

PILOTS at a GLANCE

Reporting on the Community Consolidated Child Care Pilot Program

MAY 2005

Innovation through Collaboration: Colorado's Consolidated Child Care Pilot Programs

Colorado has an estimated 410,000 children under age 6. Each of these children is experiencing profound growth and development, and each adult that comes into a child's life has the ability to directly influence that child's development. This boundless potential in each child has led to the development of an innovative Colorado initiative.

In 1997, the Colorado Legislature, looking to improve the quality of care and education of young children and make it more responsive to the needs of families and children, created the Community Consolidated Child Care Pilots (Senate Bill 97-174). State lawmakers were responding to two policy developments at the time: welfare reforms requiring more parents to work, and research findings linking quality early childhood education to school readiness and success.

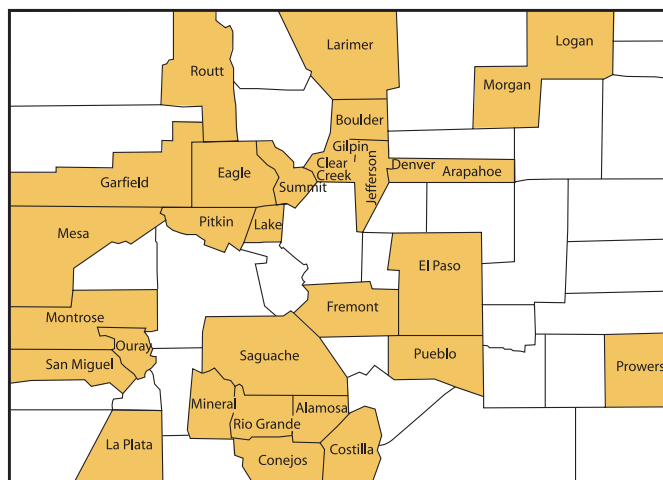
As a result, the Community Consolidated Child Care Pilots (the Pilots) were established as community-based initiatives across Colorado working to build a quality early childhood system through the collaboration of local partners. The Pilots are charged with the creation of a "seamless delivery system of early care and education services" that:

- Ensures collaboration among public and private stakeholders;
- Responds to the needs of working parents;
- Enhances child care quality; and,
- Consolidates funding sources to create an early childhood system.

Currently, 17 Pilots are active in 30 of Colorado's 64 counties—encompassing 80 percent of the state's population. Each Pilot is locally led by an early childhood council that develops, coordinates, and implements

services for early childhood professionals, children, and families. The councils are composed of community leaders from early care and education, health, mental health, and family support. Their role is to assess community needs, base planning and activities around those needs, and try out innovative approaches to building a local early childhood system.

The Pilots receive federal funding from the Child Care Development Block Grant,



■ Pilot Counties

administered through a collaborative partnership between the Colorado Department of Human Services and the Colorado Department of Education. Funding to Pilot communities currently ranges from \$30,000 to just over \$100,000. The Pilot communities apply for the dollars annually, and determine their funding requests based on local strategic planning, community needs, and gaps in resources. These dollars are often matched and/or supplemented by additional funding from public and private agencies to support early childhood activities, such as enhancing the quality of child care, training and education of teachers and parents, and coordinating local projects and services.

Partners on Early Childhood Councils

- Community Colleges
- Child Care Professionals
- Early Intervention
- Elected Officials
- Family Resource Centers
- Head Start
- Higher Education
- Home Visitation
- Local Social Services
- Libraries
- Licensing
- Mental Health
- Parents and Families
- Public Health
- Resource and Referral
- School Districts
- School-Age Programs

Community Consolidated Child Care Pilots Role:

To shape an early childhood system, based on partnership and innovation, that nurtures and develops Colorado's greatest resource—our children.

Visit our website at:

www.cde.state.co.us/cde/prevention/picccpilotrfp.htm

Thank you to The Piton Foundation for supporting the development of the Pilot briefing papers.

“Colorado is one of a handful of states leading the nation in building a comprehensive early childhood system. As usual, all eyes are on Colorado!”

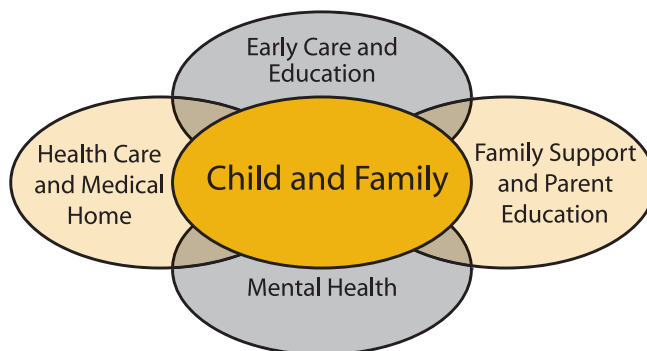
~ Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan, Professor of Early Childhood and Family Policy, Columbia University

Comprehensive Goals Frame Pilot Activities

When the Community Consolidated Child Care Pilots were created in 1997, their legislative expectation was to create a “seamless” early care and education system. At the time, no one really knew what this system would look like. The Pilots have become the state’s laboratories for shaping and defining the system. As their work evolves, the Pilots are learning that quality early childhood care and education is a critical piece of a broader system that impacts and supports children and their families. Young children also need strong health care services that meet their unique health, social, and emotional needs. Parents need support and education to help them with the complicated job of parenting. Early childhood professionals need opportunities for education and training.

In order to better define the innovative work the Pilots engage in and help direct their efforts forward, eight comprehensive goals guide the work of the Pilots. The goals are transferable to a variety of settings and systems serving children. These goals are:

- Program Quality and Standards
- Program Availability
- Parent and Family Engagement
- Professional and Workforce Development
- Public Engagement
- Governance
- Accountability
- Funding and Financing



Below is a description of each goal, and examples of how some of the Pilots are meeting them.

1. Program Quality and Standards —Services and supports provided for all children and their families will be high quality, standards-driven, and developmentally appropriate.

High quality services for children are at the core of the work of the Pilots. Ten of the Pilots are ensuring quality standards are met through their involvement in the School Readiness Child Care Subsidization Program. The program targets early care and education providers serving a majority of low-income families in neighborhoods with low-performing and unsatisfactory elementary schools. The participating child care sites receive a quality rating through Qualistar and assistance in improving their ratings through the use of enhanced educational materials, specialized teacher training, and parent involvement. **Pueblo County, the San Luis Valley, and Fremont County** are among the 10 participating Pilots. In Fremont County alone, children from participating sites who also received Colorado Preschool Program subsidies showed dramatic improvement in school readiness. Some 95 percent were ready for kindergarten in the fall of 2003—a 14-percent jump from the previous year.

In four of the Pilot sites—**Denver, Triad, El Paso, and Larimer**—efforts to address program standards and licensing were funded through the Colorado Department of Education as a way to incubate innovative, community-developed Pilot Licensing Models. The **Denver** and **Triad Pilots** joined forces to revise and simplify rules and regulations. They also created Licensing Development Specialist positions—similar to the State Licensing Specialist, but with lower caseloads—as a way to allow child care providers to receive increased technical assistance.

The **El Paso Pilot** rewrote program standards and licensing regulations to mirror the Environmental Rating Scales (guidelines that enable teachers to create developmentally appropriate learning environments), and developed an incentive program to reward providers who improved their quality of care.

Larimer County created a self-assessment tool, and allowed child care centers and family child care homes to receive support from an Education and Resource Specialist who provided more extensive assistance than the health and safety information traditionally provided by state licensing staff.

Recommendations for reforming the current licensing system, based on lessons learned



from the Pilot Licensing Models, are currently being developed for the State's Human Services Board and the State Legislature.

2. Program Availability—*The early childhood system has the capacity to provide accessible services and supports for all children and their families.*

For Colorado's parents, finding affordable, quality child care near one's home or work is a huge challenge. Parents of infants are often faced with long waiting lists to get their baby into care or cannot find a licensed child care provider that has the space or staff able to care for infants. Infant care is expensive for parents and providers, and providers need additional resources and supports to provide quality infant care.

El Paso County's Home Network lends support services for home child care providers, including CPR and First Aid training, on-site coaching and mentoring on developmentally appropriate activities, as well as immediate reimbursement when care is provided for low-income children. This results in more family home providers keeping their doors open and also helps to recruit additional providers, allowing more quality choices for parents. **Boulder and Morgan Counties** are working to license more Spanish-speaking family home providers through trainings, manuals, and coaching in Spanish.

Parents with a child with special needs have multiple challenges in finding quality child care for their child. The **Logan County Pilot** is addressing this issue by offering providers additional training, resources, and equipment in order to help the early care and education providers feel confident and supported in caring for children with special needs.

3. Parent and Family Engagement—*All parents and families are partners in the early childhood system.*

Parents have an important leadership role in the work of the Pilots, and providing them with the most current information on issues ranging from child development to parenting information is how many Pilots are engaging parents and families. The **San Luis Valley Pilot**, encompassing six counties in southern Colorado, sponsors an annual Month of the Young Child Celebration each April, while in the **Rural Resort Region** of central Colorado, meetings are held regularly to inform parents regarding various early childhood issues. For example, a nationally recognized speaker, Dr. Lisa Klein, spoke at three separate forums to

family members, business leaders, and teachers about school readiness indicators. **Prowers County** in southeast Colorado holds Parent Academies, discussing issues such as how to support literacy development and prepare for kindergarten. And the **Triad Pilot**, including Clear Creek, Gilpin, and Jefferson Counties west of Denver, requires child care sites to have a family involvement plan and offers incentives for successfully involving parents.

4. Professional and Workforce Development—*The early childhood system ensures integrated and formalized ongoing professional and workforce development.*

Continuing education for early childhood professionals is critical to keeping them up to date on the most recent research, policies, and practices for improving the quality of care for young children. Many of the Pilots collaborate with community colleges to allow child care providers an opportunity to obtain degrees or receive certification in early childhood development. In **Morgan County**, a partnership with Northeastern Junior College (in an adjoining county) allows Morgan Community College to serve as a satellite site for its early childhood education classes.

Some Pilots have conducted child care needs assessments in their communities to help in developing their professional development plans. In **Pueblo County**, a survey of child care providers informed early childhood council members of the education level and experience of the child care workforce, and helped in the planning for raising the quality of care.

Finally, Pilots help to implement topic-specific workshops and trainings to meet specific professional development needs. In the **Rural Resort Region**, coordinators host local and regional trainings, small group work, and lending library programs.

5. Public Engagement—*The public understands the importance of, places a high priority on, and promotes the early childhood system.*

The general public has a sense of the importance of early childhood, yet needs to be more engaged in how early childhood impacts communities directly. The Pilots have tackled this issue by using the media in different ways to promote their early childhood messages. Some of the Pilots have formed partnerships with their local media to broadcast public service announcements (PSAs) on the importance of positive development during a

Jenna Davis
State Coordinator,
Consolidated Child Care Pilots
720-291-0066
jenna@ecesystem.com

Sharon Triolo-Moloney
Colo. Department of Education
303-866-6781
triolo-moloney_s@cde.state.co.us

Local Pilot Councils & Coordinators

**Arapahoe County:
Early Care Council**
Gretchen Davidson
720-289-5532
gretchen_acecc@msn.com
www.acecc.org

**Mesa County:
Quality Care &
Education Coalition**
Lois Hybarger
970-683-2613
loish@htop.org
www.mesacountyearlychildhood.org

**Boulder County:
Early Care &
Education Council**
Danielle Butler
303-441-1913
butlerd@ci.boulder.co.us
www.bouldercountyece.org

**Morgan County:
Local Board for
Early Care &
Education**
Sandra Chapin
970-867-9606
schapin@aginformation.com

**Denver County:
Ready to Succeed
Council**
Ted Liepold
303-355-4411
rtsdenver@earthlink.net

**Prowers County:
Roots & Wings for
Children**
Joyce King
719-336-7486, x169
jking@prowerscounty.net

**El Paso County:
The Alliance for
Kids**
Sharon Ranney
719-635-1536, x344
sranney@cpcd.org

**Pueblo County:
Early Childhood
Care and Education
Consolidated Pilot**
Cindy Bernal
719-549-3272
cindy.bernal@pueblocc.edu

**Fremont County:
Project ECHO**
Pam Walker
719-276-5719
walkerp@canon.k12.co.us
www.projectecho-familycenter.com

**Routt County:
First Impressions**
Renee Donahue
970-870-5270
rdonahue@co.routt.co.us

**High West Council
for Early Childhood:
San Miguel, Ouray,
& Western
Montrose Counties**
Carol White
970-728-5613
highest@telluridecolorado.net

**Rural Resort Region
Early Childhood
Council: Eagle,
Garfield, Pitkin,
Lake, & Summit
Counties**
Kim Hilderbrand
970-947-1529
RRRPilotProject@msn.com

**La Plata County:
Early Childhood
Council**
Tamara Volz
970-247-5960, x22
tamarav@tchs4c.org

**San Luis Valley Early
Childhood Council:
Alamosa, Conejos,
Costilla, Mineral,
Rio Grande, &
Saguache Counties**
Mary Jo DePriest
719-658-0101
maryjo@my.amigo.net

**Larimer County:
Early Childhood
Council**
Wendy Watson
970-377-3388
ecc@frii.com
www.fortnet.org/ecc

**Triad Early
Childhood Council:
Jefferson, Clear
Creek, & Gilpin
Counties**
Patricia Bolton and
Kris Robledo
303-914-6527
pbolton@frccce.org

**Logan County:
Early Childhood
Council**
Caren Padgett
970-265-4046
carenpadgett@yahoo.com

child's early years. In **Mesa County**, eight PSAs aired on local television addressing a variety of topics important for young children. Additionally, an 11-week call-in radio show featured a local pediatrician who discussed such topics as finding a quality child care provider and using the local Infoline as an early childhood resource. The **High West Pilot**—encompassing Ouray, San Miguel, and western Montrose Counties in southwest Colorado—interested the local newspaper and radio station in the results of its regional child care needs assessment, resulting in a blitz of news coverage.

The Pilots also employ a number of strategies to engage local leaders. In **La Plata County**, public engagement activities include an 8-member speaker's bureau that addressed service groups, agencies, and parents in the community. In addition, **Fremont County's** early childhood council hosted a candidate forum to allow citizens to find out each candidate's stance on early childhood issues.

6. Organizational Structure — *The early childhood system has formally established governance and administrative structures at the state and local levels.*

A strong and diverse governance body to provide the vision, innovation, and administration of an early childhood system is key to the work of the Pilots. Locally, each Pilot has established its own formalized criteria for membership, committees, and decision-making on its early childhood council. For example, in **Routt County**, two city council members, the school superintendent and a school board member, a county commissioner, and five parents are engaged members of their early childhood council. The **Larimer County** Pilot has established its own 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. An executive committee and key stakeholders established articles, bylaws, an organizational chart, and policies and procedures for the new organization, and hired staff.

Fiscal administration of the Pilots is determined locally. Nonprofit organizations administer most of the Pilot funds; in a handful of communities, county governments or community colleges are the fiscal agents. These fiscal relationships can result in better coordination and consolidation of public and private funding streams.

7. Accountability—*The early childhood system is accountable for children's readiness for school and life.*

Ultimately, the question of an early childhood system must be, "Does this make a difference in the lives of young children and their families?" Answering this question involves the collection and analysis of data through assessments and evaluation. This is complex work that includes the identification of child outcomes to be tracked and documented using indicators that describe child progress over time.

Fremont County's use of both the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) and formal "Work Sampling" observations in a number of centers and child care homes is an example of how the Pilots implement evaluation and analysis to ensure accountability and quality of services. Periodic assessments of child progress are aggregated to track social and emotional outcomes (DECA results) and skill acquisition (Work Sampling results) for enrolled children. For example, Work Sampling results from pre- and post-tests in Fall 2002 and Spring 2003 showed significant growth in children's math skills. In the Fall observations, less than 20 percent of children showed interest in sorting objects or counting and numbers, while in the Spring observations, nearly 70 percent of children showed interest.

8. Funding and Financing—*The early childhood system has adequate, sustainable, and flexible funding and resources from a broad array of public and private partners.*

Investing significant funds into Colorado's early childhood system will have profound implications for the lives of children and families and for Colorado as a whole. Currently, the majority of Pilot funds come from the federal Child Care Development Block Grant, and Pilots are constantly seeking out additional public and private funds to do the quality work they are mandated to do.

In many of the Pilot sites, local partners have provided funding and expertise. In **Arapahoe County**, partner agencies including Tri-County Health, Aurora Mental Health, and the Community College of Aurora sponsored four community-based professionals to form the School Readiness Transdisciplinary Team, which offers health and mental health resources and supports

to child care providers in the county.

In the **High West Pilot**, the Town of Telluride partnered with High West to provide funding for the regional needs assessment, and the School Readiness Program is matched dollar-for-dollar by the Telluride Foundation. The **Boulder Pilot** is in close partnership with the Knight Foundation, and together they sponsored a socioeconomic study concerning the early care and education needs of Latino children in the county.

A Work in Progress

While nearly three-quarters of the states in the U.S. have enacted laws relating to early childhood care and education, Colorado's community-based approach, through the Consolidated Child Care Pilots, has proven innovative and has led to positive, systemic changes in the way communities are coordinating—and families are accessing—services.

Colorado's emerging early childhood system is a work in progress, and coordinating and educating the multiple systems that touch the lives of children and families will take resources and time. State investment in early childhood must be deepened, and the public's understanding of early childhood development as an investment in the future must be expanded. The Pilot communities across the state are tackling these issues through proactive planning and intentional partnering.

The benefits of building collaborative partnerships to work toward a more efficient, more accessible, and higher-quality early childhood system overall, far outweigh the potential roadblocks. The reward is that children are well prepared for a successful educational experience and a healthy, productive life.

