



## COMMUNITY PROFILE



# Denver

## ORIGIN

The Colorado Early Childhood Councils are a legislative expansion (HB06-1062) of the Consolidated Child Care Pilots that existed from 1997 – 2006. Currently, 31 Early Childhood Councils are active in 58 of Colorado's 64 counties. The role of Early Childhood Councils is to improve and sustain the availability, accessibility, capacity and quality of early childhood services for children and families throughout the state. Denver's Early Childhood Council or "Joint Council" was created in 1992 to address a systemic need to coordinate and manage quality improvements in Denver's early childhood education (ECE) centers. Since that time, the Council's role in coordinating early childhood services and partners has grown, and is now inclusive of all early childhood domains: Early Learning, Well-being and Family Support. The Council became an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in 2011.

## GOALS

The Council's strategic organizational goals are to:

- Improve the quality of Denver's early childhood services
- Build the foundations of a collaborative early childhood system
- Create and maintain a thriving organization

## KEY STRATEGIES

Between 2015 and the end of 2018, the Council will focus its highest level of attention and resources on these four priorities:

- Inform and impact policy in the City and County of Denver through intentional collaboration to direct resources to improve services for children and families.
- Provide leadership to assure successful implementation of quality improvement initiatives so child care providers can offer quality programs and services.
- Provide inclusive quality improvement services to at least 70 percent of licensed, formal care (0-5) and a broad base of informal care.
- Leverage and develop the strengths and expertise of the staff and Board to pursue innovative and diverse funding strategies for a sustainable organization.

## LEAD AGENCY

Denver's Early Childhood Council

## MISSION

To serve as Denver's early childhood hub, leveraging resources, opportunities and connections to create a quality system that positively impacts the lives of children and their families.

## INITIATIVE BUDGET

\$3 million

## START DATE

1992

## GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Denver, CO – City and County

## KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Population  
633,777 (2014 ACS)

Population Under 5  
44,364 (2014 ACS)

Percent of Children in Poverty  
27.5% (2014 ACS)

Percent of Newborns at Low Birth Weight  
9.1% (2013, National Center for Health Statistics)

Percent of Children in Food-Insecure Households  
22.5% (2013, Feeding America)

## CONTACT

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## INNOVATION OF NOTE

### ecConnect: Online Portal and Data Collection System

The Denver Council has played a lead role in the development and expansion of a comprehensive database system for administering and monitoring Quality Improvement (QI) grants to early childhood programs. ecConnect (a customized version of SugarCRM, an open-source customer relations management system) allows the Council to manage the full life-cycle of QI grants, including a fair and objective application process, assignment of QI resources, electronic signature of program MOUs, coaching scheduling, detailed logs assessments and observations and an online provider portal that enables child care professionals to register for trainings, access QI funds and submit helpdesk questions.

As the new Colorado Shines quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) system was built in 2014, ecConnect was identified as a complementary system that could be leveraged and utilized across the state by all Early Childhood Councils for streamlined, aggregate-level reporting within the shared framework. A comprehensive integration between the state's Salesforce system and the Council's SugarCRM system, backed by a written Data Sharing Agreement, has been successful in the initial phase of the project. Thousands of data fields sync between the two database systems on a nightly basis, seamlessly connecting the activities occurring with the QRIS system and the Council-supported quality improvement work.

### + EARLY CHILDHOOD-LINC

An initiative of the Center for the Study of Social Policy, **Early Childhood-LINC** (Learning and Innovation Network for Communities) is developed by and for communities. Our mission is to support families and improve results for young children in communities across the country with a focus on accelerating the development of effective, integrated, local early childhood systems.

## MEASURES OF PROGRESS

### APPROACH

By collaborating with key state and local partners and early care and education providers, the Council is setting the stage to track outcomes for early care and learning programs as a result of our QI efforts. Its "2020 Vision" is that more than half of all formal care settings where high-need children are served in Denver are of high quality (Colorado Shines rating of Level 3 or higher).

### INDICATORS

The Council will measure its success against the following indicators related to its goals for 2020:

1. At least 70 percent of licensed child care programs have accessed the Council's services to enhance and support their quality
2. At least 70 percent of Denver CCCAP children are enrolled in high quality ECE programs
3. Over 51 percent of Denver's programs serving CCCAP children are high quality (Level 3 or above)
4. Over 20 additional informal caregivers have received resources to achieve their professional goals

In addition, since 2011, participation in quality improvement initiatives has continued to grow (from approximately 180 formal MOUs to over 450 MOUs) and the Council's services (such as coaching, training, scholarships and materials grants) have more than doubled in volume and frequency.

## STRUCTURE & LEADERSHIP

The Council's formalized structure includes an independent Board of Directors. Two positions are appointed by the Mayor of Denver, and two are appointed by the Denver Public Schools Superintendent. Board members are eligible to serve two 3-year terms. The Council's bylaws require that each Board Member participate on at least one committee or partner network group.

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT

At least one parent of a child under 5 is required legislatively to be part of the Council. In 2015 the Council created a new staff position that focuses on family engagement.

## FINANCING

About three-fourths of the Council's budget comes from public funding and government contracts, including the state's federally awarded Race to the Top grant. The remaining portion of funding comes from private foundations and donations. The Colorado Department of Human Services provides federal Child Care and Development Fund block grant dollars to support the council system.



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