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**COLORADO FOUNDATIONS ANNOUNCE LAUNCH TOGETHER AWARDS**  
***Seven Community Partners Selected to Advance Children's Social and Emotional Health***

**DENVER— DECEMBER 22, 2015** – Seven Colorado communities were each awarded up to \$55,000 for a LAUNCH Together planning grant to promote the social and emotional health and well-being of children and families. Baby Bear Hugs, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Pueblo, Denver's Early Childhood Council, ECHO & Family Center Early Childhood Council, Jefferson Center for Mental Health, Mesa County Health Department and Tri-County Health Department, in partnership with community stakeholders, will participate in a seven-month strategic planning process to expand evidence-based prevention and promotion practices and enhance coordinated community systems. Seventeen community applications were submitted, covering a total of 44 counties in Colorado. At the end of the planning grant, the seven grantees will have developed a community vision for advancing children's social and emotional health and a strategic plan for implementation. Up to four of the seven communities awarded LAUNCH Together planning grants will move forward through a competitive application process to receive four-year implementation grants, totaling up to \$2M for each community.

The \$11.2M, five-year, multi-phase LAUNCH Together effort is possible through a unique and innovative collaboration between eight Colorado-based foundations: The Ben and Lucy Ana Walton Fund of the Walton Family Foundation, Buell Foundation, Caring for Colorado Foundation, the Colorado Health Foundation, Community First Foundation, Kaiser Permanente Colorado, The Piton Foundation at Gary Community Investments and Rose Community Foundation.

The LAUNCH Together initiative is inspired and informed by SAMHSA's (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) Project LAUNCH (Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children's Health) initiative and Colorado Project LAUNCH partners. The LAUNCH Together effort aims to:

- Invest in communities to plan and implement effective community-based strategies and infuse mental health expertise into a variety of child-serving settings
- Bring together public and private partners to communicate what works, raise awareness and support policy changes to sustain effective community practices
- Evaluate the project and provide technical assistance to grantees to be successful in their work

"The Caring for Colorado Foundation is proud to partner with other early childhood and health funding partners in the LAUNCH Together initiative. There is very strong interest in and need for this kind of work in communities across the state," said Caring for Colorado Foundation President and CEO, Chris Wiant, MPH, PhD. "Colorado is the first state in the nation to replicate this model in communities using private dollars. We're committed to this effort because improved social-emotional outcomes is a cornerstone of child well-being and is critical to success in school and beyond."

Despite great strides in the field, seventeen percent of children in the United States experience social-emotional, developmental or mental health problems, but less than half of these problems are detected prior to entering school. “The partnership between the privately- and publicly-funded LAUNCH efforts poises Colorado for transformative change at the state and local level. We have a shared vision and are committed to working together to improve outcomes for children and families across Colorado,” said Dr. Larry Wolk, Executive Director and Chief Medical Officer of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. LAUNCH Together is inspired by the Project LAUNCH efforts at the national and state level. The Colorado Department of Human Services is currently leading the Colorado Project LAUNCH effort, which was funded by SAMHSA in 2014, in partnership with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment with southern Adams County serving as a pilot community. Weld County received a federal Project LAUNCH award in 2010.

“LAUNCH Together will fuel more communities to better address gaps in early childhood social-emotional health,” said Lisa Jansen Thompson, Executive Director of the Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County and Board President of the Early Childhood Councils Leadership Alliance. “This is Colorado’s own unique and innovative take on fostering meaningful community partnerships. We are confident this effort will inform policy opportunities to ensure these effective strategies are sustained in communities across Colorado,” said Jennifer Stedron, PhD, Executive Director of Early Milestones Colorado. Early Milestones Colorado was selected as the lead agency for LAUNCH Together to oversee program administration, communications efforts and technical assistance to community partners. The effort will not only raise awareness and understanding of early social-emotional development, but integrate and connect children’s health and development systems to ensure stronger outcomes for kids and families.

LAUNCH Together communities will focus their strategic planning efforts around five key prevention and wellness promotion strands of work: 1) the integration of behavioral health into primary care; 2) mental health consultation in early care and education settings; 3) enhanced home visiting services; 4) family strengthening and parent education; and 5) screening and assessment. For more information, visit [www.launchtogethercolorado.org](http://www.launchtogethercolorado.org).

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#### *About Early Milestones Colorado*

Early Milestones Colorado (Milestones) is a nonprofit intermediary organization that connects community and state partners to innovation, best practices and systems improvements. Milestones accelerates the bridging of high-impact ideas with key stakeholders so that collectively, we help all children develop to their full potential. Learn more at [www.earlymilestones.org](http://www.earlymilestones.org).

