, otherwise, expected an approximate 4% increase in the workforce during this period of time; therefore, Colorado was left with an 11% gap in the early childhood workforce in fall 2021.

⁴ [The cost of child care in Colorado](#), Economic Policy Institute (October 2020)

⁵ [State of Babies Yearbook 2022](#). Zero to Three.

⁶ [Colorado's Child Care Capacity](#).

To address this crisis, CDEC's Division of Early Childhood Workforce (DECW) leads the State in creating interagency strategies focused on recruiting and retaining early childhood professionals. A well-prepared and skilled early childhood workforce is paramount to ensuring Colorado's children receive the best possible start in life. Recognizing this, DECW focuses on proactive measures to enhance the systems and structures that sustain and grow a diverse early childhood workforce. These measures target compensation, career pathways and professional learning, and the overall well-being of early childhood professionals.

As of fall 2023, the early childhood workforce is approaching 24,500 professionals, a 19% increase in just over two years. While this growth has been critical for sustaining the workforce, the early child care and education field continues to experience a high annual turnover rate. Still, the slow regrowth indicates the effectiveness of CDEC's recruitment and retention initiatives, many of which involve collaboration with other state agencies.

- CDEC partners with CDHE on providing scholarships and free courses to early childhood professionals. This partnership is a component of the Workforce Recruitment & Retention Scholarship Programs which provides professionals with a menu of options for financial assistance and access to the education and training needed to enter the early childhood workforce. The partnership includes several elements: providing higher education scholarships through 22 public colleges and universities to help professionals obtain higher education certificates and degrees; providing student loan repayment to teachers as an innovative compensation strategy to reduce student loan debt burden; partnering with institutes of higher education so that professionals with high quality training can receive credit for non-higher education-based training and professional experience; and providing scholarships for free ECE 1011 and ECE 1031 courses to individuals which align with the minimum coursework required to become an early childhood educator.
- Through partnerships with BHA and CDEC's ECMH Unit, CDEC has launched [innovative recruitment, retention, and recognition efforts](#), including bonuses, internships, and licensure fee reimbursements, targeting the early childhood mental health workforce.
- In partnership with Child Care Innovations (CCI) at Red Rocks Community College, CDEC offers scholarships for early childhood professionals to participate in a federally-registered apprenticeship program to receive support for on-the-job training. Early childhood professionals receive scholarships for professional development opportunities, and programs receive incentives to host apprentices.
- CDEC supports DOR in implementing the [Early Child Professional Tax Credit](#), which was established via legislation in 2000. The legislation created a voluntary tiered system of Early Childhood Professional Credentials (ECPC) that recognizes increased knowledge and experience for those who care for and educate our youngest children. Credentials ensure that all professionals caring for and educating young children have the same core early childhood knowledge regardless of setting, including family child care, child care centers, and public schools. The early childhood field was actively involved in the creation of the credential system and has enthusiastically embraced it. In 2005, legislation moved the professional credentials from a pilot project to statewide availability. CDEC has collaborated with DOR to strengthen the validity, reliability and responsiveness of the state's system for reviewing credentials for the Early Child Professional Tax Credit. For tax year 2022, this effort resulted in 25,512 professionals across Colorado who are eligible for the ECPC tax credit which recognizes attainment of higher credential levels.
- CDEC partners with OEDIT and its network of Small Business Development Centers, along with local Early Childhood Councils, to offer no-cost business training and consultation for child care providers. CDEC and OEDIT meet regularly to discuss progress and to set the strategic direction for this shared work, including most recently convening a working group to reconceptualize the training model. CDEC and OEDIT also schedule quarterly check-ins with participating SBDCs to hear what is going well and what requires additional attention. Finally, CDEC, OEDIT, and Energize CO staff meet quarterly to discuss shared opportunities in the early childhood business space.
- CDEC partners with CDHE and CDE to support several strong Institute of Higher Education and district-based partnerships with "grow your own" strategies for dual enrollment college courses in high school, and these have demonstrated impact at bringing young teachers into the field.

In addition to the above initiatives, several efforts to improve retention and recruitment are underway through other state agencies, and CDEC consults and collaborates on an ongoing basis as requested. CDE provides free ECE Apprenticeship Authorization degree/credentialing, funded through SB23-087 for the next two years. CDHE is implementing additional efforts to align Colorado's two-to-four-year degree pathways, and there are emerging efforts to create stackable credentials that build toward a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree as well as competency-aligned professional development that can be awarded credit toward a BA degree. CDHE has also launched multiple work-based apprenticeships and place-based BA models to support both new teachers as well as seasoned teachers who have been unable to finish their BA degree.

CDEC, in partnership with the Early Childhood Leadership Commission, is in the process of developing a Colorado Comprehensive Early Childhood Workforce Plan that will guide Colorado's interagency efforts around early childhood workforce. The effort is rooted in four anchor areas: recruitment and career pathways; retention and wellness; compensation and finance; and system learning and leadership. The plan is expected to be finalized in 2024.

Ensuring Kindergarten Readiness through Early Childhood and K-12 Collaboration

Effective transitions from preschool to kindergarten are important for children and their families and, from a systems perspective, represent one of the most complex transition points because of the cross-agency and cross-system collaboration required. Transition practices that support positive relationships between children, families, and educators can substantially impact child outcomes. The transition to kindergarten represents an important shift in children's and families' education experiences as the goals, demands, and classroom structures in kindergarten are often different than those in preschool and child care settings. CDEC is committed to building strategies and systems that support children and their families' smooth transition from early learning experiences (including child care, preschool, Head Start, developmental/Special Education preschool, or friend, family, and neighbor care) into kindergarten, ready to learn and to be behaviorally and academically successful.

Prior to the launch of CDEC, a 2018 comprehensive needs assessment completed for the Preschool Development Planning Grant revealed a need to build a systems-level approach for supporting the transition to kindergarten. In 2019, Colorado was awarded a three-year Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five (PDG B-5), which has allowed for extensive investments to enhance the continuity and strengthen the bridge between preschool and kindergarten. This work has continued throughout the transition to CDEC.

To create a foundation for this work, a Kindergarten Transitions Project Team was convened comprising CDEC and CDE staff representing the Head Start Collaboration Office, Preschool through 3rd Grade (P-3) services, Preschool Special Education, School Readiness, and the Migrant Education Offices. This workgroup, in partnership with the National P-3 Center, developed a systems-level vision for Colorado's transition to kindergarten. Disseminated in 2022, the [Transition to Kindergarten in Colorado Roadmap](#) identifies eight key strategies to strengthen and systematize Colorado's approach to transitions to kindergarten and the birth through five (B-5) system. This Roadmap was created by crosswalking federal, state, and local policies, as well as gathering community input from both the sending (the early care and learning sector) and receiving (K-12 system) side. The Roadmap is grounded in the conceptual anchors that effective transitions must be supported by interagency coordination and alignment between state policy and local implementation.

In practice, this collaboration is facilitated by CDEC's Head Start Collaboration Office (HSCO), which partners with CDE—specifically Special Education, Migrant Education, and Highly Mobile Student Units—to support a sturdy bridge between preschool and kindergarten. CDEC has developed several resources, professional development offerings, and supports in collaboration with CDE which can be used by both the sending and receiving sides to strengthen practices and processes that support the transition to kindergarten. Many of the resources below have been supported through PDG B-5:

- In February 2020, the then-CDHS Office of Early Childhood Early Intervention program and Head Start Collaboration Office partnered with CDEC's Colorado Preschool Program, Special Education Part B program, and Kindergarten Readiness Consultant to host a Building Bridges Summit. The Summit's goal was to enhance local coordination between senders and receivers. Another two-day Transitions to Kindergarten Summit was hosted in October 2023 for early care and education providers and kindergarten educators. The summit showcased tools generated by CDEC and the National P-3 Center that support local communities to further their transitions to kindergarten. These resources, created in December 2022, were informed by an advisory team from CDE and CDEC, as well as local teams of senders and receivers.
- In 2022, PDG B-5 funding was used to support seventeen local teams consisting of 100 school administrators, Head Start grantees, Early Care and Education professionals, K-12 educators, early childhood councils, local coordinating organizations, families, and other key stakeholders to develop and implement transition plans for their community.
- In partnership with the National P-3 Center, the Kindergarten Transitions Project Team developed a [Kindergarten Transitions Timeline and Checklist](#), which provides key strategies and practices for the sending and receiving sides to implement throughout the year. There are also targeted transition resources for children and families [experiencing homelessness](#), who are from [Migrant and Seasonal communities](#), and those living in our [tribal communities](#).
- CDEC engaged with Marzano Research on a [resource guide](#) to elevate children with special health conditions as they transition between learning environments and into kindergarten. This resource guide was also informed by CDE's Part B Unit, CDE's School Nursing and Health Services, CDPHE's maternal and child health team, as well as the Children's Hospital and Colorado families.
- The Assessment Alignment State Agency Advisory, made up of agency staff from CDEC, CDE, and CDPHE representing the Colorado Preschool Program, Preschool Special Education, School Readiness, Migrant Education, Head Start, Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) child care licensing, and child health and wellness, reviewed and disseminated an evidence-base to inform preschool and kindergarten assessment alignment in Colorado. This Advisory Group met five times between December 2021 and June 2022 to build collective knowledge, develop a common language, and strengthen the capacity and leadership of early childhood and K-12 leaders on preschool and K-3 aligned assessments in Colorado. The information developed by the Advisory Group will inform a P-3 Leadership Model, described in the next bullet; integrating the collective findings into the Leadership Model will support a pathway of coordination between senders and receivers at a local level.
- CDEC is working with the National P-3 Center to create a plan for a Colorado-specific P-3 Leadership Model from January to December 2024. The goal of the model is to create focused opportunities for Colorado leaders to come together, receive joint training, and collaborate on P-3 projects of mutual interest. The model will be informed by work previously completed by the Assessment Alignment State Agency Advisory, described above. The planning team for this model will consist of CDEC's Universal Preschool Director, CDE's Associate Commissioner of the Student Learning Division at CDE, CDHE's Director of Educator Preparation Pathways, as well as local education leaders from the sending and receiving sides. To support an informed planning process, the National P-3 center will provide guidance and experts who can speak about promising practices in leadership models from other states.

Finally, with the launch of Colorado's Universal Preschool Program, HSCO works with CDE and Universal Preschool to ensure continuity between programs and kindergarten entry. Additionally, CDEC will be hiring a Kindergarten Transition Administrator who will work to support state and local implementation of the eight strategies recommended within the Transitions to Kindergarten in Colorado Roadmap; provide technical assistance to local organizations, including Local Coordinating Organizations (LCOs) and local education agencies (LEAs); develop and disseminate tools and resources; and coordinate and collaborate with CDE.

The PDG B-5 ends in December 2023, though CDEC has requested a no-cost extension through December 2024. Without additional resources, CDEC will need to be strategic in implementing strategies captured in the Roadmap; providing

ongoing support to families, ECE providers, PreK-12 educators, and other professionals; and ensuring ongoing coordination and collaboration with CDE.

Operational Alignment Between Early Childhood Services and Child Welfare System

Prevention Approach

Effective child maltreatment prevention requires collaboration between the early childhood, health care, public health, and human services sectors. CDEC recognizes the importance of its role in this work, and it has elevated strengthening families as one of the goals in CDEC’s Strategic Plan. Specifically, CDEC aims to create supportive and inclusive environments for early childhood development and to offer families support for raising happy, healthy children despite the challenges that come their way.

In 2022, 41% of child welfare assessments in Colorado included children under the age of six years old, highlighting the importance of supports and services that prevent families from touching the child welfare system in the first place. CDEC administers a menu of early childhood programs and services to support families and early care and education providers who work with families. These programs, which range from theory-informed to evidence-based, align with a protective factors framework, which posits that five factors (resilience skills, social-emotional competencies, social connections, knowledge of child development, and concrete support in times of need) are the foundation for strong families. When protective factors are well-established, the family environment promotes optimal child and youth development and the likelihood of child abuse and neglect diminishes. [This resource](#) provides an overview of the programs and services housed within CDEC’s Division of Community and Family Support.

CDEC Prevention Programs by Protective Factor				
Concrete Supports in Times of Need	Knowledge of Child Development	Social Connections	Resilience Skills	Social Emotional Competence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colorado Child Care Assistance Program • Child First • Colorado Community Response • Early Intervention Colorado • Family Resource Centers • Colorado Fatherhood Program • Family Connects • Intensive case management and navigation services • Mobile Child Care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscious Discipline • Early Learning Guidelines • Early Intervention Colorado • Early Childhood Mental Health Support Line • Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Training • Home Visiting Programs (Nurse Family Partnerships, Parents as Teachers, SafeCare, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Resource Centers • Colorado Fatherhood Program • Circle of Parents • Colorado Connected Community Norms Campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seedlings, Roots, Branches, and Sprout Curricula • Respite care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incredible Years • Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation • Pyramid • Healthy Steps

for Substance Use Disorder Treatment	Youngsters) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Colorado Fatherhood Program ● Healthy Steps ● Nurturing Parenting 			
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Collaborative Initiatives and Program and Funding Alignment

Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention

Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) funding supports community-based efforts to develop, operate, and enhance initiatives, programs, and activities to prevent child abuse and neglect. Funding also supports the coordination of resources and activities to better strengthen and support families and, therefore, to reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. Funding is made available for activities that target the general population (primary) and vulnerable families at risk of abuse or neglect (secondary).

CDEC has funded 10 communities in carrying out a wide variety of CBCAP work identified in local plans. These funded activities focus on providing individualized services, changing organizational culture and practice, fostering collaboration and community efficacy, and influencing policy and legislative change. Starting October 1, 2023, CDEC began providing CBCAP funding to support up to additional 12 communities in developing a community Child Maltreatment Prevention plan. Financial support goes toward experienced facilitators and county staff to manage logistics, free use of researchers to conduct a parent and community survey, and community planning tools. CDEC continues to release open calls for applications and to support counties in developing a scope of work and the plan.

Family First Prevention Services Act Plan

The federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) legislation supports states in focusing on prevention services for children and families who are candidates for foster care. FFPSA plans identify strategies and treatments each state wishes to utilize to prevent children and families from entering the child welfare system. Colorado’s FFPSA Plan, led by CDPHE, was officially approved in November 2022. The Family Strengthening Unit, originally at CDHS and then re-located to CDEC, was involved in every step of the process which began in March of 2018, including:

- Participating in the Implementation Committee, as well as several subcommittees (Prevention Services Continuum, Candidacy, Legislative, and Constituency workgroups).
- Partnering with CDHS’s Division of Child Welfare (DCW) and the University of Denver to survey counties to map Family First Clearinghouse programs. CDHS and the university produced a publication which included recommendations for FFPSA implementation in Colorado.
- Participating in the Child Welfare Legislative Task Force to analyze laws and rules related to the delivery of Child Welfare Services to ensure alignment with FFPSA.
- Developing an American Indian and Alaskan Native workgroup to ensure FFPSA programming is culturally responsive.
- Ensuring parents and caregivers perspective is embedded in the decision-making process.
- Developing the [Family First Digest](#) to communicate with community members, families, and practitioners in various fields across the state about decisions made and next steps related to FFPS.

The following home visiting programs, operated by CDEC, are included in Colorado’s five-year FFPSA plan: Nurse Family Partnership (NFP), SafeCare Colorado (SCC), Parents as Teachers, Healthy Families America, and Child First. Currently, family strengthening unit staff serve on the leadership team of the Child Welfare Prevention Task Group which is now responsible for implementation of the approved plan. The Family Support Systems Manager has been working with the Task Group to integrate tools from the [Child Maltreatment Prevention Framework for Action Toolkit](#) and to implement further efforts to develop common language across the prevention.

Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families

CDEC has membership in the Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families (CPTF). CPTF is a collaboration between families, county Human Service Directors, county Public Health Directors, state agencies (CDEC, CDHS, CDPHE, HCPF), and other statewide partners such as the Colorado Human Services Directors Association, Colorado Association of Local Public Health Organizations, Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab, Casey Family Programs, and Illuminate Colorado (the Colorado Chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America). The Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families (CPTF) aims to significantly reduce child fatalities and child maltreatment for all children birth through five years old by positively and proactively supporting strong and healthy family formation. Priorities include:

- Enhance cross-system service coordination and strengthen family, community, and governmental partnerships.
- Expand the availability of family services and supports that are culturally and linguistically responsive, community driven, and evidence-based.
- Shift family, community, and systems norms on support-seeking and support offering and increase community connection, social cohesion, and support networks.

Family Support through Primary Prevention

Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families (CPTF) is the implementer of the Family Support through Primary Prevention (FSPP) grant, though CDEC was the applicant on behalf of the Partnership. FSPP targets families with children ages prenatal to five with a focus on the first year of life, and the goals of the grant include:

- Collaborate across sectors and engage families in applying a public health approach to child maltreatment prevention, family strengthening, and equitable well-being;
- Enhance cross-system service coordination and strengthen family, community, and governmental partnerships
- Connect postpartum families to services and supports that are culturally responsive, universal, and evidence-based.

In FY 2023-24, CPTF and Illuminate Colorado continue to work with select counties to implement projects and programs and to provide technical support via the following opportunities:

- Boulder, Denver, and Jefferson Counties launched Family Connects, a universal home visiting program, through a phased approach in 2022 and 2023. This transformational program offers three nurse home visits to families who give birth in a participating hospital. The nurse conducts a comprehensive family assessment and provides referrals to services in the community.
- In October 2022, Adams and Prowers counties began a partnership with Family Resource Centers to create a "no wrong door" referral system and build family protective factors. The first year entailed developing evaluation and implementation plans, which the counties will execute in the second year.
- The [Colorado Connected program](#) provides communities with the tools they need to build critical social connections. This includes parents and community members directly, as well as organizations such as libraries, family resource centers, and neighborhood associations. In June 2023, the program launched a media campaign to disseminate information that provides inspiration, knowledge, ideas and practical tools to strengthen social connections among parents.

Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund

CDEC facilitates the Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund (COCAP), established pursuant to section 26.5-3-201-208, C.R.S., which provides visionary leadership and collaborative support to align, advance, and uplift primary and secondary child maltreatment prevention efforts in Colorado. COCAP's primary focus is to prevent and reduce the occurrence of prenatal substance exposure and support an evidence-based or research-based child sexual abuse prevention training model to prevent and reduce the occurrence of child sexual abuse. In FY 2022-23, the funding stream provided training for 671 adults virtually and 524 adults in-person, for a total of 1,197 adults to prevent child sexual abuse. This funding has a statewide impact and is available in every county.

The COCAP board makes recommendations on the distribution of funds. The board comprises 19 members representing CDEC, CDPHE, CDE, HCPF, CDLA, the Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman, CDHS's Division of Child Welfare, four county representatives, three family representatives, and two legislators. COCAP's priorities for SFY 2023 - 24 are to:

- Provide funding for child sexual abuse prevention training across Colorado.
- Provide funding for the development of a Child Maltreatment Prevention Investment Strategy with policy and practice recommendations, including the sub-account for Family First Prevention Services claiming reimbursement. COCAP Board is working with the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab on this priority.
- Align delivery of Child Welfare Services Task Force Prevention Services Array recommendations and the recommendations from the Home Visiting Investment Plan with the new Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund Investment Strategy.

Delivery of Child Welfare Services Task Force

CDEC's Director of the Division of Community and Family Support co-chaired the CDHS's Delivery of Child Welfare Services Task Force until it sunsetted on June 30, 2023. The task force addressed eight child welfare system priorities, including growing prevention services and increasing collaboration across the various systems serving children in child welfare. This task force was convened monthly from July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2023, and its membership included representatives from state and county child welfare, the court system, Medicaid, physical and behavioral health, prevention, and placement providers. At the final meeting, the Task Force voted to present the COCAP board with the Prevention Services Array Recommendations and requested that the COCAP board advocate for the implementation of the recommendations.

Infant Safe Sleep Partnership

The mission of the Colorado Infant Safe Sleep Partnership (ISSP) is to support families, providers, organizations and policymakers to increase infant safe sleep practices and address related barriers and disparities through education, practice change, and systems improvement. ISSP includes individuals from CDPHE, CDHS, CDEC as well as health care providers, community organizations, and nonprofit representatives. This is an ongoing collaboration focusing on the following priority areas:

- Develop culturally-responsive public awareness and educational campaigns in collaboration with families and community-based organizations.
- Design and implement quality improvement initiatives based in hospitals and simultaneous provider education opportunities.
- Work in constant partnership with community organizations to address systemic issues that may impact safe sleep practices including economic security, physical and behavioral health access, transportation access, systemic/historical racism, housing, and immigration status.

Child Fatality Prevention System

The Child Fatality Prevention System (CFPS) is a statewide, legislatively mandated, multidisciplinary, multi-agency network to prevent child deaths. CFPS consists of the CDPHE State Support Team, at least 43 local child fatality prevention review teams (local teams), and a 46-member State Review Team. The CDPHE State Support Team works with county and district public health agencies to coordinate the local teams, which review deaths of infants, children, and youth under 18 in Colorado and implement strategies to prevent future deaths. The CFPS State Review Team develops an annual legislative report on child death prevention and data quality recommendations. The State Review Team also works to identify and support implementation of strategies to prevent child abuse and neglect. CDEC has a representative participating on the CFPS State Review Team and continues this collaboration.

Child Fatality Review Recommendation Steering Committee

CDEC is a member of CDHS's Child Fatality Review Recommendations Steering Committee. This Committee supports the implementation of recommendations made by the separate CDHS Child Fatality Review Team. The Review Team, codified by HB11-1181, is a multi-system case review of child fatalities for children who had involvement in the child welfare system within the last three years. CDEC does not hold membership on the Review Team, but the Department does hold membership on the Steering Committee.

Memorandum of Understanding Between CDEC and CDHS

To ensure ongoing alignment and collaboration, CDEC and CDHS's Division of Child Welfare (DCW) entered into a MOU in June 2022. The MOU covers agency collaboration on fulfilling the requirements for Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) and all the programs in CDEC's Family Strengthening Unit, including the Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund, Community Based Child Abuse Prevention Program, Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV), as well as Early Intervention, Head Start, and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation. CDEC and CDHS-DCW hold regular meetings to monitor the implementation of the MOU. The MOU has been renewed to extend through September 2024.

This MOU outlines CDEC and CDHS-DCW's operational roles and responsibilities on ensuring:

- The PSSF program is implemented in accordance with federal regulations
- The Annual Program and Service Report has information about PSSF and all the child maltreatment prevention programs
- Related recommendations from the Child Fatality Review Team are advanced
- Participation in implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act
- Support for newborns impacted by a parent's substance use disorder
- Collaboration on activities for child abuse prevention month
- Co-planning of the biennial Strengthening Colorado Families and Communities Conference
- Development of prevention content for the CO4Kids.org website and Child Welfare Training System
- Early childhood mental health consultants participate in case consultation as requested
- Evaluations of the effectiveness of prevention programs
- Participation from both entities on relevant boards
- Referring children to Early Intervention
- Building strong collaboration with community-based organizations offering home visiting and family support programs
- Enrolling children from the child welfare system in Head Start
- Expanding the prevention services array across the state, and
- Developing local child maltreatment prevention plans

Background Investigation Collaboration

CDEC's Division of Early Learning Licensing and Administration (DELLA) is also key to ensuring alignment between early childhood services and the child welfare system. Prior to the creation of CDEC, DELLA's Background Investigation Unit, then housed within CDHS's Office of Early Childhood, processed all criminal and Trails abuse and neglect background checks for all 24-hour and less than 24-hour child care programs.

After the launch of CDEC, an Interagency Agreement (IAA) between CDEC and CDHS was established to continue the Background Investigation Unit's continued role in processing background checks for CDHS's Division of Child Welfare and Provider Services Unit, which regulates 24-hour programs, while CDHS set up its own background investigation unit. DELLA continues working closely with CDHS to stand up its own background investigation unit by supporting the identification of necessary IT system changes and the development of policies and procedures.

CDEC and CDHS collaborated on a new long term IAA effective October 1, 2023 through September 30, 2024. This IAA authorizes CDEC's Background Investigation Unit to conduct background checks for the CDHS Provider Services Unit, including criminal background checks and abuse and neglect checks, until CDHS is ready to implement its own background investigation unit.

Additionally, CDEC's DELLA and CDHS are working collaboratively to update the rules for child care facilities. The agencies will revise these rules to ensure that regulations pertaining to less than 24-hour programs are under the authority of CDEC, while regulations pertaining to 24-hour programs are under the authority of CDHS.

Use of Public Funding for Child Care

CDEC utilizes public funding for three statewide child care programs: the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), Head Start, and the Universal Preschool Program. This slate of programs provides Colorado families with financial assistance for and access to child care and education services for children birth to five. Each program is unique in its funding source, eligibility, and population(s) served, but all programs contribute to ensuring Colorado's young children and families have the care they need to thrive.

Child Care Assistance Program

With the passage of HB22-1295, CDEC became the lead agency for the administration of the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), as the program had previously been administered by CDHS. The program provides child care assistance to low-income families who are (i) income eligible and are employed, searching for employment, or are in post-secondary education or training; (ii) families who receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) basic cash assistance and/or state diversion and need child care services to support their efforts toward self-sufficiency; and (iii) at county option, families that have an open protective services child welfare case.

CCCAP is administered through local County Departments of Human Services under the direction of the CDEC. Program entry income eligibility limits are set at the county level based on the self-sufficiency standard of that respective county. During FY 2022-23, these thresholds were temporarily increased (thresholds are currently set at 200%, 235%, and 270%) using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) federal stimulus Discretionary funds as a strategy to increase access to child care assistance for low-income families. As long as they are participating in an eligible activity (employment, post-secondary education, training program, job search), families remain eligible until they reach an income that exceeds 85% of the state median income.

The funding sources for CCCAP are a mixture of county, state, and federal dollars, including federal Child Care and Development Fund dollars. Therefore, the State must adhere to federal regulations of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF).

To support the successful transition of CCCAP to CDEC, a revised MOU between CDEC and counties was executed on January 1, 2023. This MOU outlines requirements for the supervision and administration of CCCAP. CDEC also expanded CCCAP's infrastructure by developing a policy administration team that provides policy technical assistance to counties and providers and ensures CCCAP complies with federal requirements.

CDEC continually works to expand access to CCCAP and to increase the number of children and families being served. In FY 2022-23, 25,864 children utilized CCCAP, an increase of 1,783 children from the previous year. This growth may indicate the effectiveness of strategies to increase access, such as the following funded by ARPA dollars:

- Beginning July 1, 2022, CCCAP expanded entry level income limits to increase the number of families eligible for the program. The increased income threshold contributed to 306 additional families and 462 additional children being served through CCCAP.
- Beginning July 1, 2022, CCCAP implemented payment based on enrollment for infants and toddlers to encourage providers to accept more CCCAP children in this age range and to improve access to child care for families. This strategy contributed to 330 infants and toddlers being enrolled in the program in SFY 2022-23.

CDEC is working to maintain this increase trend by pursuing a true cost of care model intended to incentivize more providers to participate in CCCAP and supporting the continuation of the above stimulus strategies.

Consistent, operationally aligned programming at the state, county, and provider level is key for supporting CCCAP families. CDEC's CCCAP program collaborates with the following CDHS programs and services on a weekly operation basis to share programmatic updates between programs and ensure services are accessible to CCCAP families: Child Support; Child Welfare; food assistance programs including CACFP, WIC, and SNAP; Colorado Works (Temporary

Assistance for Needy Families); County Liaison Office, and the Audit Division. Additionally, CCCAP works closely with counties through the Colorado Human Services Directors Association, which represents the social/human services directors from across the state of Colorado, and Colorado Counties, Inc., which offers assistance to county commissioners, mayors, and council members and encourages counties to work together on common issues.

CDEC has also developed opportunities for stakeholders to share critical information, inform program direction, and promote best practices in serving families participating in the program. CCCAP has created standing committees and workgroups dedicated to county and provider collaboration including:

- CCCAP Rate Setting Committee includes county and child care provider leaders who provide input and direction on rate setting for CCCAP, including both market rate and alternative methodology frameworks.
- The Universal Preschool and CCCAP Work Group discusses alignment of the two programs for dually enrolled children. This committee represents counties, local coordinating organizations, child care providers, and early childhood leaders. The members work closely with CDEC staff to operational and regulatory alignment of both programs.
- CCCAP Allocation Committee comprises county finance leaders, who provide input on the allocation formulas utilized to determine the amount of each county's block grant.
- Monthly county work sessions are facilitated by CDEC's CCCAP team to offer guidance to all county staff who support CCCAP, as well as specialized support sessions for county staff who work with CCCAP qualified exempt providers and who support program integrity.
- CDEC staff actively promulgate CCCAP rule and follow the process of review, input, and voting by members of both the Rules Advisory County Subcommittee and Rules Advisory Council (RAC).

Universal Preschool Program

The Universal Preschool Program ensures that every child in the year before they are eligible for kindergarten is eligible for up to 10 hours of state-funded, voluntary preschool beginning in the 2023-24 school year. In 2020, Colorado voters approved Proposition EE to provide State-funded voluntary preschool services for every child in the year before they are eligible for kindergarten, and subsequent legislation (HB22-1295) established Universal Preschool.

Previously, the state had funded targeted preschool services for eligible high-risk children through the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP). CPP was funded based on the total number of students enrolled in the Colorado Preschool Program. Additional funding was provided for preschool students with IEPs, which was a separate program from the Colorado Preschool Program. This funding was used by districts and schools to educate enrolled preschool students.

Universal Preschool is funded through two streams: Proposition EE and State General Funds. The State General Funds portion is inclusive of funding that was previously appropriated to CPP and to preschoolers with IEPs through School Finance. This funding is then combined with the Proposition EE revenues deposited in the Preschool Program Cash Fund (PPCF) to be distributed directly to school districts and private providers. In turn, school districts and private providers are able to subcontract with Administrative Units to provide preschool services to both general and special education students.

State law sets prioritization requirements for Universal Preschool funding to ensure that all eligible children with disabilities are funded at the number of hours determined by their IEP and that all eligible 4-year-olds are funded at a minimum of 10 hours a week, though CDEC has committed to funding all eligible 4-year-olds for 15 hours a week. According to the law, if remaining appropriations are available after funding those two groups, CDEC will then fund eligible 3-year-olds with a qualifying factor, then additional hours for 4-year-olds who are low income and have one other qualifying factor. These groups are explained in further detail below:

- All eligible preschool students with disabilities in accordance with their Individual Education Programs (IEPs).
- 4-year-olds / students in the year before kindergarten - a minimum of 10 hours/week (15 in the 2023-24 school year via 'specified purpose' funding).

- Eligible 3-year-olds / students in the two years before kindergarten (and younger in a community with historical waiver) who meet a qualifying factor per rule. CDEC has a designated funding allocation for eligible 3-year-olds.
- Additional hours for eligible 4-year-olds / students in the year before kindergarten, per rule and subject to available appropriations.

The Colorado General Assembly instituted two level-funding provisions for the 2023-24 school year only. These were designed to ensure that providers receive the same or greater level of total funding than the year prior during this transition year.

- Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) Historical Allowance: During the writing of HB22-1295, collaborators assured that historical funding was guaranteed in the first year of Universal Preschool implementation for both school districts and community-based providers that previously participated.
- Maintenance of Effort Hold Harmless: The second provision, colloquially referred to as the “Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Hold Harmless” funding, is provided through the Colorado Department of Education and applies if a school district has less total funding through Universal Preschool in 2023-24 than the amount of funding received in 2022-23 for “total preschool funding for all preschool positions.” MOE Hold Harmless funds will be provided by CDE to districts in the summer of 2024. If a district or community-based provider has a lower per-student revenue rate in 2023-24 than in 2022-23 but higher total program (whether it be just CPP or “total preschool funding”) revenue due to an increase in students participating or other factors, these provisions will not apply. Districts will also attest to which funds flowed through districts to community based providers.

Universal Preschool launched July 1, 2023. The program is currently serving more than 39,000 four year olds. This makes Colorado 8th in the country in terms of 4 year-olds enrolled in preschool, up from 26th in the 2021-22 school. More than 1,800 providers have enrolled in the system—48% of which are community centers, 39% of which are schools, and 13% of which are family child care homes. On average, families are saving \$6,000 through Universal Preschool.

Head Start

Head Start is a federal-to-local funded model that supports children's growth from prenatal to age 5 through services that support early learning and development, health, and family well-being. Head Start services are available at no-cost to children in eligible families with children ages 3 to 5, while Early Head Start services work with eligible families with children ages birth to 3 and many programs also serve expectant families. Programs deliver child development services in center-based, home-based, or family child care settings.

Head Start services are for children from birth to kindergarten entry, as well as pregnant people and expectant families. Eligible participants include children whose families meet the federal low-income guidelines; that is, families whose incomes are at or below the Federal Poverty Guidelines or who participate in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) public assistance services. Other eligible participants include children who are in the foster care system or experiencing homelessness by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act definition. Programs may also accept a limited number of children (up to ten percent of funded enrollment) who do not meet any of those eligibility criteria.

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs have specific eligibility requirements for the children of farmworkers. American Indian and Alaskan Native Head Start programs enroll tribal children from reservations or nearby areas. All programs enroll children with disabilities and welcome children who speak a language other than English at home.

As there are generally more eligible children than are supported by program funding, each program maintains a waiting list and partners with local funding sources to support families, such as CCCAP. According to the FY 2022-23 Program Information Report, a mandated reporting requirement for Head Start, Colorado was funded to provide services for 11,861 children and pregnant families.

Per the Head Start Act, each state is required to have a Head Start Collaboration Office (HSCO) that exists to facilitate partnerships between Head Start agencies and other state, territorial, or tribal entities that provide services to benefit children from families with low incomes. Colorado’s office is housed within CDEC and contributes to the state systems for early care and education, which coordinate and regulate various services for children from birth to age five and their families. The state systems are designed to increase the effectiveness of early childhood services by linking young children and their families to the support they need.

In FY 2022-23, HSCO partnered with CDE, CDPHE, CDHS, DOLA, HCPF, CDLE, and CDHE to build pathways for Head Start families to access services that meet their unique needs; to collect data regarding early childhood programs and child outcomes; to support the expansion of high quality workforce opportunities for staff; and ensure alignment in educational, workforce, and health standards. The chart below details HSCO’s areas of collaboration across state agencies.

Agency	Collaboration Areas
CDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Special Education Part B for the support of students with an IEP ● Transitions to Kindergarten to support the continuity of care for Head Start families ● Early literacy standards to support school readiness for all students, such as assessments and READ Act alignment ● Migrant Education Program to provide equitable resources and supplemental support for eligible migrant children ● McKinney Vento Homeless Education to support the identification and resource provision for children experiencing homelessness ● Foster Care Education Program to strengthen the stability of Head Start students in foster care
CDHE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create pathways for early childhood professionals to access the trainings and credentials needed to meet Head Start standards
CDHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to family strengthening and support services for Head Start families in the child welfare system ● Access to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for eligible Head Start families
CDPHE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promotion of oral health and healthy eating resources ● The use of Maternal and Child Health Block Grant funding to support Head Start families’ economic mobility ● Participation on CDPHE’s Early Childhood Screening and Referral Policy Council to identify and implement policy and system changes that ensure all young children receive appropriate development screening and appropriate services
DOLA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to support and resources offered by DOLA’s Office of Homelessness Initiatives for eligible Head Start families
HCPF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment and lead screenings ● Promoting access to Medicaid services for eligible Head Start families by building connections between local Head Start programs and Medicaid’s Regional Accountability Entities
CDLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Partnership with the Office of New Americans to coordinate refugee families’ enrollment and to create workforce pathways for New Americans within Head Start programs

With the launch of Universal Preschool, HSCO has facilitated collaboration between state and local entities to ensure alignment between Head Start and Universal Preschool. HSCO hosts office hours for Head Start recipients and Universal Preschool leaders to support providers’ program alignment needs. In collaboration with the Region 8 Office of Head Start, HSCO and the Universal Preschool Program developed an informational memo to guide providers regarding. Additionally, HSCO participates in monthly Universal Preschool community-based advisory sessions intended to

strengthen Universal Preschool at the local level. HSCO's participation ensures alignment between Head Start Performance Standards and Universal Preschool Quality Standards.



APPENDIX

The table below includes additional details of collaboration for areas of work not covered in-depth in the report.

Strategic Goal	Collaborating Agencies	Topic	Details of Collaboration
Expand Access	CDHS, CDPHE, CSDB	Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Interagency (EHDI) Workgroup	CDHS is the recipient and CDEC is the co-principal of the federal Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) grant. This grant implements a system of screening, referral, and intervention for children who are deaf or hard of hearing from birth through the age of three. CDHS, CDEC, CDPHE and the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind (CSDB) all have certain responsibilities under the EHDI system. The four agencies have created the EHDI Workgroup to discuss agency responsibilities, data sharing needs, and gaps that may need to be addressed with the intention of creating an Interagency Agreement. An EHDI Steering Committee will be ongoing.
Expand Access	CDPHE	Economic Mobility and Family Well-being Shared FTE	CDEC and CDPHE hired a shared 1.0 FTE to promote economic mobility and family well-being and to align efforts through CDPHE, CDEC, CDHS, DOR, and local partners and programs. This position is term limited and is set to end on July 1, 2024.
Expand Access	CDPHE	Rules and Regulations Governing the Health and Sanitation of Child Care Facilities in the State of Colorado	CDPHE implements 6 CCR 1010-7, Rules and Regulations Governing the Health and Sanitation of Child Care Facilities in the State of Colorado. The regulations cover a wide variety of topics including but not limited to environmental hazards, disease control, and food safety (also includes infant feeding). The regulations apply to all licensed child care facilities, with the exception of neighborhood youth organizations and any home based care such as family child care homes and foster homes, and to 24 hour facilities such as residential child care centers. CDPHE delegates authority to local public health agencies and performs all inspection work in counties that do not have a local program. CDPHE partners closely with CDEC and CDHS on any regulation changes to avoid any duplication or conflict in regulations.
Expand Access	CDPHE	Child Care Immunizations	CDPHE reviewed and updated the Child Care Immunization Course, which is an annual requirement for child care providers who review immunization records offered on Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System (PDIS). CDPHE presented to CDEC and to local licensing specialists regarding school and child care immunization date reporting requirements and resources. CDPHE meets regularly with CDEC, CDE, and Healthy Child Care Colorado to understand barriers and build resources and tools to increase immunization uptake in this population.
Expand Access	CDPHE	Health Equity Commission	CDEC holds a seat on CDPHE's Health Equity Commission (HEC). HEC advises CDPHE through the Office of Health

			Equity on health equity issues, focusing on alignment, education, and capacity-building for state and local health programs and community-based organizations. In addition, the commission advises the Health Disparities and Community Grant Program and collaborates with CDPHE and the Governor's Office to develop a statewide equity report and strategic plan outlined in Senate Bill 21-181.
Expand Access	DPA	Employer Based Child Care	CDEC Employer Based Child Care Program staff meet monthly with the P3 Office in DPA to share projects that might be a good fit for P3 collaboration or Employer Based Child Care (EBCC) programs, including the EBCC facility grant and EBCC Design Lab, which is held in partnership with EPIC (Executives Partnering to Invest in Children). CDEC staff also share updates on upcoming EBCC grants and program opportunities through the monthly meetings and solicitation courtesy notices.
Expand Access, Strengthen Families	CDHS, HCPF	Coordination with County Human Service Directors	CDEC staff participate in weekly calls with CDHS, HCPF and county partners to provide information and address questions and concerns
Strengthen Families	CDHS, CDPHE	Family and Community Engagement	CDHS and CDPHE are partners consulted in a variety of initiatives in both agencies' Family and Community Engagement work. For example, CDHS's Community Engagement Director co-chairs a Family and Community Engagement Committee with CDEC, and many other state agencies, including CDPHE and HCPF, are members of the group. The purpose of the Committee is to create positive transformational outcomes for all Coloradans by aligning efforts between state agencies and community partners to ensure diversity, inclusion, representation, and accessibility, and reduce redundancy. Additionally, the Colorado Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework was developed to align to existing efforts from CDHS, CDPHE and CDE. CDPHE provides the federally-required data expertise and support (needs assessments, performance measurement, evaluation and quality improvement support) for home visiting programs, as well as population-level data for other programs. Finally, CDEC developed the Family Voice Council with support from CDHS and by building off the existing CDHS Family Voice Council. CDEC's Family Voice Council also connects with the CDPHE Community Advisory Board.
Strengthen Families	CDPHE, HCPF	Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant Steering Committee and Workgroups	CDPHE and HCPF have membership on CDEC's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant Steering Committee and Workgroups. The grant provides CDEC \$255,600 annually for five years (2021-2026) to complete activities that will advance Colorado's maternal and child health and early childhood systems of care. CDPHE provides data and evaluation support to identify strengths and needs, help prioritize activities and measure progress on objectives for federal funders and the state.
Strengthen	CDPHE	Economic Mobility and	CDEC programs share information on CDPHE's Get Ahead

Families		Family Supports	Colorado public information campaign promoting tax credit opportunities and referral to free tax filing services via CDEC communication channels and state meetings.
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