



COLORADO CENTER
on LAW & POLICY

Justice and Economic Security for all Coloradans

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Education and Training for Low Income Parents Designing an Approach that Works

What are proven predictors of early success in school for young children?

- In a review of large scale (500+), longitudinal studies looking at early childhood predictors of early school success, the **strongest predictors of success** were: maternal education, gender, income and low birth rate.ⁱ
- **Parental education and income directly impacts child success in school.** Young children whose parents' education and income level is low are more likely to fall behind in school themselves. If Colorado wants successful kids, we need to address the educational needs of their parents.

Dr. Donald Hernandez of City University of New York compared children of mothers who did not complete high school, with children of mothers who had a bachelor's degree. As expected, the children of mothers who did not finish high school had a much higher poverty rate—53 percent compared to 4 percent. Quite startling is the comparison of eighth grade reading and math skills between the two sets of children. Of those whose mothers had not finished high school, 16 percent reached grade level reading proficiency compared to 49 percent of children whose mothers had a bachelor's degree. In math, grade level proficiency was 16 percent for children of parents who did not finish high school, versus 52 percent for children of college graduates. *Mother's Education, Child Well-Being, and Key Components of Dual Generation Program Strategies*. Annie E Casey Foundation, 2014.

What barriers do parents face in getting education and training they need?

A lack of available and affordable child care can limit a parent's progress toward educational goals and consequently impair their efforts to escape poverty and improve the family income. Approximately 52 percent of single mothers in Colorado without a high school diploma live in poverty. Yet for single mothers with a B.A., the poverty rate falls to 18 percent. Delays in the parent's education progress result in delays in the educational progress of the child.

What resources currently exist to help parents navigate education and parenting?

Colorado has some resources to support parents in achieving their educational goals but they are spread between four different state departments and can vary from college to college. It can be difficult to impossible for a low income parent to identify and coordinate the resources that could help them complete their education or training goals while caring for young children. Only one in 10 low income parents are enrolled in education or training programs nationally. Half of those also work, thus need child care for work, school and their commute.ⁱⁱ

Colleges: Only a few colleges have onsite childcare. Those that do may still require full payment of child care services, which challenges low income parents. Or they may serve different aged children, or may not provide child care during the hours when needed classes are offered. The federal Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program is design to help address the need, but falls far short in addressing the need for affordable child care.

We have heard anecdotally that some colleges include child care needs in determining financial aid. Still parents are attracted to schools which advertise more online classes, schools which may be more expensive or not suited to those with academic challenges. We have also heard that some parents increase student debt to cover child care bills.

Workforce Centers: While Workforce Centers may train or retrain workers, their services generally do not include the provision of child care. Clients with child care needs are often referred to Human Services. WIOA does allow funds to be used to provide support services, including child care, but funds are not sufficient to meet the need for child care along with the other necessary supportive services for the targeted population. **Under the new WIOA bill, workforce centers must prioritize service to those with barriers to employment, such as the need for child care.** Under the new WIOA, youth 18-24 who are out of school and out of work are prioritized for services under the youth program. Many of these youth are parents of young children. The State Workforce Development Council is currently in the process of writing Colorado's WIOA implementation plan. To effectively serve those with child care need in the workforce centers, coordination between state departments must be developed. Unlike other parts of Human Services, the Child Care Assistance Program is not a federally required partner.

Adult Education and Literacy: Some programs have a child care arrangement, but most do not. Thus parents may defer participation until their children are school aged, deferring as well their ability achieve economic stability by completing their high school equivalency diploma.

Human Services: Under HB14- 1317, the Child Care Assistance Program now must consider post-secondary education an eligible activity, but counties are free to prioritize employment related child care over education related child care. In times of limited child care dollars, with a majority of those eligible not being served, this can call into question whether dollars would be available. Child care must be provided to TANF recipients, but TANF is first and foremost an employment focused service. Educational services are subject to the discretion of the counties. Meanwhile, counties feel pressured to meet TANF Work Participation Rates, and educational opportunities are limited. It is uncertain whether low income parents, colleges and universities and community based organizations know they can now access child care dollars for education.

Bill Proposal

A time limited task force should be created, charged with evaluating the best way for state agencies to coordinate to address the child care needs of low-income parents of young children who wish to advance their education. The task force can be charged with streamlining processes administratively, or making recommendations for future legislative changes, if needed.

Members of the task force should include representatives from the Department of Labor, the Department of Higher Education, the Department of Education, and the Department of Human Services, as well as representatives of organizations that serve parents of young children in the employment and training arena, representatives of child care providers, and parents who have sought or completed education and training while parenting small children.

For more information, questions, or concerns, contact:

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ⁱ ChildTrends Project Report by Susmita Pati, MD, MPH et al., 2009

ⁱⁱ The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and Child Care for Low-Income Parents by Shayne Spaulding. Urban Insitute, 2015