

***To improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of our community.***

**Weld County's Early Childhood Council**

**Strategic Plan 2020-2025**

**Vision**

Every child in Weld County is valued, healthy, and thriving.

**Purpose**

Weld County's Early Childhood Council is a diverse Weld County community partnership that increases the awareness of the importance of early childhood development and facilitates accessible pathways of services leading to lifelong well-being for all children prenatal to eight years of age.

Weld County's Early Childhood Council brings community partners together to share knowledge and resources, build expertise and work collaboratively to accomplish the following goals:

- I. Early Learning & Development – Support early care and education providers in consistently implementing quality practices to improve school readiness.**
  - a. Provide coaching and quality improvement opportunities to early childhood education programs and providers to increase the quality of care provided to all children.
    - i. Provide high quality early care and education professional development to early childhood professionals.
    - ii. Increase Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System Engagement to 60%. Engagement is defined as level 2 or higher (currently 88/227 or 39%).
    - iii. Increase the percentage of child care providers in Weld County accepting Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) subsidies. Currently 70/227 (31%) providers are serving CCCAP children.
    - iv. Increase the percentage of high quality (level 3-5) child care programs that accept CCCAP subsidies (currently 18/35 or 51%).
    - v. Increase the number and percentage of children receiving child care subsidies (CCCAP) being served in a high quality programs (levels 3-5). Currently 562/774 or 73% of CCCAP children are served by high quality programs.
    - vi. Manage and help implement two English and one Spanish Expanding Quality in Infant Toddler Care certificate trainings annually.
    - vii. Prepare unlicensed providers to obtain the Child Development Associate certificate through the Providers Advancing School Outcomes program and other means when fiscally able.

- viii. Provide additional quality improvement supports including professional development, quality improvement supplies, and coaching as funding is available.
  - b. Understand and address the barriers to people entering and staying in the early childhood education workforce.
    - i. Develop clear career pathways for early childhood professionals with a no wrong door approach.
    - ii. Create a recruiting plan for increasing child care capacity with available funding.
    - iii. Support early childhood professional credentialing through the Professional Development Information System (PDIS).
    - iv. Provide scholarships for early childhood education courses or credentials.
    - v. Work with local school districts and colleges to create an early childhood pathway/concurrent enrollment opportunities.
  - c. Increase the number of children entering kindergarten ready for school and the number of children reading at grade-level by fourth grade.
    - i. Provide backbone support for Colorado Reading Corps in Greeley Evans School District 6.
    - ii. Maintain and execute Weld County's School Readiness plan (please see exhibit I) for details.

**II. Family Support & Education – Increase coordination of resources to provide access to information about young children's overall wellness and development for parents and caregivers.**

- a. Offer no-cost, high quality learning resources for the families and caregivers of young children.
  - i. Distribute school readiness calendars annually to over 3,000 parents, families, and child care providers of children ages three and four, to promote kindergarten readiness.
  - ii. Maintain and regularly update the Roadmap4kids online resource.
  - iii. Promote the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System and the Early Learning and Development Guidelines through monthly newsletters, social media posts, and other mediums.
  - iv. Host the annual Northern Colorado Children's Festival.
- b. Increase the number of businesses that have family-friendly workplace policies.
  - i. Encourage and incentivize businesses to take the Health Links assessment and create family-friendly policies as indicated.
  - ii. Offer Family Business Solutions to companies to offset the cost of child care for their employees.
- c. Align, support, and maintain cutting-edge home visitation practices.
  - i. Regularly convene a home visitation committee and regularly provide in-service opportunities so that committee members stay current on relevant topics.
  - ii. Support home visitors in their professional growth and development by coordinating quarterly trainings as determined by committee members.
  - iii. Be aware of, and share with the community, legislative issues affecting home

visiting and early childhood issues.

- d. Maximize use of services by families experiencing complex stressors through interagency communication and cooperation.
  - i. Utilize Bright by Three and other home visitation programs as a point of entry for families to connect with additional services.
  - ii. Optimize educational support and intervention services for families.
  - iii. Remain knowledgeable of other agency/program resources and availability so as to reduce duplication of services and optimize mutual referral of appropriate clients. All data will be kept current on the home visitation matrix.
- e. Provide backbone support for a diaper bank serving Weld County.
  - i. Build community partnerships, fundraising opportunities, location, staffing, and infrastructure.
  - ii. Provide support for family-serving agencies and programs to incentivize participation while at the same time alleviating family stress related to social determinates of health.

**III. Health & Well-being – Work with community partners to increase awareness of nutrition, physical activity, and mental health services available in the county.**

- a. Community/council members are engaged with and actively participate in the Thriving Weld Dashboard.
- b. Physical and mental health information and resources are shared with the community and with early childhood stakeholders via social media, the Roadmap4kids, the council newsletter, etc.

**IV. Community Awareness & Advocacy – Link public engagement/awareness efforts about early childhood issues, priorities, and challenges, and share/implement with stakeholders.**

- a. Support stakeholders, agencies, and professionals to increase cross-domain knowledge and referrals and to provide strength based and culturally sensitive services.
  - i. Annually provide a minimum of six in-person opportunities for agency representatives and other professionals to receive education and information, network, and joint problem-solve.
  - ii. Professional development offerings will be made available to community stakeholders and staff to increase systems building work and capacity.
- b. Serve as a clearinghouse for information about early childhood education by sharing up-to-date information through provider email lists, monthly newsletters, social media posts, and the website.
- c. As needed, host events such as Kids COUNT! presentations and early childhood documentaries to engage the community in understanding the importance of early childhood and advocacy.