



# ECLC

*Early Childhood Leadership Commission*

## **2011 Annual Report**

Presented to:

Governor Hickenlooper

Senate Education Committee, Senate Health and  
Human Services Committee, House Education  
Committee, House Health and Environment  
Committee



*Greeting Children.* 2011. Photograph. Clayton Early Learning Center, Denver.

Colorado’s future success and prosperity depends *today* on the foundation our communities build for every child to thrive.

That’s why this administration has identified early childhood as a top priority. We know that Colorado cannot prosper without strong support for its youngest citizens. Children who have a supportive family environment, a strong health foundation and quality early learning are more likely to succeed in school and, ultimately, the workplace.

The Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) brings together early childhood stakeholders from across Colorado to improve outcomes for young children ages birth to eight. The Commission is committed to identifying opportunities for, and addressing barriers to, the coordination of early childhood policies and programs so that all Colorado children have a chance to be valued, healthy and thriving.

This report reflects the Commission’s accomplishments over the past year and provides a roadmap forward for Colorado’s early childhood system. As a state, we will continue to prioritize early childhood development as the most important investment in Colorado’s future.

Joseph A. Garcia

Lieutenant  
Governor

Anna-Jo Haynes

Co-Chair  
ECLC

Pat Hamill

Co-Chair  
ECLC

Reggie Bicha

Co-Chair  
ECLC

## Support for Early Childhood Is an Investment in the Future

Did you know that only **one of six U.S. children born into the bottom economic tier will move to the middle class** and **less than one in ten will move to the highest income levels**?<sup>1</sup> Some call this the *lottery of birth*. A recent study showed that U.S. children's educational, social and economic futures are more tied to their parents' education when compared to some other countries.<sup>2</sup> **Less than half** of U.S. parents now believe their children will grow up to experience a higher standard of living than their own.<sup>3</sup>

We know good policy *can* change our children's future. While gaps in ability and health across socioeconomic groups begin at very early ages, quality early childhood supports can mitigate these gaps.

- Investment in early childhood education can help **close achievement gaps, boost wage earnings, increase the likelihood of healthier lifestyles and reduce social costs** like crime.<sup>4</sup>
- Quality home visiting can decrease the incidence of low birth weight by almost half and **cut rates of abuse and neglect by 80%**.<sup>5</sup>
- Children with a medical home\* have been shown to have **30% fewer emergency room visits** as well as fewer hospitalizations and unmet health care needs.<sup>6</sup>

## How Colorado Rates for Kids

Changing the *lottery of birth* will be challenging. Currently, many Colorado children are born at-risk and stay at-risk:

- **DOUBLED.** The number of Colorado children living in poverty in the last decade has doubled.<sup>7</sup>
- **LOW BIRTH WEIGHT.** Colorado has one of the nation's highest rates of children born with low birth weight—a predictor for child development problems.<sup>8</sup>
- **LESS THAN HALF.** Only 48% of children ages 6 to 9 received the recommended number of medical well-child visits.<sup>9</sup>
- **AVAILABILITY GAP.** Colorado has an estimated 1.63 children for every 1 licensed childcare slot.<sup>10</sup>
- **ONE QUARTER.** 25% of Colorado students do **not** graduate high school. By and large, these are the same students who were not reading proficiently in the early grades.<sup>11</sup>

The Commission is committed to helping all children—especially those most at-risk—have the best chance to be valued, healthy and thriving. This report describes the ways we're working to achieve this goal.

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## About The Colorado Early Childhood Leadership Commission

**Mission:** In 2010, legislators passed SB 195, creating the Early Childhood Leadership Commission to **promote the coordination of policies and procedures that affect the health and well-being of Colorado children**, guided by the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* (see last page).

**Who:** Members include business and philanthropic leaders, legislators, service providers, and representatives from education, health and other state and community stakeholders.

**Why:** Guided by a child-focused and family-centered approach, the work of the Commission is vital to:

- **Close the Achievement Gap.** Research indicates that high-quality early childhood services can close the school readiness gap and lay the foundation for a productive citizenry.
- **Support and Build the Workforce.** A strong early childhood system improves worker productivity and reduces turnover in the workplace.
- **Increase Efficiency, Increase Results.** Better outcomes for children result when health, education and human service systems are better coordinated, increasing the effectiveness, efficiency and availability of services.

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### Year-at-a-Glance – Preserving, Digging Deep and Marching Forward

Colorado continues to deal with strenuous budget choices as a result of the weakened economy. Thanks to broad legislative support, services for young children were mostly preserved in 2011.

To continue to protect and maximize our resources, the Commission embarked on several information-gathering efforts to better understand the landscape, advance the quality of services and strengthen how the early childhood system functions to serve children. To this end, the Commission:

- Spearheaded a governance plan to make Colorado's early childhood system more **efficient, effective and elegant**.
- Engaged in **intensive data collection** on the status of children, and the funds and services that support them;

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- Supported work to **improve the quality** of early childhood services;
  - Launched a **statewide summer listening tour** to gain feedback on early childhood governance and activities in order to strengthen local efforts (see Listening Tour Spotlights);

This work will be used in 2012 to help the state advance the vision that all Colorado children, regardless of background, zip code or income, will be ready for their first day of kindergarten and develop to their fullest potential.

## **Effectively Structuring the Governance of Early Childhood Programs**

In its authorizing statute, the Commission was charged to develop recommendations by January 2012 concerning the governance of state early childhood supports and services. The Colorado landscape of early childhood involves **5 different state agencies and 23 different funding streams**, not to mention numerous state and local, public and private efforts. The Commission needs to preserve what works while streamlining and strengthening the overall system to help children and families.

Energized by Governor John Hickenlooper's call for change management in state government, the Commission partnered with the administration to work on early childhood governance. The Commission used prior state proposals, national models and feedback from their listening tour to design a governance structure to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and elegance with which services are delivered to children and families:

- **Increase Efficiency.** Increase coordination and alignment, reduce duplication of efforts, increase responsiveness and maximize fiscal and human capital resources.
- **Increase Effectiveness.** Implement a results-focused system to track outcomes, measure progress and inform strategic planning and funding.
- **Increase Elegance.** Improve and streamline the quality, access, capacity, and local delivery of early childhood services across all child-serving sectors.

**“Thanks to broad legislative support, services for young children were mostly preserved in 2011.”**

The Commission, stakeholders and legislative sponsors are enthusiastic about realizing this **new vision for early childhood** governance. See the “*Future Commission Work*” section for information on the governance legislation to be introduced this session and next steps for this effort.

## Digging Deep—Understanding the State of Early Childhood

Efforts for children are sometimes stymied by a lack of hard data. The Commission embarked on several projects to understand how:

- Children and families are faring in health and development across the state;
- Money is allocated across the early childhood system; and
- Quality improvements can lead to better outcomes for Colorado children.



**Listening Tour Spotlight:** Boulder County’s Early Childhood Council is just one of the many councils dedicated to improving the availability of high quality early childcare centers to its community. Through partnerships with the Acorn School, Boulder Day Nursery, Shared Services and the Merage Foundation, Boulder County is on track to add several new centers. These centers will highlight quality programs like Head Start, while providing health, mental health and special needs services on-site. The combined effort of these programs should help serve 300 children within the Boulder County community.

The Commission identified two data-collection projects as a priority for this year:

### 1. Assessing the Needs of Colorado Communities

The Commission recently completed the [\*Colorado Early Childhood Needs Assessment\*](#) which provides a comprehensive picture of early childhood risk and protective factors in Colorado’s 64 counties. Counties were classified as low, medium or high risk, based on the status of children and families. Then, based on the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework*, county-level information on children and currently available resources was summarized for the four system domains critical to early childhood development—early learning, family support and education, social/emotional/mental health, and physical health. The report includes information in areas such as third grade reading and the availability of health care. This

assessment will serve as a reliable planning tool for county and state early childhood services.

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## 2. Modeling the Costs and Benefits of the Early Childhood System

Colorado lacks up-to-date information on the actual costs of and returns for programs and services across the early childhood system. To address this, the Commission directed the update and enhancement of the *Colorado Early Childhood Cost Model*. The cost model, available in early 2012, is an interactive, web-based tool that will allow the Commission legislators and other state and local stakeholders to project the costs of financing a comprehensive, high-quality early childhood system. Users will be able to analyze the costs and benefits of various services by modeling scenarios that impact access and quality

across the system. Users can also forecast the return on investment, or **long-term economic benefits**, of certain programs. In this way, the cost model will help promote discussions and planning around early childhood policy and funding.



Lieutenant Governor Visits Head Start Classroom. 2011. Photograph. Mile High Montessorri, Denver.

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### Improving Quality

There's no doubt that services for young children **must** be of high quality for children to learn and thrive. The Commission has been working on **five fronts** to increase the quality of Colorado's early childhood programs:

- Developing early learning and development guidelines for children birth to eight;
- Evolving the state's quality rating and improvement system;
- Developing early childhood professional competencies;
- Supporting the pilot of a kindergarten readiness assessment; and
- Planning an early childhood data system.

**“Services for young children  
must be of high quality for  
children to learn and thrive.”**



Library. 2011. Photograph. Martinez Elementary, Colorado Springs.

## 1. Early Learning and Development Guidelines

To increase chances for Colorado children to develop to their fullest potential, we must have a common vision for what young children should know and be able to do. To that end, Colorado is developing a comprehensive set of early learning and development guidelines for children birth to eight. The ***Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines*** will foster better continuity in care and help everyone—from parents to providers—have a shared understanding of children’s growth. The guidelines will also recognize variations in cultures, languages and abilities in children.

Colorado will be one of the **first states in the nation** to use guidelines that align with the new Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework and the **Common Core State Standards** (a nationwide collaborative project to provide teachers and parents with a common understanding of what students are expected to learn). Importantly, the guidelines will align with Colorado’s new P-12 standards, ensuring that services and expectations are coordinated across early learning settings. The Commission expects to release a draft of the guidelines in early 2012.



## 2. Quality Rating and Improvement System

High quality early care and education is one of the critical tools to boost school readiness across the state. The Commission is supporting work to design and implement a next-generation **Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS)** for licensed programs. This system can help families compare a program's quality and determine which programs best support their child's development. It also helps providers be most effective in their work. Currently, licensed centers can elect to participate in Colorado's TQRIS, administered by Qualistar Colorado. This was one of the first in the nation to be implemented more than a decade ago. All licensed providers will be included in the new quality rating and improvement system, which will be developed through stakeholder input and incorporate best practices recognized by early childhood experts and research. The new system will offer a unifying set of standards —for parents, providers and funders —that will promote the best outcomes for Colorado children.



**Listening Tour Spotlight:** During the stop in Grand Junction, the Mesa County Partnership for Children and Families demonstrated how a community can collaborate to support professional development. Partnering with local organizations, state agencies, community partners, the community college and foundations, over 250 early childhood professionals have continued post-secondary education in the past three years. Students have gone on to become directors of early childhood centers, receive honor society awards and become president of the Mesa District Group.

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## 3. Early Childhood Professional Competencies

While parents are a child's first and most important teacher, effective professionals are also a key ingredient to a child's success. The Commission is supporting the creation of a **Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework**, uniform standards for early childhood professionals that will align with the new **Educator Effectiveness Standards**. The Framework will address specialized fields such as English Language Learning, special education and infant/toddler care, ensuring that Colorado children are receiving the best possible care from well-trained and knowledgeable professionals.

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## 4. Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

Are Colorado children ready for school? We won't fully know the answer without a state-wide kindergarten readiness evaluation. The Commission is supporting the Colorado Department of Education's pilot of a kindergarten readiness assessment. In addition to giving policymakers important information about the status of young children, the assessment will help educators deliver appropriate curriculum including early intervention services. This will ensure that kindergarteners receive the necessary attention and resources in a timely manner. Per statute, it is the goal of the state to deploy the assessment for all children in publicly-funded kindergarten by 2013.

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## 5. Creating a Comprehensive Early Childhood Data System

To achieve Colorado's vision of all children being valued, healthy and thriving, we need information about children, programs and providers to evaluate our progress and make improvements. Colorado will need to coordinate and integrate existing data sources to help identify and meet the needs of children. The Commission is collaborating with the Governor's Office of Information Technology to leverage the Colorado Department of Education's statewide longitudinal data system and responsibly access information from other sources such as the Colorado Department of Human Services and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. The optimal data system will allow for regular status reports, inform state and local decisions and be accessible to providers across the early childhood domains in order to improve services for children and families.



**Listening Tour Spotlight:** The Listening Tour drew feedback from the front range to the western slope, the southwest to the eastern plains. The Early Childhood Council serving Washington, Yuma and Kit Carson counties is working to address the need for developmental and health screening. In 2000, they began Healthy Child Clinics in Yuma and Washington counties, and added dental screening in 2002. Thanks to dedicated partners in health care, dental care and child care, this program has successfully served the community for 9 years. The next challenge is to bring these partners to Kit Carson to provide the same quality programs.

## Setting the Agenda: Future Commission Work

The Commission will focus its efforts this coming year on two key priorities:

- Supporting the passage of the legislation on early childhood governance; and
- Realizing the vision of an improved early childhood system with innovative re-sourcing and enhanced quality and access.

### Early Childhood Governance

In last year's State of the State address, Governor Hickenlooper announced a change management effort to make state government "more efficient, effective and elegant." The Commission governance project was the first major initiative of the Governor's change management effort.

**"We seek your support in consolidating early childhood services... to more efficiently and effectively aid children and parents."**

**- Governor John Hickenlooper  
2012 State of the State Address**

In September 2011, the Commission unanimously approved an early childhood governance proposal put forth by the Hickenlooper-Garcia administration and the executive directors of the Colorado Department of Human Services, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing. This proposal will be introduced in the 2012 legislative session. This legislation:

- Calls for the consolidation of several early childhood programs into a newly-created office in the Colorado Department of Human Services;
- Ensures inter-agency cooperation and reporting; and
- Focuses on prevention and intervention.

The legislation also proposes that the public/private Commission serve as an advisory body to the new office.

Supporting the passage of this legislation —with the ultimate goal of streamlining services for children and families —is the Commission's top priority.



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## Marching Forward

The Commission believes Colorado must do better for its youngest citizens—our future depends on their future. This means supporting families as their children’s first and best teachers, while providing a network of quality supports and services to ensure children develop to their full potential. The Commission is committed to maximizing the state’s resources to make improvements in quality and access across the four system domains: early learning; family support and parent education; social/emotional/mental health; and physical health.

Colorado took a big step toward this effort in 2011 as one of 37 applicants for the \$500 million Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Fund. Only 9 states were selected and Colorado’s application was just 10 points away from being awarded. However, the grant application, developed with unprecedented engagement from stakeholders, including leadership from the Commission, has helped Colorado create a clear roadmap to enhance the quality and effectiveness of early learning and development. The state will now refine the roadmap and commit to timelines, priorities and strategies to move Colorado’s early learning system to higher levels of quality and better access. The Commission also continues to work on issues of health, mental health and family support so that we ensure the strongest opportunities possible for each child to be valued, healthy and thriving.

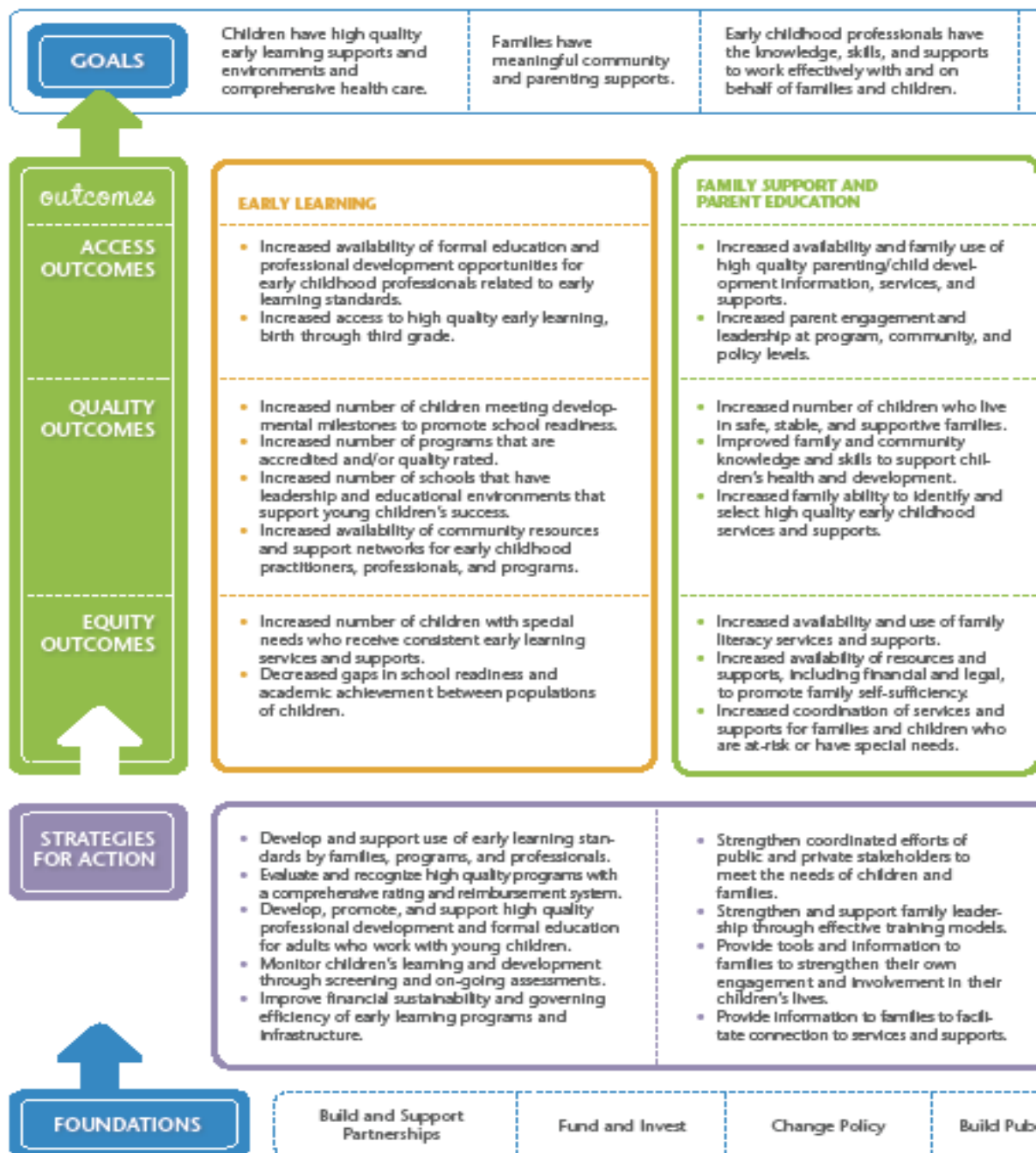
The Commission is proud of its work on behalf of Colorado’s young children and grateful for the many partners involved: the Hickenlooper-Garcia Administration, the state legislature, the network of Early Childhood Councils Colorado and the many public and private partners who share this vision. The Commission will continue to guide early childhood work in Colorado so the state can maximize current resources to improve the lives, and the future, of Colorado children.

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**Thanks to all the public and private partners who worked in collaboration with the Early Childhood Leadership Commission in 2011**

Augenblick, Palaich and Associates  
Aurora Public Schools  
Boulder Journey School  
Clayton Early Learning Center  
Colorado Alliance for Quality School-Age Programs  
Colorado Association for the Education of Young Children  
Colorado Association of Family Child Care  
Colorado Association for Infant Mental Health  
Colorado Children's Campaign  
Colorado Children's Trust Fund and Family Resource Centers  
Colorado Community College System  
Colorado Department of Education  
Colorado Department of Higher Education  
Colorado Department of Human Services  
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment  
Colorado Head Start Association  
Colorado Health Foundation  
Colorado Office of Professional Development  
Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition  
Colorado Trust  
Community Research Education Awareness Results  
Denver Preschool Program  
Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission  
Early Childhood Councils Leadership Alliance  
Early Learning Ventures  
Executives Partnering to Invest in Children  
Family Flex  
Foundation for Educational Excellence  
Head Start State Collaboration Office  
Hickenlooper-Garcia Administration  
Invest in Kids  
Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation  
Marsico Institute for Early Learning and Literacy  
Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning  
Mile High Montessori  
Mile High United Way  
Office of Information Technology  
Office of the Lt. Governor  
Oldham Innovative Research  
Piton Foundation  
Qualistar Colorado  
Red Rocks Community College  
Rose Community Foundation  
Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation  
The Partnership for Families & Children  
Tim Wolf, Wolf Interests, Inc.  
University of Colorado Boulder  
University of Colorado Denver  
University of Denver  
University of Northern Colorado



*all children are valued, healthy, and thriving*

#### SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND MENTAL HEALTH

- Increased availability and use of high quality social, emotional, and mental health training and support.
- Increased number of supportive and nurturing environments that promote children's healthy social and emotional development.

- Increased number of environments, including early learning settings, providing early identification and mental health consultation.
- Improved knowledge and practice of nurturing behaviors among families and early childhood professionals.

- Increased number of mental health services for children with persistent, serious challenging behaviors.
- Decreased number of out-of-home placements of children.

- Promote caregivers' knowledge of the social, emotional, and mental health of young children.
- Provide early childhood professionals with effective practices that promote children's social-emotional development and mental health.
- Strengthen and support community-based mental health services that identify and serve young children.

#### HEALTH

- Increased access to preventive oral and medical health care.
- Increased number of children covered by consistent health insurance.

- Increased number of children who receive a Medical Home approach.
- Increased number of children who are fully immunized.
- Increased knowledge of the importance of health and wellness (including nutrition, physical activity, medical, oral, and mental health).

- Increased percentage of primary care physicians and dentists who accept Medicaid and Child Health Plan Plus.
- Increased percentage of women giving birth with timely, appropriate prenatal care.
- Decreased number of underinsured children.

- Enroll more children in health insurance programs.
- Promote and support use of standards for a Medical Home approach (including medical, oral, and mental health, as well as developmental, vision, and hearing screening and services).
- Strengthen coordinated efforts of public and private stakeholders to support health and wellness.

ic Engagement

Share Accountability

Generate Education and Leadership Opportunities

### EARLY CHILDHOOD COLORADO PROVIDES A FRAMEWORK THAT:

- Recognizes the needs of the whole child and family.
- Communicates the vision for comprehensive early childhood work.
- Focuses on specific measurable outcomes.
- Guides, organizes, and focuses the actions and accountability of public and private stakeholders.

### THIS WORK IS GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

- Be child-focused and family-centered.
- Recognize and respond to variations in cultures, languages, and abilities.
- Use data to inform decisions.
- Build on strengths of communities and families.
- Focus on children from birth to age 8.
- Promote partnerships.
- Act at state, local, and statewide levels.

For more information contact [Early.ChildhoodTeam@capitol.state.co.us](mailto:Early.ChildhoodTeam@capitol.state.co.us).

## Early Childhood Leadership Commission

### Co-Chairs

**Reggie Bicha**-Colorado Department of Human Services, Executive Director

**Pat Hamill**-Oakwood Homes, Chairman and CEO

**Anna Jo Haynes**-Mile High Montessori, President Emeritus

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**Karen Trierweiler**-Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Director, Center for Health Families and Communities

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**Elsa Holguin**-Rose Community Foundation, Senior Program Officer

### Program Quality, Coordination & Alignment Committee Co-Chairs

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### Members

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**Greg Anton**-Anton Collins Mitchell, Partner

**Charlotte Brantley**-Clayton Early Learning, President and CEO

**Larry Curry**-The Curry Center, Clinical Director and CEO

**Dave Ferrill**-Governor's Office of Economic and International Trade, Field Representative, Global Business Development

**Charlie Forster**-Collegiate Peaks Bank, President and CEO  
**Joel Jones**-Durango Chamber of Commerce, Past President of Fort Lewis College, Past School Board Member Durango 9-R

**Representative Jim Kerr**-Colorado State House of Representatives

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**Jim Lynn**-Governor's Office of Information Technology, Agency Services Director

**Fernando Martinez**-San Luis Valley Community Mental Health Center, Executive Director

**Senator Linda Newell**-Colorado State Senate

**Fernando Pineda-Reyes**-CREA Results, Founder and CEO

**Kim Poast, PhD.**-Colorado Department of Higher Education, Associate Deputy Director, Access & Student Services

**Diane Price**-Early Connections Learning Centers, President and CEO

**Sherry Price**-Mesa Developmental Services, Director, Children and Family Services

**Gina Robinson**-Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, Program Administrator

**Steve Romero**-Morgan County Department of Human Services, Director

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**David Suppes**-Denver Public Schools, Chief Operating Officer

**Faye Tate**-Colorado Workforce Development Council, Member

**Heather Tritten**-Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Head Start State Collaboration Director

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For Questions relating to the Annual Report  
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