

# COLORADO'S EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION WORKFORCE



**Early childhood educators** are a major contributor to a child's healthy development. High-quality early care and education (ECE) results in many short- and long-term benefits to children and families, and a stable and skilled workforce is the key to quality. Yet, communities across Colorado lack the workforce needed to provide these important services to families.



## DEMAND IS GROWING

Colorado's population of children under the age of four is expected to increase by 10% in the next two years and 22% by 2026.



## SUPPLY IS INADEQUATE

70% of ECE program directors report difficulty finding qualified staff. The field also suffers from high turnover; approximately one-third of ECE staff leave their jobs annually, which is a rate four times greater than in elementary schools.



## STRONGER ECE WORKFORCE, STRONGER FAMILIES

The ECE industry is unique because its services enable parents of young children with the opportunity to work.

## ABOUT EARLY MILESTONES COLORADO.

We are an independent organization helping to advance innovative solutions that improve policies and practices in early childhood development. We work with state and local partners to exchange ideas, share resources, and create lasting, positive change for children.



EARLY **MILESTONES**  
COLORADO

ADVANCING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN'S SUCCESS

## WHAT WORKS

It is critical to ensure that new early educators enter the field and the existing workforce stays in their job. A recent survey shows that the most important retention factors in this industry include increased compensation and improved working conditions. Communities across Colorado have piloted innovative approaches and found success in strengthening the ECE workforce through:



**STREAMLINED QUALIFICATIONS & TRAINING.** Through accelerated programs that include supports like career navigation, mentor teachers, and cultural consciousness training, more than 40 new educators joined the ECE workforce in Denver and Larimer counties.



**CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT.** After piloting the P-TEACH program with 17 students, St. Vrain Valley School District now has more than 55 high school students enrolled to become early childhood educators in partnership with the University of Colorado Denver. In 2019, 27 high school students in La Plata County completed ECE coursework in partnership with Pueblo Community College, and an estimated 31 students will complete courses next year.



**APPRENTICESHIPS.** Red Rocks Community College recruited 70 people to its federally registered ECE apprenticeship since the program re-launched in 2018. A pilot to expand this program to 15 Colorado counties is underway.



**SCHOLARSHIPS.** In 2019, over 125 Coloradans applied for T.E.A.C.H. scholarships (a national scholarship model focused on ECE workforce compensation and retention) with funding available to award scholarships to just 78 applicants. Local scholarship models are also successful. In La Plata County, scholarships to participate in the Early Childhood Intensive Institute at Fort Lewis College resulted in thirteen new early childhood educators and two new ECE program directors.

## THE ECONOMY DEPENDS ON OUR ECE WORKFORCE



### QUALITY INVESTMENT NOW

Every dollar spent on ECE services contributes \$2.25 to the state's economy by enabling parents of young children to work.



### REVENUE CREATION

In 2014, Colorado's ECE sector generated \$639.7 million in revenue, comparable to the advertising industry.



### INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

Children who attend quality ECE are more likely to have increased lifetime earnings and are less likely to require public assistance, resulting in an additional \$832 million contributed annually to the state's economy.

### COMPENSATION IS AN ONGOING CONCERN

The average annual income of ECE professionals is just above the poverty threshold for a family of four. Early childhood educators have similar responsibilities to their peers in K-12. However, ECE wages are comparable to low-paid service jobs, such as hairstylists and dog walkers.

