

Department of Early Childhood Transition Plan **DRAFT**

October 2021



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is the culmination of intensive work by stakeholders across the state of Colorado, including the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC); the Transition Advisory Group (TAG); the four Subgroups: 1. Transformative Governance, Operations and Funding, 2. Special Education Service Delivery, 3. Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability, 4. Universal Preschool Implementation; the Transition Working Group (TWG); and participants of ECLC listening sessions, town halls, and other engagement events. The work of these teams and individuals built upon the strong foundation of engagement by organizations such as the Colorado Children’s Campaign, the Women’s Foundation of Colorado, and Early Milestones Colorado.

Transition Working Group (TWG): HB21-1304 created the TWG and charged this group with the development of a Transition Plan for the Department of Early Childhood and recommendations for a new statewide, universal, voluntary preschool program.

ECLC Co-Chairs

Pamela Harris, Ph.D. - President & CEO,
Mile High Early Learning

Susan Steele - President & CEO, Buell Foundation

Tom Massey - Deputy Executive Director,
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Representatives from Existing Departments

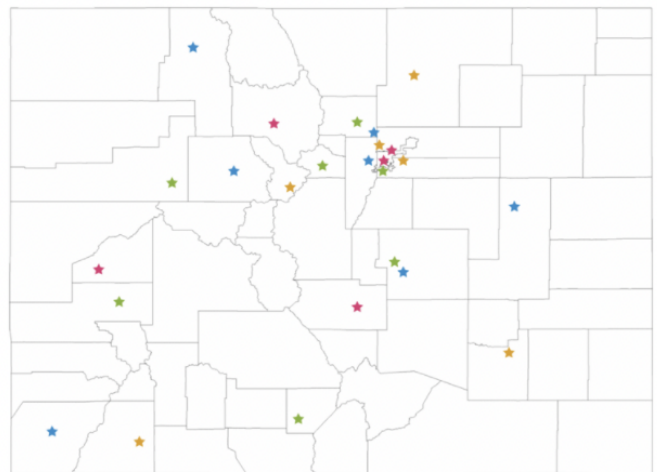
Ben Henderson - Director of Operations and Cabinet
Affairs for Governor Jared Polis

Carrie Cortiglio - Director of Prevention Services
Division-Colorado, Department of Public Health and
Environment

Katy Anthes, Ph.D. - Colorado Commissioner of
Education

Michelle Barnes - Executive Director, Colorado
Department of Human Services

Transition Advisory Group (TAG): The ECLC convened TAG to advise the TWG and ensure that this process is grounded in the recommendations of a diverse group of stakeholders.¹ TAG is composed of 56 community leaders who offer a wide array of diverse public and private perspectives to ensure the recommendations reflect the full spectrum of early childhood programs and services. This includes parents, members of the early childhood workforce, providers, school districts, human services leaders, local Early Childhood Councils, and other stakeholders representing under-served and under-resourced communities.



¹ See Appendix 3 for more detailed information about TAG members.

TAG Members²

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Subgroups: Four Subgroups were convened and open to the public to offer comprehensive insight in key areas:

- Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding
- Universal Preschool Implementation
- Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability
- Special Education Service Delivery

Facilitators from Early Milestones Colorado, in partnership with Marzano Research and the Colorado Education Initiative, then elevated themes and concerns from these sessions to TAG, which made recommendations to be considered by TWG.

The Special Education Service Delivery subgroup, specifically named in the legislation, included 37 seated members and offered reports directly to the TWG.

Special Education Subgroup Members³

Alisha Lacombe-Emile • Alison Hargarten • Amy Kilgour • Bill Jaeger • Cheryl Caldwell • Christy Scott • Clare Vickland • Corinne DePersis • Dana Richardson • Danae Davison • Dawn Klco • Diana Herrera • Dinah Frey • Eileen Sullivan Kratzer • Heather Hicks • Heidi White • Jane Miyahara • Jennifer Levin • Jennifer Yates • Jon Paul Burden • Julie Knowles • Kayla Marcella • Linda Meredith • Lisa S. Franklin • Lisa Trautwein • Liz Costaldo • Lucinda Hundley • Moe Keller • Nazia Hasan • Olivia Coyne • Paul Foster, Ed.D. • Rashida Banerjee • Rhonda Palic • Rick Simms • Shannon Secrest • T Vail Shoultz McCole • Tammy Johnson • Taran Schneider

² <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1O3WaelF6BjuoW2ikyW9CFsH12erAw6Bu/view>

³ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1N-lxM9PI9VwHYzit06Rr1ffwyBArGwf/view>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Colorado has a decades-long commitment to improving the early care and education experiences of young children and families. In June 2021, HB21-1304 established the Department of Early Childhood (DEC) and required the creation of a Transition Plan to be presented to the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC), the Governor, and the General Assembly. This Transition Plan is the culmination of months of work by stakeholders, the Transition Advisory Group (TAG), Subgroups, and the Transition Working Group (TWG). A second report with recommendations on the new statewide universal, voluntary preschool program will be presented to the ECLC on January 1, 2022, and will be submitted to the legislature no later than January 15, 2022.

Key Recommendations

In this report, TWG recommends DEC:

- **Adopt mission, vision, values, and guiding principles.** These statements will help ground the new department in a vision set forth by stakeholders across the state.
- **Administer the following programs:**
 - All programs currently located in the Department of Human Services-- Office of Early Childhood (OEC)
 - Colorado Preschool Program (CPP)/Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE), which will be unified with the new statewide universal, voluntary, preschool program by the start of the 2023-2024 school year
 - Early Childhood Workforce Development
 - Additional programs should be revisited by July 2025
- **Establish a Rules and Regulations Advisory Council.** This group would facilitate meaningful advice, consultation, and collaboration regarding rulemaking guidance.
- **Provide the Executive Director final rulemaking authority.** By doing so, the DEC will maintain a unified and cohesive vision.
- **Build an equity-focused leadership team.** The leadership team should bring a diverse set of skills, backgrounds, and deep expertise.
- **Organize program delivery around functions of the early childhood system.** Implementing this approach, rather than organizing around the administration of individual programs and grants, creates more cohesion for the field and flexibility in program delivery.

- **Address funding challenges identified by families and providers by:**
 - Revising rules and regulations to ensure more flexibility with funds and reduce administrative burdens while ensuring equitable use of those funds.
 - Creating and utilizing a single application and eligibility verification for families.
 - Blending and braiding state dollars before releasing allocations to localities.
 - Empowering communities to lead and innovate based on their local context.
 - Evaluating community readiness for launching the universal preschool program.

- **Utilize technology and data to make informed decisions for children and families in Colorado by:**
 - Collecting data that provides additional information on system capacity, including number of open or closed classrooms, number of current teachers and workforce shortages, and overall availability of slots and current vacancies.
 - Implementing a child count process that provides insight into the unique number of children served at every publicly-funded site, across programs and funding sources, including unique identifiers when available, to encourage seamless K-12 integration while fully respecting the privacy of every student and family.
 - Ensuring that the child count process captures the number of children served by Colorado Shines quality level.
 - Coordinating and requiring the collection of data in a way that does not burden providers and families.

DEC has an opportunity to change the way families and children interact with government systems. The unification of early childhood programs and services under one governing structure meets families and children where they are, offering them a single place where they can gain access to all aspects of the early childhood system. While these recommendations will require state support, if they are funded and implemented, the TWG envisions a future in which all Colorado children, families, and early childhood professionals are valued, healthy, and thriving.

Timeline

November 1-15 2021	Submission of Transition Plan Governor's budget will be submitted November 1. After approval by the ECLC, by Nov. 15, TWG will submit the approved plan to legislative committees.
December 1 2021	Presentation to Legislature TWG presents approved transition plan to the Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission.
January 1-15 2022	Submission of New Preschool Programs Recommendations By January 1, 2022, the TWG will submit its recommendations for the new statewide, voluntary preschool program to the ECLC. After approval, TWG will submit the plan to legislative committees.
January-May 2022	Legislative Action Between January and May, the legislature will convene to determine the necessary actions to operationalize the movement of all programs and funding sources to DEC.
July 2022	Launch of DEC DEC becomes operational with the initial group of programs transitioning to the new department.
July 2023	Launch of New Preschool Program DEC is responsible for the launch of the statewide, voluntary preschool program that provides 10 hours of free, high quality preschool to all 4 year old Coloradoan children. CPP financial administration will move to DEC from CDE.
July 2025	Re-Evaluation of DEC After 3 years of operation, DEC shall review its governance structure and consider the movement of additional programs to the department.

BACKGROUND ON EARLY CHILDHOOD IN COLORADO

Highlighting the Importance of Early Childhood

Research is clear: Investing in early childhood is essential to supporting working families, child development, and a prosperous economy. The window from birth to age 5 is critical in a child's development. In the first few years of life, more than 1 million new neural connections form every second.⁴ The experiences children have in the first five years of their life lay the foundation for their future. Research shows when those experiences are not high quality, children are less likely to perform well in school, graduate on time, and have healthy and successful adult lives.⁵

Due to inequitable access to resources during this critical period in a child's life, children from underserved and under-resourced communities often enter kindergarten behind their more affluent and better resourced peers. Investments in the early childhood system that increase access to services have shown to mitigate this opportunity gap and the generational cycle of poverty.⁶ The benefits of high-quality early childhood services extend beyond just gains in early reading and math, with longitudinal studies also illustrating reduced grade retention, reduced placement in special education, increased likelihood of attending a four-year university, better earnings, and reduced crime.⁷

For more than 30 years, the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP), within its limited capacity, has seen these benefits for child outcomes, and the creation of this new department seeks to build upon these successes. Research on children enrolled in programs receiving CPP funding shows: (1) reduction in grade retention, (2) fewer children identified with significant reading deficiencies, and (3) higher high school graduation rates than children with risk factors that did not participate in a CPP funded program.⁸

In addition to the benefits for children, increased access to early childhood programs has enormous implications for working families. The opportunity for accessible and high-quality care and learning experiences for children empowers caregivers, who are mostly women, to remain in or re-enter the workforce, advance skills, and earn income, which boosts the economy as a whole.⁹

“The early childhood development system has not only done wonders for [my daughter], her education, and her socialization with other children but also for myself.”

- *George Davis V
Parent, TAG
Member, and
Clayton Parent
Ambassador*

⁴ <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/brain-architecture/>

⁵ <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/aer.103.6.2052>

⁶ https://www.policymattersohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/pre-kpinch_Nov2008_report.pdf

⁷ https://www.policymattersohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/pre-kpinch_Nov2008_report.pdf

⁸ <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cpp/2021cplegreport>

⁹ <https://www.ffyf.org/why-it-matters/support-working-families/>

Overview of Early Childhood Accomplishments in Colorado

Colorado has a decades-long commitment to improving the early care and education experiences of young children and families. Throughout this history, early childhood stakeholders have remained focused on ensuring quality early development and learning experiences, prioritizing the health and wellbeing of all children, providing support and education for families, and building a more unified, effective early childhood system. Highlights include¹⁰:

- 1988: Created the Colorado Preschool Program, a high-quality preschool program for children experiencing risk factors.
- 1995: Established a child care quality rating system that identified indicators of a quality setting and ensured families understood their early childhood care and education options.
- 1997: Formalized the first legislative commission on early childhood education policy to provide a leadership role for the General Assembly in early childhood.
- 2007: Charged Early Childhood Councils with positively impacting services through local coordination, capacity building, and quality improvement.
- 2010: Established the ECLC to better align and strengthen the early childhood field.
- 2012: Consolidated 23 funding streams administered through five state agencies into the CDHS Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to more efficiently and effectively support quality services to promote the well-being of children and families.
- 2013: Updated the Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission (ECSRLC)¹¹ to solidify the General Assembly's strong leadership on early childhood issues.
- 2018: Established a P-3 Office at CDE to align the department's early childhood programs with its K-12 initiatives.
- 2019: Implemented full day universal kindergarten and saw a 25% increase in enrollment the first year.

While this is not an exhaustive list of accomplishments, it illustrates the progression of successes that has made Colorado a national leader in early childhood. (A more detailed history of early childhood in Colorado is in Appendix 1.) The Department of Early Childhood is the next step to better aligning the early childhood system, supporting quality early development experiences, and building a more accessible early childhood system for children, families, and program providers.

Despite Colorado's recognition of the importance of early childhood and its track record of success, families with young children continue to face significant challenges. According to KIDS COUNT, a project by the Annie E. Casey Foundation:

- Of the nearly 322,400 children under 5 in Colorado in 2019, an estimated 35,000 are living in poverty.¹²
- In 2019, less than two-thirds of all young children in need of early care and education were able to access a licensed slot.¹³

¹⁰ https://earlymilestones.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/EarlyChildhood_FINAL.pdf

¹¹ http://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/images/2019_ecsrlc_committee_charge_memo.pdf

¹² <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=colorado%20under%205%20poverty&tid=ACST1Y2019.S1701>

¹³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

- Between 2008-2019, the percent of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in any type of preschool increased only from 49% to 51%.¹⁴
- In 2019-2020, less than one-quarter of 4-year-olds were able to be served in the Colorado Preschool Program.¹⁵
- As of 2019, Colorado provided home visiting to only 8,198 families of an estimated 310,900 pregnant women and families with children under 6 years old not yet in kindergarten who could benefit from home visiting.¹⁶

Proposition EE

Recognizing the critical importance of high-quality preschool, in 2020, proponents Anna Jo Haynes and James Garcia filed a ballot initiative, which ultimately was referred by the legislature, to increase the state tax on tobacco, establish a nicotine products tax, and direct 73% of the funding to a universal, voluntary preschool program. In November 2020, Colorado voters overwhelmingly passed this ballot initiative¹⁷ (Proposition EE) by a 2-to-1 margin. Beginning in July 2023, all Colorado children, regardless of family income, will have access to 10 hours per week of voluntary, high-quality preschool in a system with options that accommodate diverse family needs and choice in the year prior to kindergarten.

Knowing that stakeholder input would be critical to the success of universal preschool, Colorado Governor Jared Polis asked the Colorado Children’s Campaign to convene a process that would ensure the diverse interests of Colorado’s stakeholders were reflected in the policy development process. This process led to the creation of two formal groups: the Preschool Policy Leadership Committee (PPLC) and the Preschool Policy Advisory Group (PPAG). From July 2020 to January 2021, these groups convened and developed considerations for policymakers regarding preschool programs. This process culminated in a report¹⁸ outlining key learnings and conclusions. Throughout this process, stakeholders focused not only on the opportunity to expand preschool, but the historic opportunity Prop EE presented to elevate and fundamentally improve all of Colorado’s early childhood programs through a new cabinet-level state early childhood agency.

ECLC Recommends the Establishment of the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (DEC)

While Prop EE was an incredible win, the Preschool Policy Development process unearthed a set of challenges underlying the entire early childhood system, including fragmentation and misalignment, which make it difficult for parents and providers to navigate the system. For many years, Coloradans across a broad spectrum have advocated for the creation of a cabinet-level state department dedicated to early childhood to elevate, better align, and support the state’s early childhood programs. During the 2021 legislative session, the ECLC, the state’s federally authorized advisory council on early childhood, recommended the creation of a department that would “consolidate the various authorities, programs, and funding streams that currently exist across state agencies and focus on a unified vision of comprehensive early childhood service delivery for

¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

¹⁵ <https://www.coloradokids.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/2021-KC-Final-low-res-8.18.21-1.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5679be9605f8e24bd8be467a/t/6064b92f0b2587640e58f083/1617213782693/DRAFT+Home+Visiting+Investment+Plan.pdf>

¹⁷ https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/initiative%2520referendum_proposition_ee_title_and_text.pdf

¹⁸ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CLUSD4QtCV3oJwmAFmqoSAFp9iibgx2/view?usp=sharing>

all children birth to age 5.”¹⁹ Stakeholders recognized that the establishment of a unified department would help ensure access to quality and comprehensive whole-child, whole-family experiences, advance equity, prioritize family and community engagement, and provide transparency and accountability.

HB21-1304: The Anna Jo Garcia Haynes Early Childhood Act

Colorado’s legislature recognized this historic moment as one in which all children could be better served by a unified early childhood system for all of the services that support children and families. Colorado Representative Emily Sirota (D-Denver), Speaker Alec Garnett (D-Denver), Senate Majority Leader Stephen Fenberg (D-Boulder), and Senator Janet Buckner (D-Aurora) used this momentum to sponsor HB21-1304,²⁰ to create a new Department of Early Childhood (DEC) that will coordinate a unified early childhood system and ensure the equitable distribution of resources and programing, including the new universal, voluntary preschool program. The bill passed unanimously in the Senate and by an overwhelming margin in the House. Testimony by advocates, providers, and families focused on how stronger alignment across early childhood programs and funding would ultimately provide a foundation for greater coherence across age ranges and additional facets of child development and family supports.

The bill was named after Anna Jo Garcia Haynes, a leading visionary for early childhood in the state of Colorado, who has advocated for Colorado’s children for decades. Her achievements include founding Mile High Early Learning, bringing the Head Start program to Denver, and co-founding the Colorado Children’s Campaign and the Women’s Foundation of Colorado.

Recognizing the importance of stakeholder engagement in driving this historic opportunity, legislative leaders created three groups focused on advising and making recommendations on the DEC and the universal preschool program:

Transition Advisory Group (TAG): The ECLC convened TAG to advise the TWG and ensure that this process was grounded in the recommendations of a diverse group of stakeholders.²¹ TAG is composed of 56 community leaders who offer a wide array of diverse public and private perspectives to ensure the recommendations reflect the full spectrum of early childhood programs and services. This includes parents, members of the early childhood workforce, providers, school districts, human services leaders, local Early Childhood Councils, and other stakeholders representing under-served and under-resourced communities. In accordance with HB21-1304, more than half of TAG members were parents, early childhood programs and services providers, or members of the workforce who represented geographically and programmatically diverse perspectives.

Special Education Service Delivery Subgroup: The legislation called for the creation of a subgroup dedicated to developing recommendations for the administration of preschool special education services within the new preschool program. Recommendations from this group were presented to the Transition Working Group (TWG) and informed the recommendations in the Transition Plan.

¹⁹<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5679be9605f8e24bd8be467a/t/606cceb28188da7a1525592b/1617743539248/ECLC+Governance+Recommendation+-+Final.pdf>

²⁰ https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/2021a_1304_signed.pdf

²¹ See Appendix 3 for more detailed information about TAG members.

Transition Working Group (TWG): The ECLC co-chairs and representatives from the existing departments were charged with the development of this Transition Plan for the Department of Early Childhood as well as recommendations for a new statewide, universal, voluntary preschool program.

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITION PLAN

In response to the requirements of HB21-1304, the TWG, taking into account the advice of the TAG and subgroups, offers recommendations in this Transition Plan to the ECLC and the state of Colorado. By November 1, 2021, the Governor's office, on behalf of the TWG, shall submit the Transition Plan to the Joint Budget Committee with the Governor's budget request, and the TWG shall submit the Transition Plan to the ECLC for approval. The TWG shall work with the ECLC regarding any changes they may request before approving the plan, by November 15th. After approval by the ECLC, the Governor's office, on behalf of the TWG, will submit the Transition Plan to the legislative committees called out in HB21-1304 no later than November 15, 2021.

The Transition Plan is just the beginning of continued planning and transition process. The TWG realizes that there are many critical transitional decisions that won't all be enumerated in this first plan. The TWG recognizes the need to be flexible and nimble as the creation of the new agency occurs over the next several years, and relying on a true agile methodology, the TWG commits to continually making updates and improvements far into the future.

Vision, Mission, Values, and Guiding Principles

Stakeholders drafted vision and mission statements and defined values and guiding principles to serve as a north star for DEC. Together, they should guide the department's commitment not only to children and families but to the providers and workforce who enable the early childhood system to function.

Vision	Mission	Values	Guiding Principles
All Colorado children, families, and early childhood professionals are valued, healthy and thriving.	The Colorado Department of Early Childhood champions a comprehensive, community-informed, effective, high-quality and equitable early childhood system that supports the care, education and well-being of all Colorado's young children, their families, and early childhood professionals in all settings.	<p>We value equity across the early childhood system and are committed to utilizing an equity-focused lens to drive priorities and decision making.</p> <p>We believe formal and informal care environments can provide high-quality, developmentally appropriate care and learning.</p> <p>We respect and appreciate the diversity and strengths of all of our communities in Colorado.</p> <p>We believe accessibility to early childhood services considers affordability, cultural responsiveness,</p>	<p>Child, Family, and Community Centered</p> <p>Equity Driven</p> <p>All Children Served</p> <p>Holistic Services Approach</p> <p>Mixed Delivery System</p> <p>Thriving, Effective Workforce</p> <p>High-Quality Standards</p> <p>Streamlined Efficiency</p> <p>Data-Driven Outcomes, Focused Decisions</p> <p>Accountability</p>

		<p>and parent choice.</p> <p>We value an innovative and expansive approach to our early childhood system.</p> <p>We value a whole-family approach.</p>	Innovation
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Governance

The diversity of stakeholders in early childhood necessitates a robust governance process that is informed by multifaceted perspectives. As the federally authorized state advisory council, the ECLC has advised Colorado leaders on strategies to promote strong and research-backed early childhood practices across the state since its creation in 2010. In moving to the new department, the ECLC should also serve in a key advisory role to the leadership of DEC, as well as continuing its advisory capacity to state policymakers, other departments, and the Governor’s office.

In addition to the advisory role of the ECLC, DEC should be guided by many other existing engagement structures currently advising the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), including but not limited to: Family Voice Council, Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council, Appeals and Waiver Review Panel, Child Abuse Prevention Board, Family Resource Center Association, Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance, State Intermediaries, Alliance, Home Visiting Coalition, Early Childhood Education Association, Colorado Association of Family Child Care, Colorado Head Start Association, Strengthening Families Network, Fatherhood Steering Committee, Colorado Community Response Implementation, Early Intervention Evaluations Task Force, Early Childhood Mental Health Program Model Advisory Board, Colorado Association of School Executives, Colorado Association of School Boards, Colorado Education Association, Consortium of Directors of Special Education, Colorado Rural Schools Alliance, Colorado BOCES Association, State Board of Human Services, and the State Board of Education.

To maintain a unified and cohesive vision, TWG recommends that the Executive Director hold final rulemaking authority for DEC. To facilitate meaningful advice, consultation, and collaboration about rulemaking guidance, the TWG also recommends the creation of a Rules and Regulations Advisory Council. The DEC Rules and Regulations Advisory Council at a minimum should include:

- Parents, families, or caregivers of children who are enrolled in a variety of public and private early childhood programs;
- Members of the early childhood workforce, including community and school based educators;
- Representatives of geographically and programmatically diverse community and school-based public and private early childhood programs;
- Stakeholders representing historically under-served and under-resourced communities;

- County and school district officials; and
- Representatives from foundations, business, and advocacy organizations

As part of the DEC Rules and Regulations Advisory Council launch, DEC should ensure supports are provided, both financial and informational, that will equip every member to engage thoughtfully and contribute their expertise.

Recommendations from the DEC Rules and Regulations Advisory Council should be made by a majority vote, and the Executive Director must demonstrate that each of these recommendations is thoroughly considered. Additionally, the Executive Director may create issue-specific committees of the Rules and Regulations Advisory Council to advise on specific departmental rules or guidance, including other state departments and experts on the issue being considered.

While this is the ideal and recommended structure for the next several years, the future will likely look different than today's early childhood landscape. Governance structures may need to be adjusted, additional stakeholder voices may need to be included, and the federal government may expand programs and mandates which could necessitate revisiting this report's recommendations. By July 2025, DEC should conduct an evaluation of its governance structure to determine if additional support or structures are needed.

RECOMMENDATION: To maintain a unified and cohesive vision, the Executive Director should hold final rulemaking authority for DEC programs. To facilitate meaningful advice, consultation, and collaboration about rulemaking guidance, the TWG also recommends the creation of a well-supported Rules and Regulations Advisory Council.

Structure of Department of Early Childhood

While the intention of the TWG and stakeholders is not to limit the ability of the Executive Director to determine the structure of the department, stakeholders have elevated several functions as essential for DEC to successfully execute its mission, vision, values, and guiding principles:

- DEC should have a leadership team under the Executive Director with a diverse set of skills, a strong equity focus, and significant expertise. This team must focus on DEC's legislative charge to streamline and enhance the child, family, workforce, and provider experience.
 - DEC's mission necessitates an **expert in policy and governmental affairs** to develop equitable, effective regulatory alignment, and ensure legislative engagement.
 - Additionally, to maximize funding sources to achieve a unified vision, DEC should have a **finance expert** who is oriented toward using their significant understanding of financial regulations to find innovative solutions that meet Colorado's funding needs. This type of deeply strategic financial alignment is essential to implement the state's unified plan to increase equitable access to quality early care and education slots, services, and supports, including workforce quality, recruitment, development, and retention.

- To create cohesion for the field, the new department should **organize program delivery and budget around functions of the early childhood system**, rather than around administration of individual programs and grants, with a lead who is charged with improving the coherence of experience for children, families, providers, and workforce throughout the system.
- To ensure high-quality experiences for children and families regardless of where programs are located, DEC must establish **meaningful cross-agency partnerships**, which extend beyond agreements and updates to foster collaboration and alignment among programs and systems located in various departments and at the local level, with a lead who is charged with maintaining these partnerships and collaborations.
- To fulfill its statutory responsibility, DEC must also maintain **a commitment to data, state-level data systems, and a strong, responsible data collection process** that includes data privacy requirements. The DEC should have a team with an effective leader to develop a robust data collection and analysis system that is used to inform future strategies and guide decision making. It should also ensure the ability and legal support to share data with other agencies as needed.

RECOMMENDATION: DEC should have a leadership team under its Executive Director with a diverse set of skills, a strong focus on equity, and significant expertise. Program delivery should be organized around functions of the early childhood system, rather than around administration of individual programs and grants, to create more cohesion for the field.

Programs and Services to Transition to DEC Beginning July 2022

Colorado’s commitment to early childhood is evident in its vast array of programs that serve children and families, starting before birth and continuing through age 5 and beyond. Despite unification efforts over time, these programs continue to be administered across various agencies.

A central focus for the creation of DEC is the unification of the early childhood system to ensure a streamlined experience for families that allows them to access whole-family and whole-child services without heavy administrative burden. In addition, by law, DEC will be responsible for implementing the new universal, voluntary, statewide preschool program adopted by Colorado voters.²²

HB21-1304 created DEC to ensure Colorado can improve outcomes for all children, fully implement the new preschool program, and effectively support all Colorado families to access voluntary, high-quality child care, early education, and other early childhood services. To execute this statutory responsibility, stakeholders took the following criteria into account when considering program movement:

- The alignment of the program’s purpose to the mission, vision, values, and guiding principles of DEC;
- The importance of aligning the current early childhood system with the new universal, voluntary, statewide preschool program;
- The efficiencies of reducing duplicative oversight through the unification of programs; and

²² https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/2021a_1304_signed.pdf

- Federal limitations on the movement of the programs (e.g., WIC & IDEA Part B).

The previous planning, engagement, and alignment work done in the creation of OEC, which continues to this day, were also strongly considered.

Given these criteria, it is recommended the following programs and services begin transition to the Department of Early Childhood starting in July 2022:

- From the Colorado Department of Education
 - Colorado Preschool Program/Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE)²³
 - All services administered by the Early Childhood Workforce Development Team
- From the Colorado Department of Human Services
 - All programs and services administered by the Office of Early Childhood

The purpose of each of these programs aligns with the mission, vision, guiding principles, and values of DEC to create a comprehensive, community-informed, effective, high-quality, and equitable early childhood system.

Throughout the engagement process, these programs were determined to be the most critical to move to DEC from the outset in order to prevent a disruption in services and prepare for the launch of Colorado's new preschool program. Appendix 2 contains a full overview of the recommendations for which programs and services should transition to DEC and which should remain under the administrative purview of other state departments.

- For example: An important question was whether programs concerning child maltreatment prevention should move. This transition is recommended because it is believed that locating child maltreatment prevention programs under DEC and separate from child welfare in CDHS' Office of Youth, Children, and Families will result in reduced stigma for customers, increased program engagement, and an increase in family strengthening protective factors in a whole-child, whole-family approach. To ensure coordination between the child maltreatment prevention programs at DEC and the Office of Youth, Children, and Families at CDHS, investments should be made for interoperable referral pathways and continued seamless services for families with children of all ages.

RECOMMENDATION: Beginning July 2022, the Colorado Preschool Program/Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE), the Early Childhood Workforce Development Team, and all programs and services currently located in OEC should transition to DEC.

Fiscal Structures and Funding Transition to DEC Beginning July 2022

As programs shift to the new department, DEC should also acquire the authority and regulatory power of the funding sources tied to these programs. During the unification process, existing rules, regulations, statutes, and budget structures of these programs may need to be amended to ensure consistency in regulations across

²³ The funding administration of CPP/ECARE should continue at CDE (it should be held as a hold harmless as funding mechanisms transition to DEC) in the 2022-2023 school year while it transitions to the new department to be fully integrated into the single preschool program by the 2023-2024 school year.

the landscape, thus some of these transitions may take some time. This includes initiating a process with federal agencies to transition appropriate funding and authority to DEC. In addition, until the DEC has promulgated rules for the programs under its oversight, the sending agencies' rules and waivers should continue to take effect to ensure consistency across programs.

DEC should oversee the administration of all early childhood funding, including but not limited to:

- Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), including Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)
- Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP)²⁴
- Cash Funds from the Early Intervention Trust
- Preschool Cash Fund (Prop EE)
- Preschool Development Grant (PDG)
- Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV)
- Federal Community Based Child Abuse Prevention funds (CBCAP)
- Federal Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) funds
- Early Intervention (IDEA, Part C)
- Federal funds from Head Start Collaboration Grant
- Federal funds from the Family Support through Primary Prevention (FSPP) grant
- Federal funds from the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) grant
- Federal funds from the Retention and Recruitment of Early Intervention Professionals grant
- Marijuana cash funds used for Incredible Years
- Cash funds from Records and Reports Fund
- Child Care Licensing Cash Fund
- Colorado Children's Trust Fund
- Nurse Home Visitor Program Fund
- Child Care Cash Fund

To ensure continuity of programming for children, families, and school districts, during the 2022-2023 school year, the recommendations include:

- Colorado Preschool Program(CPP)/Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE) should remain steady in the school year 2022-2023, including funding through the current formula.
- Funding administration for CPP/ECARE should continue at CDE for the school year 2022-2023.
- Existing rules and regulations for CPP/ECARE should remain at CDE and continue to be overseen by the State Board of Education.
- DEC and CDE should develop a memorandum of understanding that outlines how both agencies will collaborate to administer all other functions including programmatic support for CPP/ECARE for school year 2022-2023, and to launch the new voluntary, universal preschool program for school year 2023-2024, including determining appropriate timing for staff transitions given program administration.
- Strong collaboration between DEC and CDE will be necessary during this period of transition.

²⁴The Colorado Child Care Assistance Program is administered through county departments of social/human services under the direction of the CDHS Division of Early Care and Learning. Counties have set income eligibility maximums for families, but must serve families with income of 185 percent or less of the federal poverty guideline (if funding allows), and will not serve families that have an income of over 85 percent of the state median income.

RECOMMENDATION: DEC should acquire the legislative authority and regulatory power of the funding streams tied to the programs moving to the department. The structure of the Long Bill should be designed to ensure maximum flexibility and equity in program delivery.

Re-evaluation of Transition by July 2025

Establishing and maintaining a strong DEC requires a cycle of continuous evaluation and improvement. After the department is established in July 2022, stakeholders recommended an ongoing review of the programs overseen by DEC. Community members elevated the following programs for an initial round of review, which should be completed by July 2025.

- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
 - CACFP, which is currently administered by CDPHE, provides reimbursement for healthy meals and snacks served to Colorado’s children and adults in child care centers and homes, afterschool programs, emergency and homeless shelters, Head Start, Early Head Start, outside-school-hours programs, and adult day care centers.
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
 - WIC, which is currently administered by CDPHE, provides free healthy food, breastfeeding support, nutrition education, and referrals to other care for pregnant and breastfeeding women and children younger than age 5. The WIC program is required to be administered by the state health department or its equivalent pursuant to federal law. The TWG recommends the DEC monitor the national context on this program and any federal law changes that would allow this program to shift out of the state public health department before reengaging on whether this program should move.
- IDEA, Part B (sections 619 & 611)
 - The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), is the federal special education law that provides federal assistance and authorizes funding to states and school districts to provide early intervention, special education, and related services for children from birth through age 21. IDEA, Part B has 2 sections: Section 611 provides grants to serve school children ages 3-21 and Section 619 provides preschool grants to programs serving children ages 3-5. Lawyers for the state of Colorado have determined that moving IDEA Part B out of CDE is not currently allowable under federal law.
 - CDE will continue to oversee IDEA Part B and coordinate with Administrative Units (AUs) to ensure compliance. DEC, with relevant insight from CDE, should set regulations and guidance for preschool programming, including classrooms serving students receiving services through IDEA Part B.

While these programs offer key supports and services to young children, their scope requires the consideration

of federal laws and regulations, as well as additional consideration for the populations they serve and the purposes of the programs. To avoid a disruption of services presently, the transition of these programs should be reconsidered in no more than three years by the ECLC, the Executive Director of DEC, and other relevant entities, including CDE and CDPHE, through a comprehensive stakeholder process that includes all relevant expertise.

Throughout the engagement process, many stakeholders noted that families and providers experience fragmentation in accessing these programs. Thus, in the interim, strong interagency collaboration between DEC and the Departments that oversee these programs should support seamless access to these services for families.

RECOMMENDATION: By July 2025, DEC and ECLC, in coordination with relevant departments and stakeholders, should review legal requirements and if possible, reconsider the transition of CACFP, WIC, IDEA Part B, and potentially other early childhood programs to DEC.

Stakeholder Feedback on Preschool Special Education Services

Colorado is lauded nationally as the state with the highest rate of serving preschool children in inclusive classrooms (92%).²⁵ There are also many innovative school districts working closely with community-based partners to provide high-quality special education services to all children in a mixed delivery system. Throughout the stakeholder engagement process that culminated in this Transition Plan, families and advocates identified areas of potential improvement. In addition, school district leaders identified both successes and challenges they face in building capacity to offer special education services across a diversity of settings. Clear themes emerged from the conversations within the Special Education Service Delivery Subgroup, including the following:²⁶

- There is a “lack of parent choice in where their child gets services (largely only in public schools).”
- “Parents/caregivers are uncertain where to bring concerns they have about children’s potential special needs.”
- There is “a lack of coordination between systems (specially the transition between Part C to Part B services).”
- There are “real challenges in recruiting and retaining staff responsible for special education delivery, including occupational therapists and physical therapists.”
- “There are large amounts of paperwork required for children to receive special education services.”
- There is a “need for year round services for children with special needs.”
- “Challenges around capacity are even more critical in rural areas where there are very few qualified special education teachers and specialists.”
- “Providers often are not prepared to seek Child Find support and refer children when needed.”

²⁵ https://drive.google.com/file/d/17lw_NZhyCMlxhD4dIRA35o9eRUKmT_MV/view?usp=sharing

²⁶ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eoG_NclsFwSUvsWGaexnOj4ilzKz6W7f/view

Due to the federal landscape and legal requirements, it is recommended that IDEA Part B administration stay at CDE. However, stakeholders identified serious challenges and recommended possible solutions for special education service delivery in Colorado, emphasizing:

- **Parent choice:** Increase equitable access for families by providing full-day and year-round care and education opportunities as well as access to specialized services in mixed delivery settings to the extent possible as determined by a child’s individualized education plan (IEP) team that includes specialists, parents/families, and teachers.
- **Communicating with families:** Improve supports and expectations for communication to parents and families.
- **Blending and braiding funding sources:** Promote strategies to blend and braid funds seamlessly across school districts and community-based programs so they can offer early care and education that meet the needs of working families and ensure children with IEPs receive the supports to which they are entitled.
- **Supporting teachers:** Provide accessible professional development across early childhood programs to support the growth and development of children with special needs.
- **Building staff capacity:** Providing incentives and supports to recruit and retain special education teachers and specialists, including occupational therapists and physical therapists.

As the agency that will continue to administer and oversee IDEA Part B, CDE should make a plan to engage with and address the concerns raised by stakeholders before the new statewide, universal preschool program launches in the 2023-2024 school year. The objectives are that preschool special education not operate in isolation and that Colorado is fully compliant with all federal regulations. CDE should maintain IDEA Part B administration and oversight and DEC should oversee and regulate all early childhood programming. CDE and DEC must work closely to ensure they are supporting children with special needs so that all children can experience free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

Ongoing Alignment and Collaboration with Other State Agencies

Colorado is committed to building a cohesive early childhood landscape. Currently, there are three main state agencies that provide services that support children and their families: Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), Colorado Department of Education (CDE), and Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE). In addition, the Department of Higher Education (CDHE) also works closely with these agencies to help recruit and train the early childhood workforce. For decades these agencies have worked collaboratively to provide Colorado’s children with the resources they need to thrive. This co-management of the system has been done through a variety of ways, including:

- Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council
- Professional Development Information System (PDIS) and workforce development efforts
- Data sharing agreements across CDE and OEC
- OEC Interagency Agreements:
 - Interagency Agreements with the Governor’s Office of Information Technology for IT System

development, operations, maintenance, and software costs.

- Interagency Agreements with Community Colleges to support local Early Childhood Councils, Licensing, and strategies implemented by the Preschool Development Grant.
- Interagency Agreements with public institutions of higher education (University of Colorado, Colorado State University, etc.) to conduct program evaluation activities, and to support the implementation of a variety of programs, including the Nurse Home Visitor Program (NHVP), Maternal, Infant & Early Childhood Home Visitation (MIECHV) grant, SafeCare, and the Preschool Development Grant.
- Interagency Agreement with the Department of Education for activities related to the professional development of the early childhood workforce.
- Interagency Agreement with CDPHE for evaluation and data activities required by the MIECHV grant.
- Interagency Agreements with CDHE for scholarships for introductory early childhood education classes to support the early childhood workforce and for the support of the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC).
- Interagency Agreement with the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) for Medicaid services provided in conjunction with the Nurse Home Visitor Program, and for the support of the ECLC.

With the unification of programs under DEC, it will be important to continue and strengthen these coordinating functions and promote alignment among education, higher education, health, and human services. Though many of the early childhood programs and services families access will be located in DEC, there are a variety of other early childhood programs that will continue to be administered at other state agencies. DEC should closely collaborate with these departments to ensure the consistency of family experience and to promote whole-child, whole-family wellbeing.

To ensure the appropriate collaborations occur, DEC should use the following structures:

- DEC, in partnership with CDE, CDHS, and CDPHE, should provide an annual report to the legislature, the Governor, and the ECLC. In this report, the agencies should provide updates on the progress and challenges, as well as cross-agency collaboration related to:
 - Administration of special education services for children prior to K-12, specifically Part C and Part B 619
 - Administration of CACFP for providers otherwise overseen by DEC (i.e., child care center providers, family child care home providers)
 - Administration of WIC, in support of families with children younger than 5 years of age
 - Connecting early childhood care, learning, and supports with K-12, to ensure children enter kindergarten ready to learn and are successful in school
 - Administration of the state's universal, voluntary preschool program, which will be integrated with CPP/ECARE
 - Alignment of the early childhood system with the child welfare system and child maltreatment prevention initiatives

- The flexible use of TANF funding²⁷ to support child care
- DEC should establish cross-agency MOUs, data sharing requirements in legislation, or other collaborative structures necessary to ensure effective, efficient administration of programs and funds related to early childhood.

Blending and Braiding Funding

Colorado’s early childhood funding landscape is vast, complex, and difficult to navigate. There are multiple funding streams, including CPP/ECARE, CCCAP, and preschool special education that are currently administered by different state departments. Blending and braiding are techniques used by providers, local entity staff, and families to combine the dollars available to help pay for all of the services a child needs.

Braiding²⁸: “Financial assistance from several sources is coordinated to support a single initiative or strategy, while each individual award maintains its award specific identity.”

Blending²⁹: “Financial assistance is combined under a single set of reporting and other requirements, and resources contributed from each individual funding stream lose their original award-specific identity.”

In a system where funding is largely the limiting factor to the growth and scale of services, blending and braiding provide a clear path for maximizing available funds and minimizing costly administrative work. The passage of Proposition EE adds an additional funding source to the system and necessitates alignment within the system. Stakeholders have expressed five key challenges they face when blending and braiding funding that need to be solved by the new department to allow localities and communities to maximize dollars and serve all children.

1. Regulations (e.g., program quality, monitoring, eligibility, operations) attached to different funding streams are complex to navigate, not always aligned, and burdensome.
2. Separate programs have separate funding and technology structures that can be a barrier for any type of access and make it complicated for families and providers.
3. Different funding sources flow to different community entities (e.g., counties, school districts, early childhood providers), with no one charged with ensuring cohesion or efficient maximization of blending and braiding capability.
4. Each community has differing current levels of coordination and implementation.
5. There is a lack of visibility into systems statewide. Clear, real time data on access, need, demand, and capacity by demographics and locality are unavailable to community leaders or state policymakers.

²⁷ <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R44528.pdf>

²⁸ <https://www.agacgfm.org/Intergov/More-Tools/Blended-and-Braided-Funding-A-Guide-for-Policy-Ma.aspx>

²⁹ <https://www.agacgfm.org/Intergov/More-Tools/Blended-and-Braided-Funding-A-Guide-for-Policy-Ma.aspx>

To achieve its mission and address these challenges, the DEC should commit to the following:

- DEC should revise and streamline existing regulations (e.g. eligibility, program standards, qualifications, reporting requirements) across state funding sources to ensure that families and providers have more flexibility with funds and less administrative burden, while maintaining alignment with federal laws.
- DEC should utilize one streamlined application for universal preschool and related slot-based early childhood programs that is user-friendly and easily accessible for families and providers. Over time, additional programs should be added to the unified application as it is beneficial for families and children.
- DEC should itself blend and braid state dollars before allocations are released for state-controlled funds. DEC must build or identify and fund local expertise and capacity to blend and braid local and federal-to-local funding with state funds across slot-based programs with an equity focused lens, including ensuring systems are ready for additional federal dollars should they become available.
- DEC should structure itself, its money, and its programs to empower local communities to lead and innovate based on their local context. DEC should elevate and scale local exemplars to build statewide solutions, and should provide resources, feedback, and support for all communities. Immediately, DEC should commence a review of community readiness to determine necessary support for successful launch of universal preschool, early childhood unification, and innovation. Where possible, DEC should promote and support community leadership within the early childhood system.

RECOMMENDATION: To address funding challenges identified by families and providers, the DEC should:

- Revise rules and regulations to ensure more flexibility with funds and reduce administrative burdens while ensuring equitable use of those funds.
- Create and utilize a single application and eligibility verification for families.
- Blend and braid state dollars before releasing allocations to localities.
- Empower communities to lead and innovate based on their local context.
- Evaluate community readiness for launching the universal preschool program.

Technology and Data Systems

To achieve its mission of providing effective, high-quality, and equitable early care and education, DEC should capture thorough data on slots, services, and supports for families and children both at a community level and statewide. Collecting this data should allow for a real-time needs assessment of various regions and enable staff from DEC to offer individualized and targeted supports for different populations.

HB21-1304 calls for an analysis of Colorado's existing data to:

- Address the extent to which existing early childhood programs and services are available to and used by the child and family populations they are designed to serve;

- Identify the groups of children and families, based on location within the state and on family demographics, including socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, gender, language, and disability, who are accessing the existing early childhood programs and services; and
- Provide specific information concerning groups of children that have historically encountered barriers to school readiness.
- Also, the legislation requires the Transition Plan to address early childhood data system strategies to inform planning, leverage resource allocations, maximize children’s access to programs, and support data-driven decision-making.

This [analysis](#) of Colorado’s existing data on all early childhood programs finds:

- Currently, Colorado is only able to measure system capacity through collecting licensed capacity, which does not provide real insight into the system’s capacity.
- Because of how data is collected and aggregated across program types, it is impossible to know how many unique children are being served by publicly-funded early childhood programs.
- Colorado Shines, the current quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) does not measure the experience children are having across all sites and all programs, and there is no way to know the number of children served by Colorado Shines (QRIS) level.

Colorado should prioritize safely collecting data that provides insight into the fundamental questions needed for policymakers and state leaders to address gaps in the system. To allow for informed decision making, at a minimum, Colorado should be collecting the following data elements:

Child and Family Data	Program and Funding Type Data	Provider and Workforce Data
<p>The number of children under age 6 years in Colorado by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demographics (e.g., age, race, SES, gender identity, language, disability status) ● Eligibility for various Early Childhood programs <p>The number of children accessing programs for which they are eligible by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Program (e.g., funding source, location, etc) ● Hours of care received ● Program quality <p>The number of children not able to access programs for which they are eligible.</p>	<p>The number of programs that exist in Colorado that provide subsidized ECE slots:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The number of slots that exist in each ECE site ● The availability of programs and slots by geographical area <p>The quality level of each program, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of children served by quality level ● Funding streams that support programs based on Colorado Shines quality level 	<p>The number of early childhood professionals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By Early Childhood Professional Credential and other attainment types ● By employment status ● By geographic location ● The comparison between supply and demand of professionals <p>Retention rates of professionals by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Credential attainment type ● Program ● By outcome (e.g., retained, working at a different center, leaving the ECE workforce)

Data sharing agreements, which ensure data privacy and security for children and families, and interoperable data systems across state agencies for both historical and future data will be instrumental in ensuring that DEC and other departments have a comprehensive view of all early childhood data across the state.

RECOMMENDATION: To inform decisions for children in Colorado, DEC should:

- Collect data that provides additional information on system capacity, including number of open or closed classrooms, number of current teachers and workforce shortages, and overall availability of slots and current vacancies.
- Implement a child count process that provides insight into the unique number of children served at every publicly-funded site, across programs and funding sources, including unique identifiers when available, to encourage seamless K-12 integration while fully respecting the privacy of every student and family.
- Ensure that the child count process captures the number of children served by Colorado Shines quality level.
- Coordinate and require the collection of data in a way that does not burden providers and families.

Recommendations for Early Childhood Workforce

To administer a comprehensive early childhood system, launch universal preschool, and continue to provide services for young children and their families, DEC must prioritize supporting the growth and development of its early childhood workforce. Subgroups and TAG raised key challenges that DEC must begin addressing immediately to ensure its success across the programs it is responsible for administering, as well directional recommendations for DEC to focus on:

Challenges	Recommendations
<p>There are not enough members of the early childhood workforce due to challenges with recruitment and retention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review qualification pathways for opportunities to reduce complexity while also maintaining a diverse workforce in all settings. ● Simplify, promote, and measure achievement using Colorado’s Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators Competencies Framework for adults who work with families and children. ● Support individuals to achieve these competencies through ongoing, accessible professional development.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work with higher education to develop pathways and recruitment strategies for specialists needed in the early childhood workforce, including early childhood teachers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech therapists, mental health consultants, and others critical to meeting the needs of children and families.
<p>Members of the workforce are not compensated appropriately.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop and elevate innovative compensation strategies for the early childhood workforce across all settings at the program, community, and state levels that are aligned with the achievement of defined competencies.
<p>It is too hard and complex to be determined qualified to teach in licensed programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review the process for meeting early childhood workforce entry requirements to reduce barriers, increase retention, and minimize administrative burden at all levels of the system.

CONCLUSION

The establishment of a cabinet level Department of Early Childhood is a monumental step for the state of Colorado. DEC builds upon the decades of bold and innovative work that Colorado has undertaken to best serve its youngest learners. With the passage of Proposition EE and the new statewide, universal, voluntary preschool program beginning in 2023, Colorado has a unique opportunity to further strengthen its early childhood landscape and increase supports and services for children and families during this critical period in children's development.

Hundreds of stakeholders offered input into this process to build on the existing successes in Colorado and share opportunities for the early childhood system to better serve children and families. The recommendations in this Transition Plan are based on the themes identified by these stakeholders to improve the current experiences of children, families, providers, and the early childhood workforce. These recommendations seek to guide DEC in its innovative work and ensure that the department is fully prepared to achieve its mission and vision.

DEC has an opportunity to fundamentally transform the ways in which the state of Colorado serves the needs of children and families through the unification of early childhood programs and services under one governing structure. These recommendations lay the groundwork for DEC and the state of Colorado to lead the country in establishing a fully supported early childhood system that prioritizes the whole-child and whole-family. If these recommendations are executed, the Transition Working Group envisions a future in which all Colorado children, families, and early childhood professionals are valued, healthy and thriving.

APPENDIX

1. Early Childhood History in Colorado

Colorado's transformational early childhood advancements in the past year establishing high-quality, universal preschool for all four-year olds and creating a new cabinet-level early childhood department are built on decades of significant legislative and policy actions. These policy changes set the ground for the state's commitment to providing young children with opportunities to succeed in school and life, while supporting their families' economic security.

The modern era of the Colorado early childhood movement essentially began in the mid-1980s with Governor Roy Romer's First Impressions initiative in 1987, which increased awareness of early childhood issues, developed a statewide agenda, and built community coalitions to promote key investments. Advocates had started to prioritize early childhood, including as a policy emphasis of the Colorado Children's Campaign, when it was formed in 1985. One of the first important actions resulting from this increased focus was the establishment of the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) in 1988. This program targeted services to three- and four-year olds with risk factors, including low family income as well as other conditions that research has shown reduces children's learning readiness, such as low parental education levels and history of family violence or substance use disorder. CPP set extensive quality standards and regular evaluations that 33 years later continue to demonstrate the program's effectiveness by revealing participating children's outcomes later in school, such as reduced retention rates, higher test scores and improved high school graduation rates. With strong legislative support over the years, CPP has grown significantly since its inception, expanding its reach to many more children.

Over the next several years, Colorado policymakers, advocates, foundations, and businesses developed policies, systems, and funding to advance early care and education. With congressional enactment of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) in 1990, the state moved forward early childhood issues by expanding access to child care for more low-income children. This expansion brought forward the need for quality services to ensure children had positive experiences and outcomes, and in 1991-92 First Impressions established the Professional Standards Task Force to examine quality practices for early childhood educators.

Colorado leaders during the 1990s also connected early childhood issues to larger systems, such as family support, business success, crime prevention, health, and education. Important examples of the family support connections included the creation of Parents as Children's First Teachers Project in 1991 and Family Resource Center pilots in 1993. During this time, employers nationally and in Colorado were increasingly recognizing stable child care was instrumental to their business success and the state's economic health, and thus formed the Colorado Business Commission on Child Care Financing. With many national studies finding quality early education led to reduced delinquency and crime, the state in 1996 established the Youth Crime Prevention Initiative that funded early childhood programs to prevent crime. This effort was later expanded and became known as the Tony Grampsas Youth Services program. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the state linked child

care and preschool programs more closely with health-related initiatives, including creating early childhood mental health pilots, which led to more comprehensive strategic mental health support in the system, namely the statewide early childhood mental health consultation initiative. The state's early childhood health connections also included funding the Nurse Family Partnership, which led to greater investments in comprehensive evidence-based home visiting programs.

Local leaders also contributed to the momentum for increased support in the early years and, by the mid-1990s, recognized the need to better coordinate the array of early childhood programs that had grown across the state. Working with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), the legislature funded several early childhood pilots in specific geographic regions to support and improve the local coordination of programs and services. The success of these pilots led to the legislative establishment of Early Childhood Councils statewide a decade later.

As Colorado early childhood policies and programs expanded in the late 1990s, early childhood leaders worked with advocates, administrators, and the philanthropic communities to engage policymakers in systemic consideration of state funding and policy needs. This effort led to the development of several state commissions and committees that provided strategic direction to child care and preschool policies throughout the state. Several of these entities included the active engagement and leadership of state legislators. One of the key areas that this examination clarified was the need to better integrate early childhood with K-12 education, as Colorado and all states were implementing the education reforms required by No Child Left Behind in the early 2000s. In 2002, the state legislature established school readiness subsidies and ratings for early childhood programs and required them to develop quality improvement plans. In 2005, the legislature expanded the Early Childhood Professional Credential statewide to ensure that all professionals caring for and educating young children have the same core early childhood competencies regardless of setting. The legislature created this credential five years earlier on a pilot basis.

In 2008, Governor Bill Ritter introduced the preschool to 20 (P-20) initiative, which recognized the systemic linkages between all education aspects, including preschool. The resulting legislative effort was known as Colorado's Achievement Plan For Kids (CAP4K), which sought to align preschool, K-12, and postsecondary education to help Colorado students graduate with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and careers. Specific components of CAP4K included school readiness plans and assessments to measure school readiness and provide teachers and families with information to support children's skills and development. Early literacy was a critical piece of these assessments and later grew into the Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act, enacted in 2012. These kindergarten readiness assessments also include physical well being, motor development, social and emotional development, language and comprehension, cognition, and general knowledge. The Ritter Administration also focused on updating and aligning the state's early childhood Professional Development Information System under the leadership of Lt. Governor Barbara O'Brien, in collaboration with CDE, CDHS, and the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE).

Another crucial aspect of CAP4K was the legislative requirement of a unique identifier for all children participating in publicly-funded early childhood programs, including the CCDF and Head Start. The purpose of

the identifier, which is used in K-12 education, is to help administrators and policymakers understand the impacts of particular programs on child outcomes without revealing the identity of any child, including outcomes by language, geographic regions, income, race, and ability. The identifier also helps state leaders know which child is receiving which services under different programs, helping to maximize state dollars and inform equitable decision-making for all children. The state later determined that establishing an early childhood identifier was too costly and complex, so it was never implemented.

With the state's extensive early childhood progress, Colorado legislators recognized the need for further systematic consideration of policies and programs and in 2009 created the Early Childhood and School Readiness Commission. This annual interim legislative committee increased state legislators' engagement, providing them with a greater opportunity to consider and pass key changes. In the Commission's first year, the legislature proposed and enacted several bills, including requiring continuous 12-month eligibility for children receiving services under the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP). It also enacted a common application form for publicly funded early childhood programs, support for professional development, and wage incentives, but none of them were funded because of fiscal constraints during the recession.

To support the state's early childhood policy making efforts, the state established the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) in 2010 as the State Advisory Council required under the federal Head Start law. The ECLC created the Early Childhood Colorado Framework, grants programmatic waivers, and advises state policymakers on policy matters. The ECLC helped guide the state's use of the federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant it was awarded in 2012 and established subcommittees to support other priorities, such as workforce and data. To enhance the state's focus on early childhood, the legislature in 2013 created the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) in CDHS, which consolidated many key early childhood programs.

Throughout the 2010s, the state expanded early childhood services in many ways, including creating and funding the Infant and Toddler Quality and Access Grant Program; establishing more than 3,000 new preschool/full-day Kindergarten slots under ECARE also in 2013; enacting several tax credits to help parents and early childhood providers better afford child care; and regularly increasing funding for child care subsidies. In 2014, the legislature set statewide CCCAP reimbursement rates, eligibility levels, and copayment schedules, and clarified the 12-month continuous CCCAP eligibility requirement. In 2016, the state expanded child care resources for vulnerable populations, such as teen parents, domestic violence survivors, and children needing mental health support. In 2018, the legislature established an equitable formula for county CCCAP Block Grants and expanded CCCAP eligibility levels.

After a couple decades of substantial early childhood expansions, Colorado was well-positioned to win two rounds of the federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG), to identify the state's biggest early childhood needs and help address them. The grants support the state's creation of strategic plans to better coordinate, expand, and improve services, increase meaningful and equitable access, maximize family engagement and support, strengthen business practices, and promote child health and well-being.

In 2019-2020 under the leadership of Governor Jared Polis and the legislature, the state continued to increase

early childhood funding and access. The state funded free, voluntary full-day kindergarten, added more than 5,000 full-day CPP slots under Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE), allowed local governments to form special districts to secure additional early childhood revenues, and established a strategic plan for family child care homes that later resulted in prohibiting homeowner associations and local zoning authorities from restricting family child care home operations. In 2020, the legislature referred a measure to the statewide ballot to increase the state's tobacco tax and establish a state nicotine tax, to provide revenues to quality, universal preschool in a mixed delivery system, beginning in 2023. This measure, Proposition EE, was passed by the voters by a two-to-one vote in November 2020.

The transformational early childhood movement Colorado is experiencing today has its seeds, roots, stalks, and branches in more than 30 years of statewide policy, funding, and system-level improvements and expansions. These actions provide an important context of the great changes for young children and families that the state is now moving forward.

2. Program Information

Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) Office of Economic Development (OEC)	Ages of Children Served	Purpose of Program	Is Program recommended to transition , revisit, or stay?	Rationale for Recommendation
Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP)	Children up to age 13, and for children with special needs up to age 19.	The Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) provides subsidized child care benefits to low-income families that are working, searching for work, in school or training, or experiencing homeless.	Move	Universal preschool will offer 10 hours of free, high-quality preschool per week. Many income-eligible families will still need additional hours to meet their needs for early care and education. CCCAP, as a program that largely serves the child care needs of young children, will connect closely with universal preschool to ensure all income-eligible families have a seamless experience accessing high-quality care. Aligning this major funding stream with other early childhood care and education program streams is a precondition for a more seamless child, family, and provider experience.
Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)	Early Childhood Providers	Colorado Shines is the statewide quality rating and improvement system for Colorado’s licensed early care and learning programs and connects families with quality child care and preschool	Move	A goal of universal preschool is to ensure children have access to high-quality early care and education. Engaging providers who participate in universal preschool with Colorado Shines will support these providers in offering high-quality care, and will help families find and select quality programs that meet their needs and help prepare children for success in kindergarten.

		programs.		
Early Childhood Councils & Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R)	Early Childhood Workforce Families with children up to 18 years	The Early Childhood Council system covers 63 of 64 Colorado counties and is charged with building the foundations of a locally based early childhood system so that more high quality services are available to children and families.	Move	Early Childhood Councils are vital local partners in supporting the early childhood workforce and other early childhood efforts. Keeping the Councils and the funding stream that supports their work in line with other state-level early childhood efforts ensures that local and state efforts will remain aligned.
Professional Development Information System (PDIS)	Early Childhood Workforce	The Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System (PDIS) is a web-based system providing free and easy access to professional development courses and credentialing to the early childhood workforce.	Move	Without a highly qualified workforce, there can be no high-quality child care or early learning programs. Including the Early Childhood Workforce Development programs in the new department will help align professional development work with high-quality program work, to ensure program staff can support children in their learning and growth.
Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund	Families with children of all ages	The Fund focuses on efforts to strengthen families before the first occurrence of child maltreatment.	Move	The Trust Fund currently provides resources to support upstream primary prevention so that children never experience child abuse or neglect in the first place. These strategies are community based, designed to support all children and families without stigma, and promote family well-being right from the start. The statute was modernized in the last legislative session and starting in 2022 will take on the additional role of increasing capacity for Family First Prevention Services across the state. Supporting families with risk factors outside of the child welfare system is

				cost-effective, less traumatic for families, and increases community and philanthropic support for sustainability of these programs. All of these strategies build protective factors to increase family well-being, reduce entry and reentry into the child welfare system, and ensure safe and nurturing environments in the home so that children and families can show up to Kindergarten ready to learn.
Colorado Community Response (CCR)	Families with children of all ages	CCR is a voluntary prevention program serving families who have been screened out from child welfare as the allegations did not meet the statutory definition of abuse or neglect.	Move	Licensed child care is a very important piece of ensuring young children are ready for kindergarten however, so is ensuring children have safe, stable, nurturing, and enriching environments in the home. Colorado Community Response supports families to have the resources they need to support children’s growth and development and build protective factors to keep families strong. This reduces entry or re-entry into the child welfare system and prevents adverse childhood experiences so children and families can be ready for kindergarten.
Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Program	Children under 5 years	The federal formula funding for community based child abuse prevention, from Part II of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, supports strategies to keep families strong from the start so they don't ever need to touch the child welfare system.	Move	Title II of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) established the Community Based Child Abuse Prevention Program to ensure resources for child abuse and neglect prevention programs for families before an initial occurrence of maltreatment. The funds are intended to flow to community-based agencies that are accessible and feel safe to families. In Colorado, much of this funding flows through Family Resource Centers because they exist as a single point of entry for many services. This funding builds protective factors in communities and families to increase family and economic well-being, ensure safe and nurturing home environments that bolsters children’s growth and development, reduce entry into the child welfare system, and ensure children are ready to learn

				in kindergarten.
Early Childhood Mental Health	Children under 5 years	The Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Specialists program provides ECMH consultation in early care and learning settings for children ages 0-6.	Move	Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants are an important support service for child care providers, as they work in child care settings. Children and child care and early education providers have many social-emotional health needs as we continue to navigate through the pandemic. Bringing Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants into the new department will continue their alignment with early care and education providers, to ensure children and providers are getting the mental health support they need.
Early Intervention	Birth-3 years	The Early Intervention program provides services for at-risk children from birth to their third birthdays.	Move	Early Intervention services are a key part of ensuring all children have access to the support they need. When children can be identified and receive services early, they are less likely to need more intensive support as they get older, helping them to be more ready to participate in kindergarten.
Family Resource Centers	Families with children of all ages	Family Resource Centers provide family support services to vulnerable families with children of all ages, including building protective factors to keep families strong, coordinated case management, resource referrals, and system navigation with the ultimate objective of increasing that family's well-being and economic	Move	Family Resource Centers provide access to basic needs, social capital, family driven goal setting, system navigation, and case management to families across Colorado. These supports are a significant factor in helping families meet children's basic needs, so they can develop to their potential. Many offer child care and other early childhood supports, like home visiting services and play groups. Family Resource Centers are also a vital part of the network of partners that provide connection and community to those with young children. Increasing economic and family well-being increases safe and nurturing home environments thus reducing entry and reentry into the child welfare systems and ensuring children and their families are prepared for success in kindergarten.

		stability.		
Fatherhood Program	Fathers who are over the age of 18 who have children or custody of children ages 24 years and younger are eligible for services.	CFP does additional specialized outreach to priority populations that include male caregivers who are receiving government aid, living in rural areas, non-custodial and custodial single fathers, veterans, fathers without a high school diploma, unemployed fathers, and fathers re-entering after incarceration.	Move	Parents are children’s first and best teachers, and fathers are an important part of children's growth and development. This program helps fathers feel confident and competent in their role, builds family protective factors to keep families strong, and connects dads with needed resources to meet the needs of the family. The outcomes are children get the benefit of an engaged father, are able to live in nurturing and safe environments, and there is a reduction in entry to the child welfare system.
Head Start (Collaboration Office)	Children under 5 years	Head Start Collaboration Offices facilitate partnerships between Head Start agencies and other state entities that provide services to benefit low-income children and their families.	Move	Head Start and Early Head Start offer high-quality early childhood education and care and comprehensive services to qualifying families. Together with child care programs licensed through the state of Colorado, Head Start programs are important in ensuring the children they serve are ready for success in kindergarten. The Head Start Collaboration office at OEC, facilitates partnerships between Head Start agencies and other state entities that provide services to benefit low-income children and their families. Moving this office will ensure continued collaboration in the federal-local funding program.
Home Visiting Programs (e.g.,NFP, SafeCare, PAT,	Children under 5 years	Current evidence-based home visiting programs approved in Colorado include Nurse Family	Move	Home visiting programs, like other programs in the Division of Community and Family Support, are key to ensuring safe and healthy home environments for children. Linking programs that support parents and family, friend, and neighbor caregivers with

Healthy Steps, Child First, HIPPY)		Partnership (NFP), Safe Care, HealthySteps, Home Instruction for the Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), Child First, Family Connects, and Parents as Teachers (PAT). These programs, while each unique, all provide services to families in their homes.		programs that support child care providers helps align and ensure that all children, regardless of where they are cared for, are healthy, valued and thriving.
Incredible Years	Children under 5 years	Incredible Years encompasses three programs that work to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors by leveraging positive parent-child and teacher-child relationships to promote preschool-aged children’s social-emotional skills and prevent behavior issues that can lead to expulsion and suspension from early childhood programs.	Move	Incredible Years programs work both in classrooms and with parents to foster stronger relationships with children. These programs are specifically designed to help children be ready to engage in school, and support children who come from all different care settings (licensed, FFN, or home).
Promoting Safe and Stable Families	Children under 5 years	The purpose of the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program is to enable states to develop	Move	The Promoting Safe and Stable Families program acts as leverage for counties to support community-based programs that promote safe, nurturing, and quality environments in the home. Building family protective factors keep families strong, improves family

		and establish, or expand, and to operate a continuum of coordinated community-based family support services, family preservation services, time-limited family reunification services, and adoption promotion and support services.		and economic well-being, reduces entry or reentry into the child welfare system, and supports children’s growth and development so they are ready for kindergarten. This program works best in partnership with other programs like Child Abuse Prevention, and should be part of a continuum of programs working together to achieve their goals.
Background Investigation Unit	Early Childhood Workforce	The Background Investigation Unit processes Colorado child abuse and neglect check requests and reviews the results of required state and federal criminal background checks for individuals working with children or in unsupervised contact with children.	Move	The Background Investigation Unit is closely linked with child care licensing, as all individuals working in licensed child care facilities must be background checked. Thus, this unit will also be very important to the implementation of universal preschool, and ensuring all providers offer a safe environment for children. OEC will lead a process to ensure that just the relevant components of the background investigation unit are moved to DEC.
Child Care Licensing	Early Childhood Providers	Child Care Licensing ensures child care programs, including preschools, child care centers, and family child care homes, as well as children’s resident camps and school-age programs,	Move	Child care licensing will be an integral part of supporting current and new child care providers who will participate in universal preschool. Child care licensing will work in close partnership with the implementation of universal preschool and other efforts to ensure children are in high quality education and care that prepares them for kindergarten. DEC will collaborate with other state departments to ensure licensing regulations remain appropriate and relevant.

		meet health and safety standards and the developmental needs of children in care.		
Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS): Office of Economic Security(OES) & Office of Children, Youth, & Families (OCYF)	Ages Served	Purpose of Program	Is Program recommended to move, revisit, or stay?	Rationale for Recommendation
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in the Office of Economic Security (OES)	Until age 18 years	TANF in (OES supports participants to become self-sufficient by strengthening their family's economic and social stability.	Stay	While families with young children may be supported by TANF funding for child care, this program aims to help all families gain economic stability and is not fundamentally an early childhood program. Although states can transfer up to 30% of TANF funding to the CCDF fund (federal funding source for CCCAP), the two funding sources do not need to be at the same department for this to continue to occur. When TANF funds are transferred to CCDF, they are treated as CCDF dollars and must be spent according to CCDF rules. TWG urges that any TANF dollars that are being spent on CCDF should continue to do so.
Child Welfare (aside from child	Until age 18 years	Child Welfare within the Office of Children, Youth, and Families (OCYF) works	Stay	While young children and their families may be involved with child welfare, the scope of this program is much greater than DEC. Additionally, having this program in a separate department

maltreatment prevention programs) (OCYF)		with families with children birth to age 18.		may reduce stigma for families accessing child maltreatment prevention programs in the DEC.
Colorado Dept. of Education (CDE)	Ages Served	Purpose of Program	Is Program recommended to move, revisit, or stay?	Rationale for Recommendation
Colorado Preschool Program (CPP)/ Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE)	3-5	The Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) is a state-funded preschool program by the Colorado General Assembly, that provides high-quality early learning experiences for children who have risk factors that may affect achievement later in school. Children served through CPP attend early childhood programs located in district-operated preschools, local childcare centers, community-based preschools, and Head Start programs. Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE) slots are a type of	Move	HB21-1304 requires DEC to “incorporate the existing preschool program into the new preschool program to operate as a single state-level preschool program and align with other relevant early childhood programs.” Integrating CPP into the larger universal preschool program, while maintaining an equity focus, will help to ensure a more seamless experience for children, families, and providers.

		CPP slots which can be used more flexibly than standard CPP.		
Preschool Special Education (IDEA 619 Part B)	3-5	The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), is the federal education civil rights statute that protects the rights of students with disabilities by governing how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services from birth through age 21. IDEA authorizes federal funding to support special education and early intervention services for children with disabilities. IDEA, Part B has 2 sections: Section 619 addresses the various services to children with disabilities, 3 - 5 years of age while section 611 provides services for ages 3-21 years of age.	Revisit	Currently federal regulations make moving administration of IDEA, Part B out of the state department of education not possible. CDE will continue to oversee IDEA, Part B so that Colorado remains in compliance with federal regulations.
Early	3 and 4 year	Results Matter is a	All data	The functions, data systems, and data of Results Matter

Childhood Assessment and Results Matter	olds served in CPP and preschool special education	nationally recognized model for child assessment and professional development.	associated with these assessments should be provided to the new department.	assessments should move to DEC, as part of its role to oversee preschool programming in the state.
Early Childhood Workforce Development Team	Early Childhood Workforce	The Early Childhood Workforce Development team manages the Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System (PDIS) and provides early childhood professional development training aligned with the Colorado's Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators. The team also oversees the Early Childhood Professional Credential.	Move	The Early Childhood Workforce Development team is central to work DEC is leading to ensure that children accessing early childhood programs are benefitting from a workforce that is well-prepared, well-compensated, and well-supported. This team should work with CDE, CDHE and any pertinent departments when solving the challenges of the early childhood workforce.
Colorado Dept. of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE)	Ages Served	Purpose of Program	Is Program recommended to move, revisit, or stay?	Rationale for Recommendation

<p>Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)</p>	<p>Eligible children include infants and children through age 12 years in child care centers and child care homes. Children of migrant workers are eligible through age 15 years. In afterschool care centers and emergency shelters, children through age 18 years are eligible. Adults over 60 years and adults with</p>	<p>CACFP provides reimbursement for healthy meals and snacks served to Colorado’s children and adults in child care centers and homes, afterschool programs, emergency and homeless shelters, Head Start, Early Head Start, and outside-school-hours programs, and adult day care centers.</p>	<p>Revisit</p>	<p>The new department will be focused on the delivery of early childhood services and the creation of the new universal statewide preschool program. For continuity of services, maintaining CACFP and its current services and supports at CDPHE will minimize disruptions for families and programs at this time. Note: If at a future date it is decided that CACFP should move, there are administrative and technology infrastructure considerations that must be discussed.</p>
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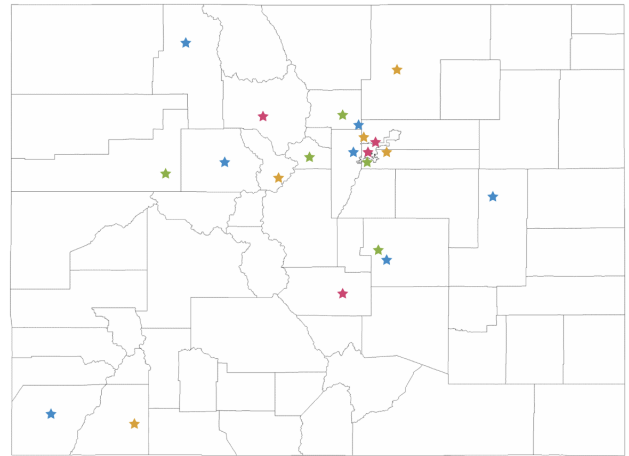
	disabilities.			
Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	Children under age 5 years	WIC provides free healthy food, breastfeeding support, nutrition education, and referrals to other care for pregnant and breastfeeding women and children younger than age 5 years.	Revisit	Federal law currently requires the WIC program to be administered by the state health department or its equivalent.

3. Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities

Meeting Calendar:

In the five months following the passing of HB21-1304, there were a large variety of ways that stakeholders were engaged including:

- 3 town halls led by the ECLC
- 32 meetings of 4 subgroups
- 6 TAG meetings
- 5 TAG feedback forms
- 4 ECLC meetings
- 6 listening sessions
- At least 45 agency subgroup meetings
- Feedback form on the ECLC transition website that was continuously reviewed (see Appendix 5)



The TAG is comprised of:

- 15 parents
- 7 school-based early childhood program providers
- 13 community-based program providers
- 7 Head Start/Early Head Start providers
- 2 family child care home providers
- 2 community-based early childhood teachers/educators
- 2 school-based early childhood teachers/educators
- 4 health and mental health program providers

Additional Information:

- 23 Black/Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) members (41%)
- 17 members from rural communities (30%)
- 17 individuals have family members with a disability (30%)

Below is a chart detailing all of the ways stakeholders were engaged with their relevant materials. For more materials such as any pre-reading please visit the [ECLC transition website](#).

Meeting Date	Meeting Name	Topics Covered and Key Questions	Meeting Materials/Resources
July 7	Kick Off - Cross Agency Webinar	This cross agency webinar helped to kick off the transition planning process. It served to provide stakeholders with additional information about the planning process and how they can get involved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2 pager(English) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Spanish ● Recording here ● Slides
July 14	Kick Off - TAG	In this kick-off meeting for the Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda

	Meeting #1	Advisory Group (TAG), members introduced themselves, reviewed the legislation, the TAG charge, and discussed a draft mission and vision of the new DEC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Slides ● Recording ● Meeting Notes
July 21	<u>Subgroups</u> Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability Special Education Service Delivery	<u>Data & Tech</u> : How is the early childhood system serving families well? Where are improvements necessary? <u>Special Ed</u> : What are the current experiences of children and families receiving special education services in the early childhood system? What is working? How should it improve?	<u>Data & Tech</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes <u>Special Ed</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording 1 ● Recording 2 ● Meeting Notes
July 22	<u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding	<u>Universal Preschool</u> : What should be the outcomes/goals of the new universal, voluntary preschool program? What does successful implementation of this look like for families? For providers? <u>Governance</u> : What programs should be part of a truly unified early childhood system to meet the needs of families? What factors/criteria should be considered when deciding which programs should be part of the new department?	<u>Universal Preschool</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes <u>Governance</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes
July 28	<u>Subgroups</u> Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability Special Education Service Delivery	<u>Data & Tech</u> : How is the early childhood system serving providers well? Where are improvements necessary? <u>Special Ed</u> : What are the current experiences of providers serving children receiving special education services in the early childhood education system? What is working? How should it improve?	<u>Data & Tech</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes <u>Special Ed</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes
July 29	<u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation	<u>Universal Preschool</u> : Brainstorm factors that should be considered when aligning or integrating the Colorado Preschool Program and	<u>Universal Preschool</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint

	Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding	the universal voluntary preschool program. With which other early childhood programs must a successful preschool program interact? <u>Governance</u> : What factors/criteria should be considered as governance is decided for the new department?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recording ● Meeting Notes <u>Governance</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes
Aug 3 12-1pm	Provider Listening Session	Providers shared about what was going well within the current system as well as areas they would like to see improved. Additionally they envisioned what a new system that would meet their needs would include.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PowerPoint ● Notes
Aug 3 5:30-6:30	Provider Listening Session		
Aug 4	TAG Meeting #2	New TAG members were introduced; TAG reviewed mission, vision, values, and guiding principles and prior stakeholder engagement and feedback, and began to discuss which programs to transition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● Slides ● Recording ● Meeting Notes
Aug 10	ECLC Town Hall	Stakeholders were provided an update on the process to date and given information on the ways they can get involved. The most up to date mission/vision/values/guiding principles were shared as well as updates from the subgroups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Slides ● Recording
Aug 11	<u>Subgroups</u> Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability Special Education Service Delivery	<u>Data & Tech</u> : Building on discussions from the last meeting, how can the evaluation and accountability systems/tools/regulations better support families? Better support providers? <u>Special Ed</u> : Review the regulations for IDEA Part B to understand legal obligations and establish a shared understanding.	<u>Data & Tech</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes <u>Special Ed</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes
Aug 12	<u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation	<u>Universal Preschool</u> : What local infrastructure exists to support implementation of the new preschool program? Brainstorm additional supports that might be valuable to implementing	<u>Universal Preschool</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording

	Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding	a successful preschool program. <u>Governance</u> : Brainstorm how blending/braiding of funds could be improved to maximize the use of public dollars. What factors/criteria should be considered when deciding how to align funding sources?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meeting Notes <u>Governance</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes
Aug 18	<u>Subgroups</u> Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability Special Education Service Delivery	<u>Data & Tech</u> : In what ways might the new department use data/evaluation/accountability to ensure ongoing/improved alignment with kindergarten and beyond? <u>Special Ed</u> : Review the regulations for IDEA Part C and the transition from Part C to Part B to set a common understanding of legal obligations.	<u>Data & Tech</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes <u>Special Ed</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes
Aug 19	<u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding	<u>Universal Preschool</u> : What should be considered when balancing universality of programming, serving children of greatest need, and ensuring access to half day or full day care (beyond 10 hours/week)? <u>Governance</u> : What local entities in the community do families currently interact with in order to access the early childhood system? What works well? Where could it improve?	<u>Universal Preschool</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes <u>Governance</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes
Aug 24 12-1pm	Family Listening Session	Families discussed what is working well for them within their current interactions with the early childhood system. They also identified challenges they have faced in this process. Finally, families worked together to envision a successful system in which all of their needs and concerns were met.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PowerPoint ● Notes
Aug 24 5:30-6:30	Family Listening Session		
Aug 25	TAG Meeting #3	TAG engaged in the following discussions: a review of the feedback from the stakeholder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● Slides

		engagement process to date; program movement; preview of local community structures and partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recording ● Meeting Chat ● Meeting Notes
Aug 26	ECLC Meeting	The ECLC reviewed HB21-1304, pre-reading materials, and stakeholder feedback and discussed programs to move to the new DEC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● Slides ● Recording
Sept 1	<u>Subgroups</u> Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability Special Education Service Delivery	<u>Data & Tech:</u> What data/technology exists or is needed to support families to find and enroll in services that meet their needs across the early childhood system? <u>Special Ed:</u> Who, in communities, supports seamless delivery of services for families and providers? What is working and what could be improved? What are our thoughts and considerations for coordination of Part B 619 and Part C of IDEA?	<u>Data & Tech</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes <u>Special Ed:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes
Sept 2	<u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding	<u>Universal Preschool:</u> Brainstorm ideas to encourage mixed delivery of the new preschool program services (e.g., quality standards, supports, funding rates). <u>Governance:</u> What does an ideal enrollment process look like for families? For providers?	<u>Universal Preschool:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes <u>Governance:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes
Sept 8	<u>Subgroups</u> Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability Special Education Service Delivery	<u>Data & Tech:</u> What should be considered when building from current state agency data systems? <i>Note: This meeting included presentations from staff at CDE, CDHS, and CDPHE to help build understanding of what current state agency data systems look like and how they function.</i> <u>Special Ed:</u> What are thoughts and considerations for the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Early Childhood and CDE in the administration and oversight of special education services in early childhood education?	<u>Data & Tech</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes <u>Special Ed:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes

Sept 8	ECLC Town hall	Stakeholders were provided an update on the transition process and given information on the ways they can get involved. The most up to date versions of the mission/vision/values/guiding principles were shared, the programs movement proposal was presented and a timeline for this transition, as well as updates on the discussions the other subgroups have been engaging in to date.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Slides ● Recording
Sept 9	<u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding	<u>Universal Preschool:</u> Brainstorm ideas to ensure adequate teachers, staffing, and facilities to implement the new statewide, universal preschool program. <u>Governance:</u> What programs within the new department can best incorporate the voices of families, early childhood professionals, and direct service providers?	<u>Universal Preschool</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes <u>Governance</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● PowerPoint ● Recording ● Meeting Notes
Sept 15	TAG Meeting #4	TAG engaged in the following discussions: a review of the stakeholder engagement process thus far, programs movement for the final time, governance structures for the new department, and the challenges of blending/braiding funding that stakeholders have identified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● Slides ● Recording ● Meeting Chat ● Meeting Notes
Sept 21 12-1pm	Workforce Listening Session	Providers, professionals, and early childhood staff were invited to share what about the current system is working well for them and what could be improved and then were asked to think about what success in the new DEC looks like.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Slides ● Notes
Sept 21 5:30-6:30	Workforce Listening Session		
Sept 22	TAG Meeting #5	TAG members continued to discuss what governance of the new department could look like, heard presentations from Summit County and Denver Preschool Program on how they blend/braid funding in their communities, and discussed solutions to the blending/braiding challenges raised by stakeholders throughout the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● Slides ● Recording ● Meeting Chat ● Meeting Notes

		process.	
Sept 23	ECLC Meeting	The ECLC discussed programs to transition to the new department and governance of the new department and began a preliminary discussion on blending/braiding funding and technology/data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agenda ● Slides ● Recording
Sept 29	<u>Subgroups</u> Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability Special Education Service Delivery	Coming soon	
Sept 30	<u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding	Coming soon	
Oct 5	ECLC Town hall	Coming soon	
Oct 6	<u>Subgroups</u> Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability Special Education Service Delivery	Coming soon	
Oct 7	<u>Subgroups</u> Universal Preschool Implementation Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding	Coming soon	

Oct 11	<u>ECLC Statewide Listening Tour</u> Events in Eagle, Grand Junction	Coming soon	
Oct 12	<u>ECLC Statewide Listening Tour</u> Events in Montrose, Durango	Coming soon	
Oct 13	<u>ECLC Statewide Listening Tour</u> Events in Alamosa, Pueblo	Coming soon	
Oct 14	<u>ECLC Statewide Listening Tour</u> Events in Denver and virtually	Coming soon	
Oct 15	<u>ECLC Statewide Listening Tour</u> Events in Fort Collins, Fort Morgan	Coming soon	
Oct 20	TAG Meeting #6	Coming soon	
Oct 28	ECLC Meeting	Coming soon	

4. Subgroup Takeaways

Subgroup	Topics Covered	Participants	Summary Materials
Universal Preschool Implementation	The Universal Preschool Implementation Subgroup identified strategies and recommendations to align the Proposition EE funding with CPP/ECARE into a new statewide, universal, high-quality, voluntary preschool program in a mixed-delivery system.	Open to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webpage • Reporting slides
Transformative Governance, Operations, and	The Transformative Governance, Operations, and Funding Subgroup focused on the opportunities to align the	Open to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webpage • Reporting slides

Funding	governance, funding, and operations of the new department. This group was tasked with discussing the following topics: movement of existing programs to the new department, governance of the new department, alignment of funding sources, and restructuring enrollment process for families.		
Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability	The Innovative Data, Technology, Evaluation, and Accountability Subgroup focused on the opportunities to enhance the data and technology needed to support a fully aligned early childhood system.	Open to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Webpage ● Reporting slides
Special Education Service Delivery	The Special Education Service Delivery Subgroup is developing recommendations for the administration of preschool special education services in collaboration with DEC.	Seated 37 members; also open to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Webpage ● Reporting slides

5. General Feedback

Throughout this entire process, the ECLC collected feedback from stakeholders through a public [form](#) on the ECLC Transition website. Responses from these forms were included as pre reading for all TAG meetings. Collected feedback can be reviewed [here](#).

In addition to the feedback form, several letters were received by the TAG and TWG that offered specific recommendations or considerations:

- [Family Resource Center Association](#)
- [Home Visiting Coalition](#)
- [Colorado Counties Inc. and the Colorado Human Services Directors Association](#)
- [UPK Universal Screening Recommendation](#)
- [Letter from Trust for Learning](#)
- [Letter from the Early Childhood Braintrust](#)

6. Strategies to Support Implementation

Key strategies - called for in the legislation, critical to the success of the early childhood system, and listed below - bolster the plan for DEC articulated in this report. Specific examples of how and where these strategies serve to strengthen the DEC listed below are based on feedback from stakeholders throughout the process.

Strategies to Support	Recommendations from TAG and Subgroups
<p>Elimination of the duplicative oversight and regulation of early childhood care and learning programs and other relevant early childhood programs, which promotes administrative efficiency;</p>	<p>The new department should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review all regulations and rules by 2025 with an eye towards reducing burdens for providers and families. Some of this work already began with the most recent SB 19-104 commission to eliminate duplicate regulations summary report but a more in depth review should be conducted. ● Reduce duplication of efforts with local entities by creating connected technology.
<p>Continuing efforts to align the increasingly unified early childhood system with the elementary and secondary public education system, especially kindergarten and grades one through three and the early literacy initiatives implemented at these levels, including strategies to reduce bureaucracy and ensure alignment with programs that are not unified under the new department;</p>	<p>The new department should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Define experiences for children within the early childhood system that prepare them for kindergarten-3rd grade and then define the supports that teachers need to be able to provide these experiences ● Collect data on the extent to which children are receiving those experiences, and provide analysis on how to improve services. ● Focus on transitions into kindergarten and how DEC and CDE can support families and providers. ● Identify existing and future opportunities for increased alignment across the early childhood system and K-3 space and report to ECLC/Governor on progress.
<p>Continuing efforts to align the early childhood system with the child welfare system and child maltreatment prevention initiatives, including efforts to ensure alignment with prevention services under the federal "Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018", as defined in section 26-5-101 (4.5);</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As named in the report, alignment of the early childhood system with the child welfare system and child maltreatment prevention initiatives should be included in DEC and other departments' annual report to the legislature.
<p>Program and service alignment among the new department and the existing departments, including entering into memoranda of understanding and shared initiatives that achieve alignment across programs and services;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● DEC's vision, mission, and guiding principles provide the foundation for creating a clear singular goal for the experiences for children in early childhood programs. ● As noted in the report, DEC will have an extensive list of structures in place to encourage cross agency collaboration.
<p>Alignment with multi-generation strategies used by the new department and the existing departments to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One of DEC's core values is a whole child/whole family approach, which is

support child and parent outcomes that improve overall family well-being;	reflected in the recommendation for program movement that includes several programs serving families.
Coordination and collaboration with state agencies that oversee or operate programs that are not moved to the new department to maximize the effectiveness of the new department's early childhood services and programs;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As noted in this report, DEC will collaborate closely with programs in other departments that also serve children and families. ● Cross agency liaisons, MOUs, and routine report outs will strengthen alignment across departments.
Robust stakeholder involvement in developing and implementing early childhood policies, which must include involvement of parents in developing policies and program decisions that affect them and their children;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As noted in the governance section of this report, the Rules and Regulations Advisory Council must include representation from families and caregivers of young children. ● Existing structures currently utilized by OEC will serve in an advisory role to DEC
Education and training regarding how to identify and address child and family trauma and support a trauma-informed approach to early childhood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review the existing set of supports related to trauma-informed care including mental health consultation and curriculum to ensure all funding is being leveraged efficiently and effectively to support identifying and addressing child and family trauma in early childhood environments.

7. Landscape Analysis

This [slideshow](#) offers a more in depth analysis of Colorado’s existing early childhood landscape, as well as recommendations for data collection for DEC.

8. Glossary of Terms

Mixed Delivery (Every Student Succeeds Act)³⁰: The term “mixed delivery system” means a system -- (A) of early childhood education services that are delivered through a combination of programs, providers, and settings (such as Head Start, licensed family and center-based child care programs, public schools, and community-based organizations); and (B) that is supported with a combination of public funds and private funds.

Program: A program offers early childhood services to children and families within specific parameters such as child and/or family eligibility requirements specific to that program (e.g. Head Start, CPP). Programs may be funded publicly, privately, or a combination.

Site: A facility that provides early childhood services that children attend (e.g. a school or child care center).

³⁰ Every Student Succeeds Act: <https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ95/PLAW-114publ95.pdf>

Provider: The owner and/or primary administrator of one or multiple early child care and education sites and/or services. Providers can also offer services outside of early care and education sites such as those groups that provide home visitation, speech therapists, occupational therapists in the child's home.

Provider Type: License type based on type of service (e.g., early care and education center, preschool, family child care home, etc.).

Early Childhood Professional: Early childhood professionals include those who provide services to support young children birth through age 5 and their families. This includes early childhood educators, home visitors, early intervention specialists, early childhood mental health providers, preschool teachers, kindergarten through third grade teachers, infant-toddler teachers, family child care professionals, and family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.

Services: Includes any and all services provided to the public by a Colorado government entity.

Slot: A space located at an early childhood site that a child can enroll in for early childhood care or education or services.

Delivery Method: Delivery method is how and where programs or services are being provided--in a public school setting, in a home, private care facility, etc.