



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COLORADO HISTORY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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In the past 30 years Colorado has made significant strides to support young children birth to eight, and their families. State leaders understand that Colorado prospers when children thrive: they are our future workforce, leaders, and community members. This report tells the story of the continued drive to increase access to quality services and supports that help all children reach their potential, regardless of personal or social circumstances.

In reflecting on Colorado’s past 30 years of progress in early childhood, several major themes have emerged.

Children and Families are Central to Early Childhood Work

The needs of the families of young children, the inter-connected nature of children’s health and development, and the importance of community in effective service coordination and delivery have guided major improvements in quality, access, equity, and governance.

A Collective, Sustained Vision is Essential to Early Childhood Successes

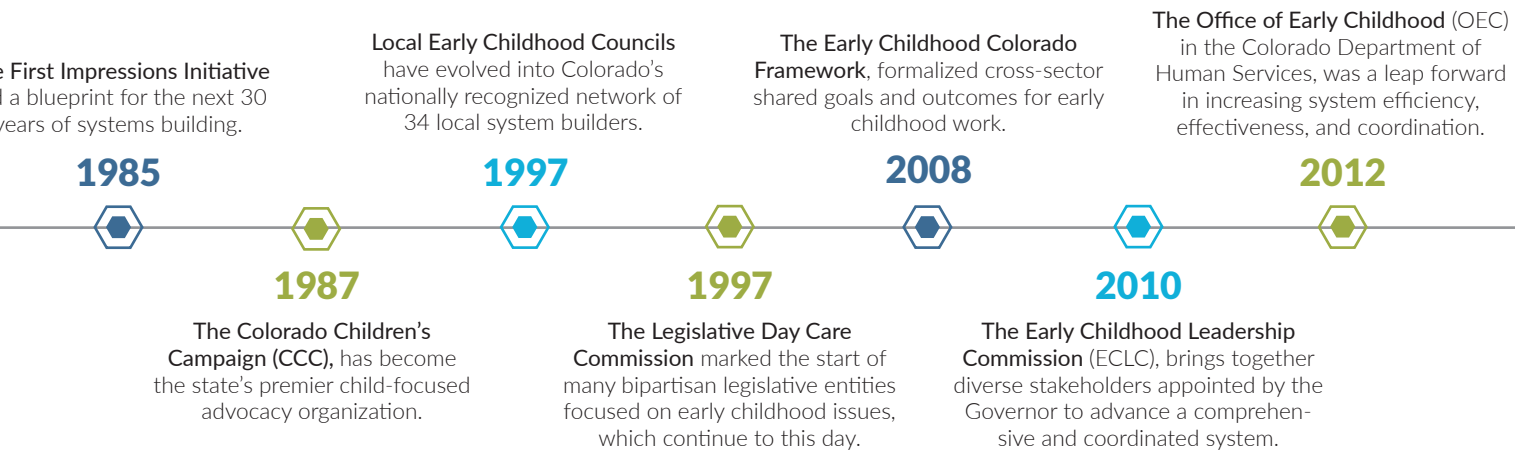
Colorado is remarkable in maintaining a consistent vision for the field that has guided progress for more than 30 years.

The Who, What, and How is Driven by the Colorado Context

The Western values of smaller government, limited taxing and spending, and an emphasis on collaborating to solve problems, have resulted in some consistent approaches to how quality, access, and equity decisions are made and implemented.

- **The Who.** Progress is made through ongoing dialogue among those inside and outside of government and among state and local stakeholders.
- **The What.** Progress is often the result of deliberate, multi-stakeholder created strategic plans that don’t just sit on a shelf. Plans are implemented, improved upon, and when the work is accomplished, the cycle begins anew.
- **The How.** When Coloradans tell their story of collaboration nationally, we are often met with amazement. We work together because child development is a multi-domain and multi-dimensional endeavor and because, to really address individual child and family needs and conditions, all perspectives are critical.

Early childhood requires a comprehensive cross-systems approach. Major systems-building accomplishments include:



In the past thirty years, Colorado has achieved significant quality, access, and equity gains across the early childhood system sectors. Accomplishments include:

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Child Care and Early Learning. Beginning in 1997 with one of the first quality rating and improvement systems, Colorado has made great strides in advancing the quality of licensed early care and learning programs. The quality of all licensed child care programs is now rated through the Office of Early Childhood’s Colorado Shines program. Over 40% of children receiving subsidies through the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) now attend high-quality child care and early learning programs.

Workforce Investments. Colorado has experienced almost two decades of progress in supporting early learning professional development. Major improvements include improved credentialing and the alignment of higher education programs. Through the early childhood workforce registry and learning management system launched in 2015, over 46,000 professionals have completed courses.

The Colorado Preschool Program (CPP). Started in 1988 as a pilot program, CPP now serves more than 20,000 children with a variety of risk factors. More than 80% of participating children in 2016-2017 entered kindergarten meeting or exceeding widely held developmental expectations for their age.

Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK). Currently, more than three of every four kindergarteners are enrolled in full-day kindergarten, an approximately 78% expansion since the early 2000s.

FAMILY SUPPORT AND EDUCATION

Family Resource Centers. The emphasis on family-centered support starting in the 1990s resulted in the piloting and expansion of family resource centers that provide comprehensive, integrated support for families. Currently, more than 56,000 people in 44 counties are served annually through the 29 centers.

Home Visiting Services. Nationally validated home visiting programs were first introduced to the state in 1989 and are now available in every Colorado county. Home visiting programs expanded significantly when federal funds became available in 2011.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Heath Insurance Access. Between 2013-2016, Colorado reduced by 50% the number of uninsured children, making Colorado one of the top states for coverage.

Medical Homes.. Colorado was an early adopter of this responsive, team-based approach to pediatric care that includes early identification. Since 2005, Colorado has focused on developmental screening and referral to improve child development outcomes.

Intergrated Care. Because coordinated care results in both better patient outcomes and cost savings, recently the state moved to restructure Colorado’s Medicaid program, joining physical and behavioral health under one regional administrative entity. Specific efforts around dental integration have resulted in preventing dental caries in children.

Early Childhood Mental Health. Integrated and systemic approaches to improving early childhood mental health have continued to expand over the last 30 years, and Colorado is now a national leader in mental health education, prevention, promotion, and community systems-building.

LOOKING AHEAD

While Colorado has made remarkable progress in shaping an effective early childhood system that serves children and families, the work is not finished. Persistent, systemic barriers stand in the way of improved family stability, health and well-being, and child learning and achievement. The early childhood community has ideas about how Colorado can remove these barriers and improve outcomes –what we need is the will to enact and implement these ideas. It’s up to all of us to work together to sustain gains and create new solutions for Colorado’s young children and their families.