

EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL
LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



@ECCLACOLORADO

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

At the start of 2021, ECCLA embarked on a strategic planning journey resulting in a refreshed and renewed vision, mission, and priorities. With this new focus, ECCLA worked throughout the year to advocate for and strengthen the early childhood system across the state through a responsive statewide system of Early Childhood Councils. And what a year it has been! With the dawn of a new Colorado Department of Early Childhood, the promise of universal preschool for all four year olds, and unprecedented federal investments in early care and education through stimulus funding, 2021 has been busy.

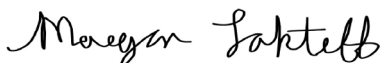
In 2021, ECCLA continued to support and strengthen local infrastructure and capacity through membership services for its 34-member Councils. Over 450 hours of technical assistance were provided to members to support professional development and capacity building within local communities. A primary focus of 2021 was the development of a Shared Measurement Tool, co-created by Early Childhood Councils, the Office of Early Childhood, and ECCLA that will help tell the remarkable story of how Early Childhood Councils are making and impact on key measurements for early childhood across the state.

ECCLA provided a strong and unified voice at the State Capitol. With members statewide, ECCLA's advocacy brings a unique lens that considers how policy will impact every corner of the state, from rural and frontier to urban population centers and more. We continue to advocate for policies which equitably meet the needs of *all* children, families, and professionals across the state.

ECCLA continued to build core programs serving the early childhood workforce. In 2021 approximately \$400,000 was invested in the workforce through the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholarship Program and the Family Child Care Home Initiative, touching the care and education of over 4,000 of Colorado's young children. In late 2021 ECCLA expanded workforce supports by adding the Back to Work: Early Childhood Education Scholarship program. With the goal of supporting 225 new early childhood professionals whose employment was impacted by the pandemic, ECCLA hopes that together, Back to Work and T.E.A.C.H. will make a significant impact on recruitment and retention of professionals in the field.

We are excited to see how far we have come and undaunted by the work ahead. As we lean into 2022, ECCLA looks forward to delivering on our mission and ensure our vision of a comprehensive early childhood system that promotes thriving young children, families, communities becomes a reality.

Sincerely,



Maegan Lokteff, PhD
Executive Director

ABOUT US



MISSION

ECCLA advocates for and strengthens the accessibility, quality, and equity of local services and supports through a responsive statewide system of Early Childhood Councils, to benefit Colorado's young children, their families, and early childhood professionals.



VISION

Colorado's comprehensive early childhood system promotes thriving young children, their families, and communities.



WHO WE ARE

As the membership association for Early Childhood Councils, we provide technical assistance and capacity building, leverage policy and advocacy, scale innovation, improve workforce supports for early childhood professionals, advance collective impact, and facilitate partnerships. In collaboration with Early Childhood Councils, our efforts enable us to effectively align, leverage, scale, and lead solutions that contribute to building and supporting Colorado's robust early childhood system.

VALUES



STRATEGIC DIRECT SERVICES



BACK TO WORK

BACK TO WORK: COSI SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Early childhood professionals are the workforce behind Colorado's workforce, and our early childhood workforce is facing pressures like never before as classrooms close due to shortages and the cost of providing care. Prior to the pandemic, 70 percent of programs reported challenges in finding qualified staff, and since the pandemic began over 10 percent of child care professionals report they will

not return to the field, according to an Early Milestones Colorado report. ECCLA is a proud recipient of the new Back to Work Grant through the Colorado Department of Higher Education's Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative program, supporting early childhood professionals impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Building on and working with ECCLA's existing T.E.A.C.H. Colorado Scholarship Program, the Back to Work program will provide a model for recruiting displaced workers into the early childhood field and helping them to obtain the education and certification needed to access higher paying early care and education jobs.

T.E.A.C.H. EARLY CHILDHOOD® COLORADO SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Colorado's child care availability is nowhere near meeting the need, with only enough licensed slots for 45 percent of the 256,000 children birth to age six with working parents. T.E.A.C.H. is a national strategy to support increased capacity and quality for young children and increasing education and wages for early childhood

professionals. ECCLA is Colorado's home for the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholarship Program, and we see major impacts for wages and retention for professionals who participate in the program.

[Find the the complete 2021 T.E.A.C.H report here](#)

T.E.A.C.H. WAGE AND RETENTION IMPACT

\$15.66 average wage at the start of the program

11% average wage increase upon program completion

93% of scholars are retained by their early childhood employer throughout the required work commitment (removing turnover due to the pandemic). Only two recipients quit their jobs due to the pandemic.





FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME FACILITIES IMPROVEMENT GRANT

In 2021 ECCLA awarded \$240,000 to 60 Family Child Care Home (FCCH) providers across Colorado. Since the inception of the Family Child Care Home Improvement Grant Initiative in 2020, ECCLA has awarded \$399,000 to 105 family child care homes across 32 counties in Colorado. These funds have been used for facilities improvements focused on expanding licensed capacity, health, safety, and quality improvement.

Building and maintaining a FCCH can be challenging, and we've seen many FCCH providers struggle to keep their doors open for the past several years. The Covid-19 pandemic has made it even more challenging for FCCH providers, and many have relied on grants or outside funding to stay open and support parents and caregivers to work and their children can learn and grow.



VOICES FROM THE FIELD

“

Thank you for helping me breathe life into this home that plans to nurture children for many more years. The biggest barrier for me in the operation of my business for the last 30 years has always been trying to bridge the gap between 'what parents can afford to pay' and 'what I need to charge to remain in business.' Unfortunately, what is left for wages after providing quality care for the children (food, activities, and supplies/equipment, utilities), simply does not allow enough cash flow for major building upkeep. Your grant helped me with some much-needed repairs and replacements to this dedicated play area.

-Gloria Bergner, Phillips County

”

345

Applications

\$1.6M

Requested

105

Awards

\$399K

Awarded



Impacted
773
Children



Grant Recipients

Increased
Capacity by
34%

Across
32
Counties

Start-up costs, fencing, heating, windows, concrete repairs, shade, fall zones, health and safety licensing concerns



Funding High Priorities

Reaching Communities in Need

52% of awards were made in child care deserts





DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD AND UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL

The 2021 Legislative Session saw landmark early childhood legislation with the passage of House Bill 21-1304, calling for the creation of a new Department of Early Childhood by July 2022. This is a significant step for our state in formally recognizing the immense educational and economic impact of the early childhood years. By creating a new state-level department, Colorado's early childhood system of support will now be addressed at the same level as higher education, K-12 education, and public health.

ECCLA looks forward to working in partnership in 2022 with its 34-member Early Childhood Councils to continue to support the development and implementation of the work of the new department, including Universal Preschool (UPK). ECCLA was pleased to participate in the Transition Advisory Group (TAG), which supported and informed the development of recommendations for the DEC and UPK which are now being considered by the Colorado legislature. ECCLA will advocate for the implementation of these recommendations, which highlight coordinating systems across state and local levels, and ensuring local implementation is supported within the new Department.

ECCLA 2022 POLICY PRIORITIES



Advocate for a unified Department of Early Childhood (DEC) and local infrastructure supports for DEC Universal Preschool, including Councils and Child Care Resource and Referral services as foundational



Advocate for workforce strategies supporting recruitment, retention, and quality with access to programs and scholarships for professionals



Ensure all Colorado children have access to universal preventive and developmental screening, referral, and follow-up



Build connections across local programming and partnerships to ensure family strengthening services and policy and advocacy alignment

MEMBERSHIP RESOURCES

COACHING: C4 AND COACHING COMPETENCIES WORKGROUP

In an effort to align coaching supports and communications across the state, ECCLA has convened the Coaching Connections and Collaboration Committee (C4). This diverse group of stakeholders all have a vested interest in the success and growth of early childhood coaches across the state. By gathering once a month, we are able to share upcoming professional development opportunities, as well as, brainstorm how to build out a sustainable support system for both new and experienced coaches.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

ECCLA works to strengthen Council leaders through providing supports that equip them to meet their community's needs. This includes membership meetings, Hot Topic Calls, and other professional development opportunities. ECCLA also engages with key partners in the Colorado early childhood landscape which align with Council initiatives.

SHARED MEASUREMENT TOOL

ECCLA is digging deeper into evaluation and impact of Councils in communities and systems. A primary focus of 2021 was the development of a Shared Measurement Tool, co-created by Early Childhood Councils, the Office of Early Childhood, and ECCLA that would help tell the remarkable story of how local Early Childhood Councils are moving the needle on key indicators for early childhood across the state.

2021 Membership Resources Snapshot

450

HOURS OF TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE OFFERED TO
MEMBERS

KEY TOPICS AND LEARNING
AREAS

LANGUAGE JUSTICE

DATA AND EVALUATION

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION
STRATEGIES

MEMBER VOICES



"As a Council, being a member of ECCLA supports our ability to have a collective voice as well as an approach to supporting young children, families, and early care and education providers across Colorado. We have opportunities to share best practices, support the full Colorado early childhood system, and raise awareness about the importance of these critical years towards improved policy and increased investment. The past two years with the pandemic have brought greater recognition of this work and having a shared path to leverage this opportunity is amazing! "

Lisa Jansen Thompson, Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County



"ECCLA is an incredible resource for Early Childhood Councils across the state. This organization is vital to Early Childhood Council work, with their ability to create a collective voice for Councils, while honoring individual community needs. ECCLA staff meets regularly with state partners, stays abreast of policy change, provides important information and resources to each Council and is able to make vital connections for us."

Sherri Valdez, Early Childhood Council of the San Luis Valley



"I was delighted to play an active role in ECCLA's strategic planning process in 2021. As a Council leader and ECCLA Board Chair, I am eager to see ECCLA continue to increase its role as a systems builder to support children and families to thrive in Colorado, along with providing excellent resources, trainings, and support to its members."

Danielle Butler, Early Childhood Council of Boulder County



STAFF, BOARD, AND SUPPORTERS

STAFF

Maegan Lokteff, PhD, Executive Director
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Esperanza Ybarra

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Thank you to our staff, board members, partners, and Early Childhood Councils for a successful year advancing Colorado's early childhood system!

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