WELD COUNTY’S CHILDREN
AN ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Prepared by United Way of Weld County and Promises for Children
2019
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**Introduction**

United Way of Weld County is a nonprofit organization headquartered in Greeley, Colorado that works to improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of our community. Promises for Children is Weld County’s Early Childhood Council and is United Way of Weld County’s suite of programs that works to improve the wellbeing of all Weld County children. Promises for Children is a diverse community partnership that increases the awareness of the importance of early childhood development and facilitates accessible pathways of services leading to lifelong wellbeing for all children prenatal to eight years of age.

Promises for Children grew out of our community's concern for the wellbeing of Weld County’s children, as represented in the 2000 Kids Count! report. While most counties along the Front Range were seeing improvements in key children’s issues, Weld County showed a lack of improvement and ranked low on several indicators. Knowing this was a bigger task than one entity could handle, UWWC convened several lead organizations including Weld County, the City of Greeley, the Community Foundation Serving Greeley and Weld County, North Colorado Medical Center Foundation, and school districts. Promises for Children was later recognized by the State of Colorado as Weld County’s Early Childhood Council in July 2007. Today, PFC supports parents, grandparents, early childhood professionals, child care providers (licensed and exempt), and teachers in preparing children to enter school ready to learn and ready to read on target by fourth grade. PFC does this by providing direct service programs, locally managing several state grant-funded initiatives, providing advocacy at the state level, coordinating the efforts of Weld County organizations working in early education, and building a community-wide system that ensures all children thrive.

United Way of Weld County and Promises for Children conducted this environmental scan through a comprehensive process to build an inventory of social and economic factors, services, and supports impacting early childhood in Northern Colorado. The purpose of this effort is to document the current setting in which children grow and the services available that address the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of children and their families, with the ultimate goal of ensuring all children are valued, healthy, and thriving.
Methods
This environmental scan was formed by reviewing existing reports, data sets, scans, analyses, and needs assessments that contained relevant data. Also incorporated were Weld County’s Early Childhood Council minutes, along with minutes from other pertinent meetings.

Key findings were organized and analyzed to provide a by-topic inventory of the most relevant and current statistics, supports, and services through a county-wide lens.
Findings

Weld County – An Overview
Weld County is located in the northeastern portion of Colorado, a key component of the Colorado Northern Front Range region. The county consists of approximately 3,992 square miles and is the third largest county in the state, making it also twice the size of the State of Delaware. The county seat and principal city in Weld County is the City of Greeley, located within an hour’s drive of the Rocky Mountains and six major municipalities, including Denver. Approximately half of the population is located in an 800-square-mile area in the southwestern part of the county.

Weld County’s population is growing rapidly; the county’s growth rate has been approximately 28% per decade since the mid-1900’s, which is more than triple the national average. Between 2000 and 2010, the population increased 40%. If the current population growth trend continues, Weld County’s total population will increase to over half a million by the year 2035.

As the population grows, the county’s diversity increases as well. In 2010, 67% of the county population identified as white, and 31% of the county population identified as Hispanic or Latino origin. By 2031, it is predicted that children of color will make up the majority of Colorado’s kids.

Economy
Weld County had a per capita personal income of $38,664 in 2014, compared to $50,410 statewide. The county’s average wage is estimated at $34,320 in all industries. Agriculture and energy are two important industries in the region. Though the degree of agribusiness’ importance is waning, Weld remains the most agriculturally productive county in the state. Beginning in 2009, Weld County was at the forefront of an energy boom, which peaked in 2014. In early 2015 oil prices fell; exploration and production was halved and many companies left the county or began to consolidate and sell off acreage positions. Though the energy industry remains alive, the county is still feeling the reverberations of its decline.

The median household income in 2016 was $63,609; 14% of the population (and 18% of children under age 18) live below the poverty level. In east Greeley and Evans, the most impoverished area of the county, those numbers double. As a note, these rates are based on the federal poverty level; many studies assert that this is significantly lower than the self-sufficiency level, indicating that many families who are not considered to be in poverty are in fact struggling to make ends meet.
Weld County Households in Poverty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratio to Poverty</th>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>2012-2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Above 300% FPL</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>9,607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 200% FPL and 299% FPL</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>5,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 100% FPL and 199% FPL</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>5,403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 50% and 99% FPL</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>1,758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 50% FPL</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>2,426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FPL=Federal Poverty Level

Concurrent with national trends, the 2017 unemployment rate was just 2.7 in Weld County – a rarely seen low. Despite this, there are still troubling statistics related to poverty, especially when looking at families with children:

- 25% of families with children were always or usually worried about having enough money to buy nutritious meals in the past 12 months.
- 22% were always or usually worried about having enough money to pay rent/mortgage in the past 12 months.
- The number of homeless students in Weld County has continued to increase since 2007. In 2007-2008, there were 419 homeless students in Weld County; in 2016-2017 there were 702.
- The current housing vacancy rate is just 4% – indicating that obtaining housing, let alone affordable housing, is extraordinarily difficult.
- 15% of Weld County families allowed a family member, friend, or other non-relative to stay at their home in the last 12 months (often called doubling-up). Reasons for doubling up: 32% of families attributed doubling up to a health problem; 61% reported it was due to a loss of housing; and 75% said it due to financial hardship.
- 38% of renter households and 19% of households with a mortgage spend more than 35% of their income on housing costs – dramatically increasing their vulnerability to unexpected and emergency costs.
- 49% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (40% for free lunch and 9% for reduced-price lunch)
• 16,877 children (20%) live in households with Supplemental Security Income, cash public assistance income, and/or food stamps/SNAP benefits.

Services currently available:
• There are four year-round shelters for the homeless: *A Woman’s Place* for victims of domestic violence; *Greeley Transitional House* for families in Greeley; *Guadalupe Community Center* for individuals in Greeley; and *Hope @ Miracle House* in Fort Lupton. A cold weather shelter is operated each winter in Evans as well.
• *Catholic Charities, LaSalle Ministry Alliance, Stepping Stones of Windsor,* and *Women2Women* provide emergency financial assistance for a variety of needs such as housing and utilities.
• To assist job seekers, *Employment Services of Weld County* is a comprehensive workforce center that connects resources for employment, education, and training services.
• *Greeley-Weld Habitat for Humanity* and *Habitat for Humanity of the St. Vrain Valley* both provide housing assistance.
• Public assistance for food includes *SNAP* (food stamps) and *WIC* (Women, Infants, and Children).
• The *Weld Food Bank* is the largest food assistance organization in Weld County and is located in Greeley. The Fort Lupton Food and Clothing Bank, a mobile food bank operated by the Weld Food Bank, and many faith communities provide food assistance in the more rural regions of Weld County.

Families
There are currently 80,530 children under age 18 in 76,368 families in Weld County; approximately 4,318 children are born each year. The average family size is 3.25 family members.

90% of children live with a parent(s), 7% live with grandparents, 2% live with other relatives, and 2% live with a foster family or other unrelated caretaker.

Family Structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Type</th>
<th>2011-2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living with two parents</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with mother, no father in household</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with father, no mother in household</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On average there are 140 children in foster care and 194 children in kinship care every month. Rates of children being removed from their home has doubled since 2014. The 2016 out-of-home placement rate was 4.5 per 1,000 children under 18.

10% of Weld County families with children reported needing services for children/youth with emotional problems or delinquent behavior, and 13% reported needing parenting information, training, or classes.

Services currently available:

- **Best Start for Babies and Toddlers, Bright by Three, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters, Parents as Teachers, and SafeCare** provide varying levels of support in the form of parent instruction and training.

- The federal **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)** provides unpaid family and medical leave but excludes roughly 40% of Americans. A proposed Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act (FAMLI) would guarantee all Colorado workers up to 12 weeks of paid leave to care for themselves and their families.

- The **North Colorado Health Alliance’s FIRST STEPS** program supports vulnerable women throughout at-risk pregnancies with prenatal care.

- The **Weld County Department of Human Services** coordinates foster care for the county.

- The **Weld County Fatherhood Initiative** is committed to providing support and services that will empower fathers with the tools to be there for their kids.

**Child Care – An Overview**

The first five years of a child’s life are critical to their development and future success. As the number of families with all parents in the workforce has increased over time, the need for high quality child care has increased as well. 246,000 children in Colorado under age 6 (nearly two thirds of all kids) have all parents in the workforce and must depend on some form of early care and education every week. A lack of available child care slots is one of the most pressing challenges Weld County’s families are facing. In 2017, there were 18,717 children under 6 with all available parents in the workforce, yet there were only about 6,200 licensed child care slots in child care centers, homes, and preschools. A lack of ample child care slots can negatively impact a family in a multitude of ways. Among families with children, 11% of adults had to quit a job, not take a job, or greatly change their job because of child care problems. A survey of Weld County parents and caregivers found that 85% feel between overwhelmed and panicked about finding and keeping quality child care.
Conversely, use of paid early care and education is highly correlated with women’s labor force participation—more than half of young children whose mother is working full-time participate in paid child care. In Colorado alone, more than $640 million in direct output is generated within the child care sector. The industry is estimated to support about $720 million in additional indirect and induced output in other industry sectors, for an estimated combined total of $1.4 billion in output in Colorado’s economy. Early care and education has tremendous spillover benefits for Colorado’s economic development: for each new child care job created, more than 1.5 additional jobs are created in the larger Colorado economy.

As of June 2019 in Weld County:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Licensed Providers</th>
<th>269</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Center Licenses</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Home Licenses</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Preschool Licenses</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of School Age Centers</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Weld County’s population has increased, the number of child care providers has not kept pace. From 2011-2018, over 70 home providers closed their doors: there was a 32% reduction in home child care providers and a 10% reduction in center care. Between 2000 and 2015, the population of children under age five increased 44%; meanwhile, the number of licensed child care providers increased only 33%.

A child care desert is defined as an area in which the supply of child care is less than the demand. With approximately two children who need child care for each licensed child care slot, Weld County is experiencing a widespread child care desert. Some of the areas with the greatest need:

- In Keenesburg/Hudson, there are 1,127 children under age five and just 173 licensed child care slots available. Of those 173 slots, 75% do not accept children ages 0-2.
- In Ault, there are 457 children under the age of five and just 106 slots available (one center with 100 slots and one home provider with six slots). The center only accepts children over one year old.
- In Greeley, there are 9,733 children under the age of five, and 2,966 licensed child care slots.

The cost of child care is a significant barrier for many families to access high quality, or even any, child care. In 2015 Colorado was ranked as the fourth highest-cost state for center-based infant child care and the fifth highest-cost state for preschool age child care. Of nine front range
counties in Colorado, Weld County ranks seventh in the cost of child care centers, and sixth in the cost of child care home providers, when based on a proportion of median income. In Weld County, the average daily child care expense in a center is 35% of the daily median income; in a home, it is 23%.

Between 2000 and 2015, the cost of infant care increased by 145% in Weld County, the cost of toddler care increased by 85%, and the cost of school age care increased by 81%. (Meanwhile, median income increased by just 45%.)

Full-time average market rates in Weld County (per day):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Average Median for Center Providers Across Weld County Regions</th>
<th>Average Median for Home Providers Across Weld County Regions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth up to 6 months</td>
<td>$41.85</td>
<td>$42.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months up to 12 months</td>
<td>$41.85</td>
<td>$42.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 months up to 18 months</td>
<td>$41.85</td>
<td>$42.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 months up to 24 months</td>
<td>$41.85</td>
<td>$42.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 months up to 30 months</td>
<td>$36.21</td>
<td>$34.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 months up to 36 months</td>
<td>$33.81</td>
<td>$34.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years up to 5 years</td>
<td>$33.10</td>
<td>$31.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years up to 12 years</td>
<td>$41.82</td>
<td>$29.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that despite the seemingly high cost of child care, being a child care provider is not a high paying job. The average salary for a preschool teacher in Colorado in 2018 was $13.72 per hour – or $27,400 per year. With a median hourly salary well-below the self-sufficiency standard in every area of the state, child care professionals earn about as much as parking lot attendants fast food cooks. They earn half as much as kindergarten teachers, and about a third as much as nurses. Nationwide, the low compensation for child care providers translates into more than $1.5 billion in public assistance going to child care educators to help them make ends meet.

The majority of providers in Weld County are home based child care facilities (84%) which typically have only one person working an average of 11.3 hours per weekday. These providers do not have the resources to hire additional employees in order to extend their hours. Providers are typically open Monday through Friday between 6:00 am and 6:30 pm. Despite the long days these providers put in, there is a gap in care availability after hours and during the weekend. Early childhood teachers leave their jobs four times more frequently than other educators.
When families are unable to afford child care on their own, there is some public assistance available, most commonly in the form of the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP). In 2016, 67% of center providers and 24% of home providers accepted CCCAP eligible families, making it difficult for CCCAP eligible families to find any open slot. The top reasons providers cite for not accepting CCCAP include: 1) too much paperwork; 2) reimbursement rate too low; 3) not paid for absences/no-shows; 4) not paid for additional fees; and 5) high turnover.

On average, private pay families spend 68% of their gross income on housing and child care-related expenses, and families enrolled in CCCAP spend 52% of their gross income on housing and child care-related expenses.

Top Five Child Care Challenges for Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parents Not Enrolled in CCCAP</th>
<th>Parents Enrolled in CCCAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Unable to find short-term care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Scheduling child care to match work schedule</td>
<td>Finding availability for school-aged children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Need but do not receive financial assistance</td>
<td>Inability to use CCCAP to pay a relative for child care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Number of days of work missed due to lack of child care</td>
<td>No child care providers nearby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Finding preschool availability</td>
<td>Cost</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Child care is an issue reaching far beyond just the immediate family. According to the Early Care and Learning Council, US companies lose over $3 billion annually as a consequence of child care related absences. When employee child care related issues are addressed and affordable quality child care options are supported by employers, 49% of employers report increased productivity and 85% of employers report a significant decrease in employee turnover rates.

A 2016 survey of employer provided child care benefits in Weld County found that 75% of companies (24 surveyed in total) offered no child care benefits. Where benefits were offered, the most common benefit was flex-spending accounts for child care expenses (21.4% of employers); 7% of all employers surveyed negotiated discounts for their employees with local child care providers.

The surveyed companies were also asked about their flexibility regarding workplace productivity and missed work due to child care problems:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company size</th>
<th>Employees can make up lost work</th>
<th>Employees can come in early or leave late</th>
<th>Employees can work from home</th>
<th>No flexibility: lost time equals lost productivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of employees counseled or terminated for child care related issues in the past 12 months:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Size</th>
<th>Counseled Once</th>
<th>Counseled More than Once</th>
<th>Terminated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Services currently offered:

- The **Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP)** is administered by the Weld County Department of Human Services and provides financial assistance for low-income families who are working, searching for employment, or in an educational activity and need child care services to support their efforts to achieve and/or maintain self-sufficiency.
- **Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC)** offers a family-friendly workplace assessment and tools for companies seeking to maximize work-life integration for all employees.
- **United Way of Weld County’s Child Care Resource and Referral** program maintains a database of all licensed home and center providers in Colorado. Interested families can call and receive referrals for best-fit child care providers.
- **United Way of Weld County’s Expanding Quality in Infant and Toddler Care** is an educational and training program for those interested in becoming early childhood professionals.
- **United Way of Weld County’s Family Business Solutions** program coordinates employer-sponsored child care benefits for working families, helping them access high quality licensed care.
- **United Way of Weld County and the Weld County Department of Human Services** have collaborated to recruit more child care providers for all age groups.
Child Care – Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) Care

Up to this point, the focus has been exclusively on licensed child care. FFN care, or Family, Friend, and Neighbor care, is an equally important topic. In fact, it’s estimated that FFN care makes up 60% of Weld County child care. FFN care is defined as “any regular, non-parental [non-custodial] child care arrangement other than a licensed center, program, or family child care home; thus this care usually includes relatives, friends, neighbors, and other adults caring for children in their homes.” FFN care is also called kith and kin care, license-exempt care, or informal care. As this type of child care is not licensed, there are currently no regulations and few quality improvement processes in place to help ensure this group of children are physically, emotionally, and mentally thriving.

National trends and facts related to FFN care:

- In the United States, nearly 11 million children under age five spend some or all of their day being cared for by someone other than their parents.
- 33-60% of children under the age of five with employed parents are in FFN care.
- Across all demographics, those in FFN care are almost exclusively infants and toddlers.
- Low-income families are more likely to use FFN care.
- Immigrant and refugee groups are more likely to use FFN care.
- Families living in rural communities are more likely to use FFN care.
- Levels of cognitive stimulation in informal settings have been shown to be low in FFN settings.
- Motivation for FFN providers to begin their business is often to help family and friends, not to pursue a career in child care.
- Parents often rely on multiple informal caregivers on a regular or as-needed basis.

Opportunities/characteristics of FFN care nationally:

- There is often a low provider-to-child ratio.
- There is often a strong emotional investment/attachment between providers and children.
- Providers often can give more individualized attention.
- There is often a cultural congruency amongst providers and children.
- Providers often reinforce family values.
- Providers tend to speak the same language as the children and families, forging stronger relationships.
- There is often a close relationship between providers and parents.
- Family support helps parents stay employed.

Challenges/characteristics of FFN care nationally:
• FFN providers have low incentive for training and formal education.
• Families of similar socioeconomic status share FFN providers.
• Fewer material resources are present in the care environment.
• Providers tend to have less education.
• There is no minimal regulation.
• Providers tend to be a hard to reach population.
• There tends to be less intentionality regarding child development, health and safety, and school readiness.

FFN care trends in Weld County:
• Most providers are grandparents.
• Most providers are low-income.
• In refugee communities, young children are often the caregivers (Kenya, Ethiopia, Thailand, Burma, Somalia, Vietnam).
• There are 52-62 dialects spoken within Weld County; many of these non-English speakers come for shift work, so nighttime care is especially needed for children in these families.
• A large portion of providers are Latina.
• Many providers live in rural areas of Weld County (outside of Greeley).
• Payment often includes bartering, providing economic benefits to both providers and parents.
• Single parent households often utilize FFN care.
• FFN care is often used to provide respite care/foster care.
• Monolingual Spanish speaking households and families who want culturally sensitive care often choose FFN care.

It is estimated that FFN care makes up 60% of Weld County child care. Up until now, little focus has been placed on FFN providers nationally. Supports are just beginning to be established to help these providers achieve their business and personal goals, and provide the best care possible.

Because of the importance and prevalence of FFN care, in 2016, the Weld County commissioners asked United Way of Weld County to conduct a study and then share recommendations for how to increase the quality of child care provided in FFN settings. A diverse group of stakeholders was convened to deliberate quality improvement in the FFN setting. It was recommended to the commissioners that a quality improvement levels system be implemented that is not focused on licensure, but instead on increasing knowledge and skill. The proposed system would set providers up for licensure if so desired. However, the proposed system was not approved by the state of Colorado, so this initiative has been put on hold for the time being.
Services currently offered:

- The FFN Care Provider Association provides educational opportunities and support for providers, and helps build social networks amongst FFN providers.
- United Way of Weld County offers PASO Institute, a training program that prepares FFN providers for licensure and improves the quality of care.

Child Care – School Age Care

High quality child care for school age children (before school, after school, and on weekends) is just as important as care during the early years. Some research suggests that what students do during out-of-school hours has as much bearing on their success as what they do during the school day. There are 44 licensed school age child care sites in Weld County with the capacity to serve up to 3,253 children. In addition to licensed and FFN care, there are a variety of organizations that provide high quality programs for school age children.

While the Child Care Quality Rating and Information System administered by the State of Colorado has a quality rating and improvement system used in licensed care programs for ages birth through five years of age, no quality rating system exists for school age child care statewide. In response, in 2016, the Weld County Commissioners asked United Way of Weld County to conduct a study and then share recommendations for how to increase the quality of child care provided in school age settings. A diverse group of stakeholders was convened to deliberate quality improvement for community partners caring for school age children. This taskforce recommended to the commissioners that a workforce qualification ratings system be established. As of February 2019, three school age child care sites have been rated using this system called Weld Plus.

Services currently offered:

- Boy Scouts of America, Longs Peak Council works to develop character, integrity, and leadership in youth through quality programs, outdoor experiences, and service to community.
- Boys and Girls Clubs of Weld County offer a variety of programs that promote academic success, character and citizenship, sports and recreation, and fine arts.
- Partners Mentoring Youth creates and supports one-to-one mentoring relationships between positive adult role models and youth facing challenges in their personal, social, and academic lives.
Education
In Weld County there are 13 public school districts, 10 private schools, and two higher education institutions.

47% of Weld County children ages three and four were enrolled in preschool in 2016; in 2017, 78% of kindergarteners were enrolled in a full-day program. In 2017, 43,746 children were enrolled in Weld County schools (kindergarten-twelfth grade). Of these, 50 students were enrolled in online education programs and 7,119 students (16%) were enrolled in charter schools. Other demographic points of interest:

- 17% of students were English language learners (19% of people five years or older sometimes or always speak another language other than English at home).
- 289 students or 0.7% were immigrants.
- 678 students were homeless.
- 4,006 or 9% of students in Weld County were enrolled in special education in 2016.
- One-in-five students were chronically absent in 2017-2018.
- 23% of Weld County students attended high-poverty schools in 2015-2016.
- Of Colorado’s 30 largest school districts, Greeley-Evans School District 6 rates fourth for highest suspension rate of – 2016-2017, 408 kindergarten through second grade students were suspended (equal to 7.8 suspensions per 100 students). Meanwhile, about 70 rural districts suspended no students at all last year, including Weld RE-9.

The National Research Council asserts that “academic success, as defined by high school graduation, can be predicted with reasonable accuracy by knowing someone’s reading skill at the end of third grade. A person who is not at least a moderately skilled reader by that time is unlikely to graduate from high school.” In 2016-2017, just 38% of Weld County fourth graders met or exceeded expectations in English Language Arts – a whopping 62% did not.

Earning a high school diploma is perhaps the most important determinant of a person’s future in the United States. The median annual income of a high school dropout in 2007 was $23,000, compared with $48,000 for someone who obtained a bachelor’s or higher degree. High school dropouts also are more likely than those who graduate to be arrested or have a child while still a teenager, both of which incur additional financial and social costs. The current pool of qualified high school graduates is neither large enough nor skilled enough to supply our nation’s workforce, higher education, leadership, and national security needs. The graduation rate in Weld County in 2017 was 82% and the dropout rate was 1.7%.
In Weld County:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>2017 Graduation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Services currently available:

- **Centennial BOCES** provides special education, technology support, Alternative Teacher Licensing Program, migrant education and services, grant writing, early childhood and child find services, online learning, homeless education and support, student information systems, professional development workshops and initiatives, and more.

- **Colorado Reading Corps** was begun in 2017-2018 in six elementary schools in Weld County; AmeriCorps tutors spend one year tutoring students who are reading below grade level.

- **Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)** is a discretionary grant program from the U.S. Department of Education designed to increase the number of low-income students in Greeley-Evans School District 6 who are prepared to enter and succeed in post-secondary education.

- **The Greeley Dream Team** provides a variety of group and one-on-one services that support student success in school.

- **The I Have a Dream Foundation** provides academic, social, and emotional support from elementary school through college, along with postsecondary tuition assistance.

**Children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities/Delays (I/DD)**

10% of Weld County residents report having a disability. 1%, or 224 children under five, and 4%, or 1,994 children ages 5-17 have a disability, the majority of which are classified as a cognitive difficulty. These estimates don’t take into account those with intellectual and development delays.

The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities defines intellectual disability as “a disability characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates before the age of 18.”
"Developmental disabilities" is an umbrella term that includes intellectual disability but also includes other disabilities that are apparent during childhood.

Developmental disabilities are severe chronic disabilities that can be cognitive or physical or both. The disabilities appear before the age of 22 and are likely to be lifelong. Some developmental disabilities are largely physical issues, such as cerebral palsy or epilepsy. Some individuals may have a condition that includes a physical and intellectual disability, for example Down syndrome or fetal alcohol syndrome.

Envision is the single-entry point in Weld County to acquire essential services for a person with a qualifying intellectual or developmental disability/delay. Envision’s Early Intervention program serves children from birth to age three who are determined to be at risk for I/DD. In December 2018, 540 children were actively enrolled, and 63 children were waiting for or in the process of having an evaluation or assessment. Envision’s Children’s Extensive Support program provides significant assistance to children under the age of 18 who have I/DD and extensive medical and/or behavioral needs.

Services currently available:

- The Arc of Weld County’s serve both children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities/delays in Weld, Morgan, Logan, Sedgwick, Phillips, Washington, and Yuma counties.
- Envision is the Community Centered Board that serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities or delays in Weld County.
- Individual school districts offer special education departments that help children with exceptional needs, such as students with learning disabilities or mental challenges.
- Medicare is the federal health insurance program for people who are 65 or older, and certain younger people with disabilities.

**Physical Health**

Conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes; these conditions are known as social determinants of health. Research is increasingly showing the profound impact social determinants of health have on people, including factors such as poverty, education, and availability of resources. Because physical health encompasses so many factors, the following is broken up by topic.
**Prenatal/Parturition/Infancy**

The physical well-being of a child has many varying influences, beginning as early as when a mother becomes pregnant. Some important factors: 79% of Weld County births are to women receiving early prenatal care. 6% of births in 2016 were to women who smoked during pregnancy, and 13% of Weld County women of reproductive age (18-44 years) are smokers. 52% of mothers were overweight or obese prior to pregnancy. 8% of births were considered low weight births. 92% of mothers initiated breastfeeding. 83% of mothers discussed what to do if they became depressed during or after pregnancy. One-in-five adult women of reproductive age reported ever being told they had anxiety or PTSD, and 21% reported ever being told they had depression.

Colorado’s maternal mortality rate has increased in recent years. Women in rural areas are more likely to die than those in urban areas, and nationally, African American women are more likely to die than white women, even when income and educational level are held constant. In Colorado, behavioral health issues and self-harm now account for the largest share of maternal deaths. However, national research indicates that high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease remain two of the leading causes of maternal death nationwide. Nearly 80% of maternal deaths could have been avoided by reasonable changes to patient, community, provider, facility, or systems factors.

In 2016, 26% of births were to women under 25 years of age; 16% were to women without a high school degree; and 23% were to single women. The three risk factor birth rate (births to single women under 25 without a high school degree) was 4%.

**Health Insurance Coverage**

One-in-two (49%) Weld County children have Medicaid/CHP+. 10% of children are eligible for CHP+ but are not enrolled, and 3% are eligible for Medicaid but are not enrolled. Despite this, 96% of all children have health insurance. While the Medicaid program provides dental benefits for all enrollees, the CHP+ program provides dental benefits for children only. As such, nearly 900 pregnant women in Colorado with health insurance through the Child Health Plan (CHP+) do not have coverage for dental care. Approximately 25% of all pregnant women in Colorado lacked dental insurance in 2016, and about 18% of expecting mothers reported not going to the dentist because they could not afford to go. 96% of children are fully vaccinated in Weld County.

**Healthy Body Weight**

The percentage of children who are obese or overweight continues to increase over time; Weld County rates are consistently higher than the Colorado state average (15% of Weld children aged 2-4 years are overweight, and 10% are obese; 21% of children ages 2-14 were overweight in
2012). Just more than half (56%) of children under 11 were physically active for a total of five or more days in the past seven days.

Meanwhile, one half of students in Weld County have three or more hours of screen time on the average school day. 50% of students eat less than one fruit per day, 56% eat less than one vegetable per day, 18% drink soda one or more times per day, and just 60% always eat breakfast. In 2010, 2,173 children in Weld County lived in a census tract considered a food desert; that is, a census tract where a substantial number or share of residents have low access to a supermarket or large grocery store.

**Risky Behaviors**
9% of students aged 15-18 who are dating have been physically hurt by the person they were seeing in the last year. 35% have had sexual intercourse; 7% have been physically forced to have sexual intercourse. 12% of sexually active teenagers used no birth control to prevent pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. The teen birth rate is 24.8 live births to girls ages 15-18 per 1,000 female teens in that age range.

22% of students ages 15-18 have smoked a whole cigarette; 63% have had at least one drink of alcohol; 37% have used marijuana at least once in their life.

**Juvenile arrest rates in Weld County:**
- Violent crime: 35 per 100,000 residents (Colorado average: 114)
- Property crime: 164 per 100,000 residents (Colorado average: 947)
- Drug related: 303 per 100,000 residents (Colorado average: 484)

**Abuse & Mortality**
The 2016 child abuse rate was 8.4 per 1,000 children under 18; 2,145 cases of child abuse and neglect were investigated in Weld County in 2016.

The 2016 infant mortality rate was 5.6 per 1,000 live births. The child death rate was 11.5 per 100,000 children ages 1-14, and the teen death rate was 72.3 per 100,000 teens age 15-19.

**Services currently available:**
- *Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+)* is a public low-cost health insurance for certain children and pregnant women. It is for people who earn too much to qualify for Health First Colorado, but not enough to pay for private health insurance.
• **Health First Colorado** (the state’s Medicaid program) is public health insurance for low-income families.

On January 31, 2019, both of the large, Metro Denver, midwifery practices owned by **Hospital Corporation of America**, Rose Midwifery and Colorado Nurse Midwives, closed their doors. On average, these two practices supported about 120 births a month. In particular, the Colorado Nurse Midwives practice was a significant provider for the immigrant and refugee communities.

• **Life Stories Child and Family Advocacy** hosts the Child Advocacy Center which conducts investigative forensic interviews of victims of child maltreatment, and the CASA program, which trains community volunteers who are appointed by the court to advocate for safe, permanent homes for children involved in the Dependency and Neglect court system.

• **Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains** offers a variety of programming for parents and children ranging from parent education to the SafeTouch program that teaches children body safety awareness.

• **Sexual Assault Victims Advocacy Center** provides crisis intervention, advocacy, and counseling for all those affected by sexual violence and provides prevention programs through community outreach and education.

• The **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** provides nutrition education, breastfeeding support, healthy food, health referrals, and other services free of charge to Colorado families who qualify. Nationally, approximately 55% of those people who are eligible for WIC are enrolled.

**Mental and Behavioral Health**

Mental health and well-being is increasingly becoming a topic of research and public conversation as depression, suicide, and violence appear to becoming more prevalent.

In Weld County, 11% of children ages 4-14 need mental health care. 20% of students age 15-18 have been bullied on school property during the past 12 months; 16% have been electronically bullied during the past 12 months. 34% felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row during the past 12 months that they stopped some activities. 19% of students 15-18 seriously considered attempting suicide in the last year; 13% made plans; 8% attempted once or more. The teen suicide rate is 21.3 per 100,000 teens.

Services currently available:

• **Alternative Homes for Youth** treats adolescent males with sexually abusive behaviors, substance abuse challenges, mental health challenges, and challenges with other criminogenic behaviors.
- **Circle of Parents Support Group** is a highly interactive parenting program that helps equip parents with the skills necessary to help children in difficult situations including drug and alcohol use, school and homework problems, delinquency, and other behavioral concerns.

- **Compass: the Weld County Family Services Team** is a collaborative effort comprised of professionals from a wide variety of Weld County service organizations. The program strives to build on the strengths of youth and their families by increasing protective factors and reducing problematic behaviors.

- **North Range Behavioral Health** offers multicultural approaches and programs that are uniquely suited for children, youth, and families not coping well with problems such as divorce, depression, abuse, substance use, aggressive and self-destructive behaviors, and more.

- **The Community Grief Center** helps people of all ages grieving a death find connection and healing.

- **Turning Point** helps youth who are struggling with behavior, mental health, or substance abuse issues.

- **Youth and Family Connections** provides coordinated multi-agency services for youth struggling with life issues, out of parent control, or engaged in anti-social behaviors.
Data Sources

- A Study of Provider, Family and Employer Child Care Needs in Weld County, Phases I, II, III
- Child Care Resource & Referral Quarterly Reports
- Colorado Child Care Deserts, March 2018
- Envision April 2018 Report
- Greeley Tribune, WCDHS and Promises for Children Child Care Desert Meeting Minutes 7.24.18
- HB19-1038 Please Support a Dental Benefit for Pregnant Women Covered by CHP+
- Health Status of Weld County Children and Youth
- Informal Child Care in Detroit and the Bay Area: FFN Learning Community Meeting Provider and Family Characteristics and Needs
- Kids Count Data Center
- Midwifery Closure Information Sheet
- Promises for Children Meeting Minutes
- Strengthen the Maternal Mortality Review Committee
- Support HB 19-1005: Early Childhood Educator Tax Credit
- US Census Bureau
- Weld County Family, Friend and Neighbor Child Care Provider Quality Improvement Task Force Report
- Weld County Licensed Child Care Provider Recruitment Campaign Report
- Weld County Population and Development Report
- Weld County School Age Child Care Provider Quality Improvement Task Force Report