



Progress Report

Colorado communities advancing children's
social-emotional health

May 2020



EARLY MILESTONES
COLORADO



UNIVERSITY of
DENVER

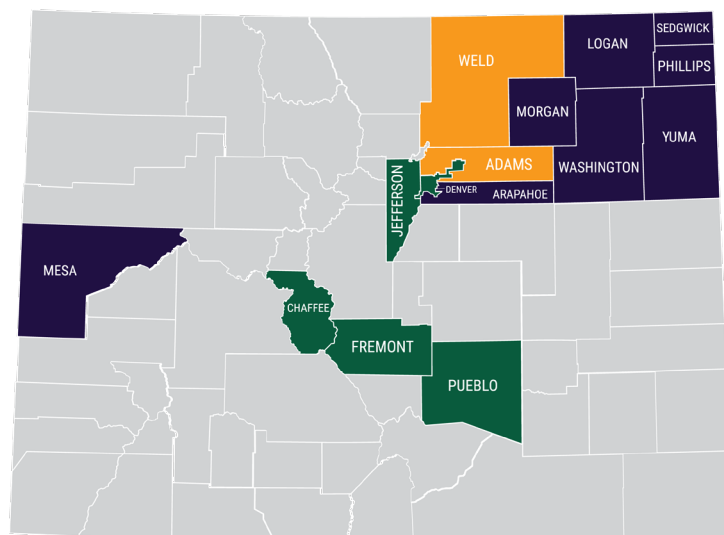
BUTLER INSTITUTE FOR FAMILIES
Graduate School of Social Work

earlymilestones.org/launch-together

About the Initiative

LAUNCH Together is a unique partnership between Early Milestones Colorado, eight Colorado-based foundations, 13 counties, and the Butler Institute for Families. It is designed to improve social-emotional and developmental outcomes for Colorado's young children and families. The initiative supports system-level collaboration to improve local infrastructure, streamline services, and infuse knowledge around early childhood mental health (ECMH).

Building on earlier work in Weld and Adams counties under the Project LAUNCH initiative, communities were selected in 2015 to create local, shared visions for early childhood social-emotional health with a focus on reducing mental health disparities among vulnerable populations. In 2016, five counties received four-year implementation grants to execute their visions. This report covers the first three years of implementation.



Communities in Action



MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTATION IN ECE

To ensure early care and education (ECE) providers can support children's social-emotional development and manage challenging behaviors, **10,463** hours of on-site mental health consultation services were provided to **69** ECE programs and **2,369** ECE providers were trained in social-emotional well-being and behavioral health.



ENHANCED HOME VISITING

Home visitors increased their ability to support the mental health of the families they serve through **2,920** mental health consultations, **2,834** hours of reflective supervision, and **1,702** hours of case consultation.



SCREENING, ASSESSMENT, & REFERRAL

Nearly **13,500** screenings of children's social-emotional development, maternal mental health, and adverse childhood experiences were completed, with **925** screenings resulting in a referral to additional services.



FAMILY STRENGTHENING

The relationship between young children and their parents or other primary caregivers is a strong foundation to support healthy development. Through this initiative, **9,882** hours of parenting education and skills training was provided to **1,084** families.



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IN PRIMARY CARE

80 pediatricians, family physicians, and primary care providers received training on children's social-emotional health, and **1,894** primary care visits involved an early childhood behavioral health consultation.

LAUNCH Together is supported by eight Colorado-based foundations that provide funding and serve as the project advisory team. Thank you to the Buell Foundation, Caring for Colorado Foundation, The Colorado Health Foundation, Community First Foundation, Kaiser Permanente, The Piton Foundation at Gary Community Investments, Rose Community Foundation, and ZOMA Foundation.

Highlights from Communities

Local leaders focused on ECMH have come together to **coordinate community systems** and **enhance services** across five strategies to better serve children and families. The community champions leading this effort are Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Pueblo, Chaffee County Early Childhood Council, Denver's Early Childhood Council, ECHO & Family Center Early Childhood Council, and Jefferson Center.

MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTATION IN ECE

A new suspension and expulsion policy in **Pueblo** encourages ECE staff to include a mental health consultant when working with a child facing expulsion.

In **Southwest Denver**, family, friend, and neighbor providers are participating in ECMH trainings and consultation services.

An adaptation of the Kid Connects ECMH model is implemented at ECE sites in **Chaffee** and **Fremont**.

SCREENING, ASSESSMENT, & REFERRAL

All early childhood welfare cases in **Fremont** are assigned a personal coordinator to streamline access to screening and referral services.

Pueblo developed a shared-decision making tool to improve the coordination of screening, assessment, and referral practices across the community.

A successful pilot within **Jefferson's** early intervention program resulted in increased navigation support for families with children at risk of child welfare involvement.



FAMILY STRENGTHENING

Caregivers in **Southwest Denver** have participated in trainings to increase their awareness of children's social-emotional health and improve their skills to lead community change.

Jefferson and **Pueblo** created local websites to provide resources on children's social-emotional development.

Chaffee and **Fremont** implemented Seedlings, a program intended to break the link between parental history of toxic stress, and the effects of that stress on children.

ENHANCED HOME VISITING

All counties offer the *Colorado Foundations* course and reflective supervision to home visitors to support the integration of mental health into their programs.

Jefferson is piloting a centralized home visitation and referral model that will provide a single-entry point for families to connect with services.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IN PRIMARY CARE

A primary care practice in **Chaffee** integrated a Behavioral Health Care Manager to participate in well-child exams and weekly care conferences with expansion to other practices underway.

All **Fremont** medical practices now use the same form for referring children to community services to streamline the process for families.

Denver Health created a new position tasked with ensuring all community clinics have capacity to deliver high-quality mental health services to families with young children.

Local Lessons



LEADERSHIP IS ESSENTIAL.

Leaders from every level of participating organizations must be engaged, from knowledge-building through system change. This will ensure a commitment to sustainability and develop stronger community partnerships.



GROW YOUR OWN.

Investing in and building capacity among local residents who have personal, long-standing community ties is one solution to shortages within the ECMH workforce, particularly for rural areas.



READINESS TAKES TIME.

More time than expected was needed to develop meaningful relationships and build the necessary knowledge to motivate behavior and system-level change.



BUILDING PUBLIC WILL IS HARD, BUT IMPORTANT.

In order to achieve meaningful policy change, more awareness of ECMH and its connections to overall health and school readiness is needed.



REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION BENEFITS EVERYONE.

Consistent time for collaborative reflection is a valuable and essential practice for almost all providers working with young children and their families.



DATA IS POWERFUL.

Shared data and common metric goals are crucial for effective and sustained system coordination.

“The whole community is trying to make sure that any place that families go, they get an opportunity for what they need to succeed, and we’re all working at it together.

– **Community Partner**

What's Needed



ELEVATE LOCAL VOICE. Include and promote the voices of LAUNCH Together partners, including families, who have a deep understanding of local resources and challenges to support the development of any legislation or implementation strategies for statewide ECMH-related efforts.



BUILD A SKILLED WORKFORCE. Ensure a variety of pathways to achieving higher education are available to support all Colorado communities as they work to grow their own.



ENSURE STATEWIDE ALIGNMENT & COORDINATION. Create an ECMH leadership group to identify and promote shared priorities for collaborative work, and ensure ECMH is elevated within broader mental health prevention and promotion initiatives.



MAKE ACCESS CONSISTENT. Increase public funding to ensure availability of ECMH services in urban, rural, and frontier areas of the state.