

# Stories of Impact



**ECPAC**  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
PARTNERSHIP  
OF ADAMS COUNTY



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## STORIES OF IMPACT: *Systems Work*

*Stories of Impact* was developed to discover and share the results of early childhood efforts in Adams County. This edition explores how partnering together leads to better outcomes through .... systems work.

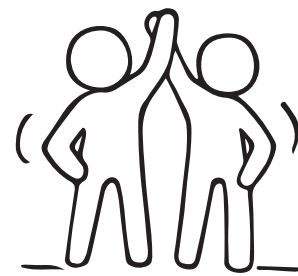
*“We want children and families to ultimately live in a community that has what they need without experiencing any barriers ... for everybody to be working so well together that families are getting the resources they need.”*

— LISA JANSEN THOMPSON,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ECPAC

### What it is ...

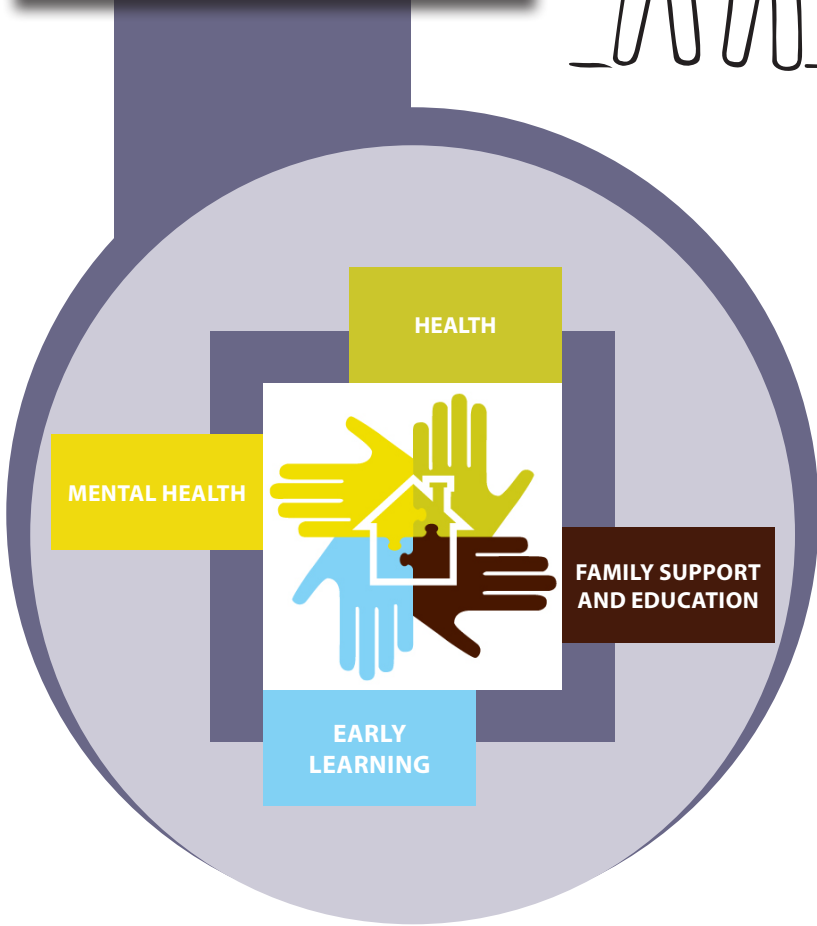
The Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County (ECPAC) provides structure and support to the overall system working to provide children and families with the services they need to be healthy and successful.

ECPAC works with partners to improve the community’s capacity to ensure access to high-quality services and supports in the areas of health, mental health, early learning, family support and education, as it strives to enhance outcomes for all children and families in Adams County.

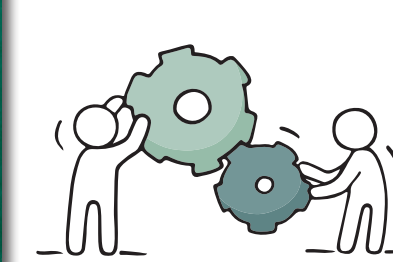


### What is involved ...

- Strengthening partnerships between organizations to facilitate seamless service delivery, efficient use of resources and shared accountability for children and family outcomes.
- Cultivating family leadership and engagement in planning, implementing and evaluating efforts.
- Working with partners to identify what works well, what doesn’t, where the gaps and barriers are and how to address those identified gaps and barriers.
- Facilitating problem-solving and creativity by introducing outside perspectives and resources.
- Building an environment of trust, transparency, and accountability.
- Encouraging common data collection and outcomes.
- Advocating for the use of best practices and procedures to help ensure the delivery of high-quality services.
- Increasing community awareness about the importance of early childhood in long-term life success.
- With partners, ensuring strong policies and sufficient investments support children and families to thrive.

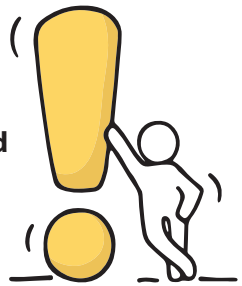


### What the numbers show...



**100%**  
of organizational partners note that they **agree or strongly agree** that their organization benefits from ECPAC involvement.

Organizations report that their partnership with ECPAC has resulted in: **Improved services or supports** for young children and families (59%); **Exchanges of resources** (43%); **Improved processes** for screening/referral/follow-up (36%); **Increased organizational capacity** (21%); Development of **new programs** (19%).



### What people are saying...

“

**“ECPAC is like a load-bearing wall you can’t be without.**

We have a lot of support walls, but definitely the biggest portion of support, connection and partnership comes through ECPAC for us.”

—MICHELLE DALBOTTEN, DIRECTOR, STEP BY STEP CHILD DEVELOPMENT

**“Without them... there wouldn’t be someone that would connect us,** nor do we have the capacity to do so.”  
—Margaret Davis, Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant at Community Reach Center and member of Early Childhood Services Team

“It’s almost like a referral for those who give referrals, making that **web of connections for each other.**”  
—Dolores Ramirez, Chief Program and Impact Officer, Growing Home

**“When you have a system of care that works together, then fewer kids slip through the cracks** and the potential risk for generation-after-generation impact goes down.”  
—Jill Atkinson, Clinical Director, Community Reach Center



### THE BIG TAKEAWAY



**Through strong partnerships, ECPAC is able to facilitate a more effective and efficient system for ensuring that Adams County is a place where young children and their families can thrive.**



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## STORIES OF IMPACT: *Connection to Services*

*Stories of Impact* was developed to discover and share the results of early childhood efforts in Adams County. This edition explores how families find and access support through .... connection to services.

*“Finding people like [my Care Navigator] makes the load a bit lighter.”*

—ELIZABET MUÑOZ, MOTHER OF THREE



### What it is ...



When children and families are connected to the services they need early, it is **more likely that children will reach individually appropriate developmental milestones, be healthy and enter kindergarten more prepared for school success.**

With funding from Project LAUNCH, ECPAC has funded care navigator positions within organizations to help children and their families get connected to services and address any identified barriers to following through with a referral.

*“Our care navigators have become an integral part of our team ... The role supports the providers’ ability to work at the top of their licensure, and the team functioning supports the fulfillment of many organizational [and] contractual requirements” — Lori Cohn, Every Child Pediatrics*

### What people are saying...

Elizabet, a mother of three, puts it this way: “I don’t feel as lost as I once did. **I feel more confident**, especially because I know [my care navigator] is there. I can call her and she is there. **I feel supported.** I know I can count on her whenever any issues come up. She is willing to help me.”

ECPAC funds care navigators at Mountainland Pediatrics, Clinica Family Health and Every Child Pediatrics, as well as Community Reach Center and North Metro Community Services through funding from Project LAUNCH.

Clinica Family Health notes that having the care navigator position has provided the opportunity to work on **process improvement** and has **paved the way for its future care management structure.** Piloting care navigation activities will now be spread to all care teams. Additionally, staff now have greater awareness and “know the importance of developing screening and connections,” thus **raising the total level of care** provided to families.

Furthermore, the care navigation system has also created the opportunity to collect better data. Reporting systems are now built into the care provision, which allows for **better tracking of outcomes and screening** and leads to more follow-up and identification of opportunities for improvement. Connecting children to services earlier helps to save costs down the line and ensures children are best prepared for school success. When families are connected to needed resources, they are less likely to experience crises that can lead to costly interventions and **lifelong health impacts.**



Families with more complex needs can require a higher level of support in navigating systems, self-advocating and overcoming barriers to follow-through on referrals. Care navigation has provided this needed support. **“With the connections made, patients are able to access the care they need,”** shares Mountainland Pediatrics.

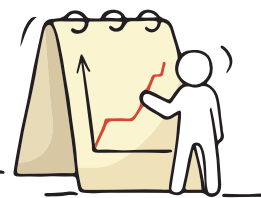
Clinica summarizes, **“It’s all about trust and relationship building.** Patients before were not calling or were not connected. Now, [parents] are calling because they know exactly who to talk to... I have seen a change from a family not being open to the referral, to them following through, to accepting supports, to coming back and saying ‘**I can’t believe I wasn’t open to this before.**’”

### What is involved ...

#### PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Helping **identify appropriate services** within the community
- **Explaining what referrals for services are**, how they are helpful, and why it is important to follow through and receive intervention
- **Problem-solving** a range of barriers faced by the family at the personal, organizational and systemic levels
- Supporting families in making an informed decision and **empowering them to navigate the system**
- Providing **support to families throughout** the screening and referral process
- Incorporating a **social-emotional component to screening**-for-service protocols
- **Ensuring attendance** at well child checkups

### What the numbers show...



Among health clinics that receive ECPAC support, referral follow-through rates have increased from 52% (2012) to 66% (2018) for early intervention services (0–3 years of age). One clinic that employs a care navigator has seen consistent follow-through rates **over 70% and up to 90%.** Also, the rate of multiple “no shows” for well-child checks has decreased dramatically as a result of the support of a care navigator.

Supported by care navigators, **8,938 developmental screenings for children** ages 0–8 and **576 depression screenings for pregnant and postpartum mothers** were completed during FY2016–2017.

Approximately **90% of participating families** said that they would **very likely recommend care navigation services to other families.**



### THE BIG TAKEAWAY



**Families not only feel supported and more confident when engaging with services with assistance from their care navigator, they also experience better outcomes and are more likely to reengage when needed.**

### How you can get involved...



#### —SHARE—

If you know someone who could benefit from ECPAC’s services, or would be interested in learning more, pass it on!



#### —GIVE—

Help ECPAC continue to be able to provide Adams County with quality early childhood services and resources.



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## STORIES OF IMPACT: *Family Strengthening*

*Stories of Impact* was developed to discover and share the results of early childhood efforts in Adams County. This edition explores how parents are empowered and children are enriched through .... family strengthening.

### What it is ...



**Parenthood doesn't come with directions, but ECPAC's parenting resources are the next best thing.** ECPAC works to provide Family Strengthening opportunities on topics and in areas of the county where there is potential for the greatest impact.

Implemented as a two-generation (2Gen) approach, Family Strengthening helps participants explore how they can become better parents, better families and more engaged members of the community. The skills and knowledge acquired support them as both parents and people, which in turn supports their children and families.

*"We want parents to feel they've increased their knowledge and skills, and children to develop on target and be prepared for kindergarten. If they are engaged in multiple opportunities [for resources], we have a better chance to see [families] thrive."* —Rebecca Snowden, Family Initiatives Coordinator

### What is involved ...

#### PARENTING CLASSES

- » Focus on topics **supporting family wellbeing and development**
- » Are offered in **English, Spanish** or both concurrently. This creates an opportunity for people who speak different languages to connect

#### COMMUNITY CAFÉS

- » Are structured gatherings, facilitated in both English and Spanish, that provide opportunities for **family engagement and leadership**
- » Are hosted and led by parents, who are trained to facilitate and share info on resources

#### RESOURCE MATERIALS

- » Ensure **countywide access to written information** on how to best support child development, strengthen families, support maternal mental health and connect to community resources. Offered in both **English and Spanish**.

### What the numbers show...



Since 2015, over **40 parent enrichment classes** have been offered. **Eighty-seven parents have attended an early literacy class**, impacting a total of 256 children in Adams County. Overall, there has been a **26% increase in literacy skills and knowledge** among parents involved.

Approximately **90% of parents** who participated in the Partners in Parenting Education (PIPE) class **felt it helped improve how they parented**, including how to read their child's emotional signals and better understand and respond appropriately.

**Over 80% of parents** who participated in PIPE **noticed a positive change in their child's behavior** and how their child expresses their feelings.



*"The resources have made things easier. Not everything is solved, but it has helped a lot and I am very grateful."*

—HEIDY, MOTHER OF THREE



### What people are saying...

"Having social connections outside of the classes, you learn that it takes a community to raise a child," Melissa, a mother of three, says of ECPAC's family strengthening opportunities. **"It can't be done alone, and there is no shame in asking for resources and asking for help before a crisis hits."**

She adds, "I love how they explain risk factors but they say that you don't have to fall under those statistics. I don't come from a great family, but that doesn't determine the type of parent I will be. **You can be a better parent than your parents were.**"

Speaking to the power of engaging with external resources, Heather, a mother of two, shares "Everything you know about parenting is passed down in your family, and **at trainings and cafés you learn different things that you maybe wouldn't have known otherwise. It makes you feel a little more confident and empowered.**"



Melissa adds, "Community Cafés are the best way to touch base with the community and get to know other moms in the area. Some questions and discussions are intense and really help us go deep. Even though this can be difficult, discussions open the door to creating connection and reach a certain level of intimacy and stronger connections with other moms."

Through post-participation surveys, parents overwhelmingly report that the social-emotional program offered support and information that helped to strengthen their relationship with their child. Heidi, also a mother of three, shares, **"Children don't come with an instruction manual. I have a child with special needs and another one just got diagnosed with autism. The resources have made things easier. Not everything is solved, but it has helped a lot, and I am very grateful."**

### THE BIG TAKEAWAY



**When families are strong, they have the capacity and capability to effectively deal with challenges as they come up, thereby increasing resilience and overall success.**

### How you can get involved...



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## STORIES OF IMPACT: *Quality Improvement*

*Stories of Impact* was developed to discover and share the results of early childhood efforts in Adams County. This edition explores how children learn and grow in high-quality learning environments through .. quality improvement.

*“Our preschool program has this quality Level due to the help and involvement of ECPAC.”*

—LISA LAMBRECHT, BRIGHT HORIZONS



### What it is ...



ECPAC works with local early care and education program providers—including family childcare homes, centers and preschools—and strives to enhance systems to help **improve the access, affordability and quality of early childhood services** through quality improvement initiatives for licensed childcare. These initiatives provide a framework grounded in best practice and are provided by ECPAC staff.

*“Every individual, every business has room for improvement. We help them ... set goals, determine how to work towards it, reach it, and keep going around and around the cycle so that at the end of the day, overall childcare business practices are improved so that children’s outcomes in their daily lives are improved.” —Rebecca Wilson, Early Learning Initiatives Manager*

### What people are saying...

Sweet Pea Center for Early Learning (Sweet Pea) was one of the first programs to go through the Colorado Shines Quality Rating System, supported by an ECPAC coach. The center initially rated a Level 3 and is currently working toward a Level 5 (the highest) rating.

Traci Chamberlain, director at Sweet Pea, shares that as a result of ECPAC coaching, she and her staff feel more prepared to go through the process again. **“ECPAC provides the hands-on piece for childcare centers, with resources and information to get you to the quality that is needed.”**

Acknowledging that quality is important, early care and education programs that participate also commit to making themselves vulnerable with regard to sharing their practices and ideas. Being aware of and sensitive to this, ECPAC coaches are able to ease nerves and address hesitations to beginning and staying committed to the process. As Sharon Juel, director of the Preschool at City of Thornton Community Center, shares, “We have a small center ... Moving into the rating system was scary for everyone. It was the first time for teachers being rated in that way. **When the coach came in, the tension level dropped noticeably.** The coach really helped calm anxieties of teachers.”

Lisa Lambrecht, preschool director at Bright Horizons Early Education Center, spoke to the incredible value of having



access to current best practices within early childhood care and education and to a network of resources. Bright Horizons is committed to ongoing improvement for the benefit of its children and families, moving through Level 1 and Level 2 ratings, to its current rating of Level 3. “As an Adams 12 Five Star School District Preschool, we are rated at a Level 3, and it is due to the help and involvement of ECPAC.” Bright Horizons is already working with its coach to achieve a Level 4 or Level 5 rating in 2019.

Summing up the value of improving quality, Sharon noted, **“We will have a better generation because of the support.”**

### What is involved ...

#### QUALITY IMPROVEMENT COACHING

➤ ECPAC coaches **meet regularly with providers** to identify individual goals and to support staff with making progress and adjustments and ultimately meeting those goals.

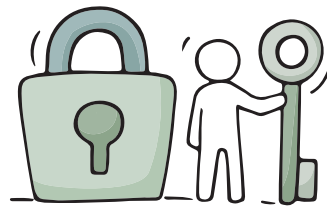
#### MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTATION

➤ ECPAC works closely with early childhood mental health consultants to **promote social-emotional development and address concerns.**

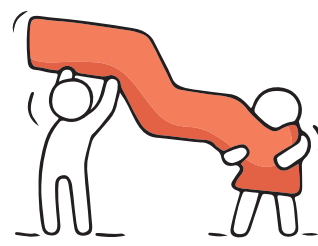
### What the numbers show...



Research shows that children, especially economically disadvantaged children, who **attend high-quality** preschool programs, **have better school achievement, social skills and behavior** than children who do not participate in a preschool experience or who are enrolled in a low-quality program.



Since 2016, **mental health consultants (funded through ECPAC) have supported 59 children with challenging behaviors** through the development of individualized strategies.



Among the Adams County programs that report children leaving their program as a result of behavioral issues, **those that receive consultation report far fewer expulsions.**

### THE BIG TAKEAWAY



**High-quality early childhood education, environments and experiences make the difference for ensuring children are ready for kindergarten and to excel academically and socially.**

*How you can get involved...*



#### —SHARE—

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#### —GIVE—

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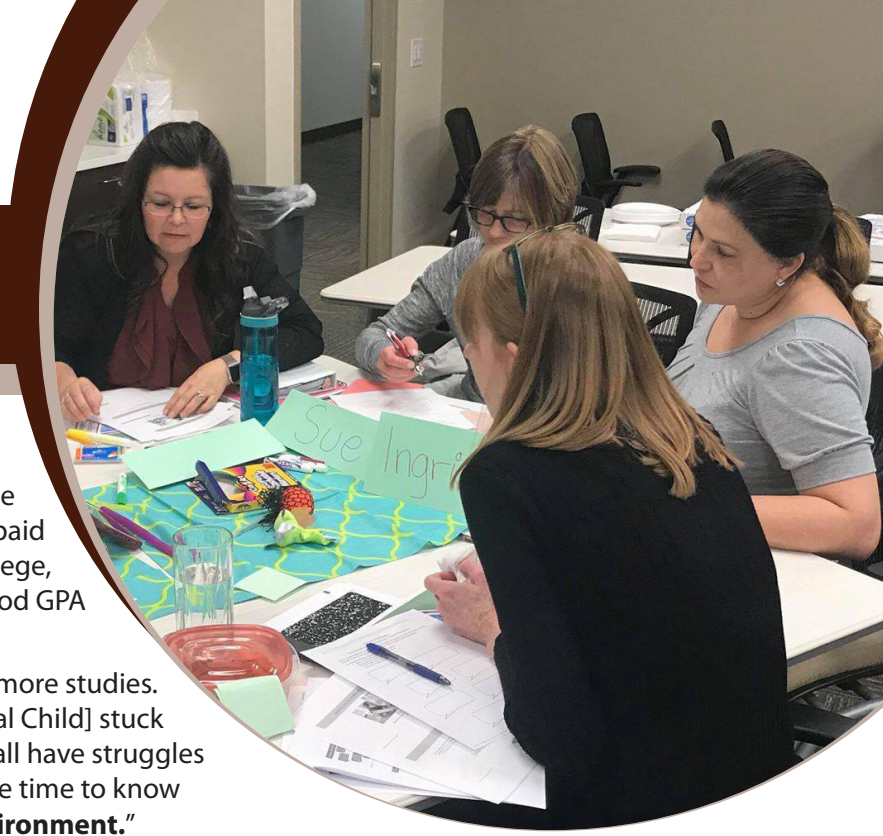
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## STORIES OF IMPACT: Professional Development

*Stories of Impact* was developed to discover and share the results of early childhood efforts in Adams County. This edition explores how community service providers are prepared and supported through ... professional development.

*"I apply what I learned with all students, ... which makes for much more of a rich environment for the kiddos."*

—JOSEFINA HERNANDEZ, TEACHER



### What it is ...



Recognizing the importance of strengthening the entire system, **ECPAC provides professional development opportunities to community professionals across disciplines**, including those involved with health, mental health, social services, home visitation and housing partners, as well as childcare and preschool providers. These opportunities offer shared learning and improvement in service quality.

*"Colleagues in the early childhood arena are people who have passion, but not always the education behind it. Having opportunities to bring them together benefits the community."*—Josefina Hernandez, Lead Preschool Teacher

*"We believe that if we provide high-quality trainings through a countywide approach to service providers, they will be able to provide more comprehensive and higher-quality services to children and families. As a result, families will have better outcomes."*—Lisa Jansen Thompson, Executive Director

### What people are saying...

ECPAC gave Josefina Hernandez the start-up support she needed to be able to complete her associate degree. It paid for one class a semester at Front Range Community College, and "little by little, I continued going to school, got a good GPA and was able to get more scholarships."

Josefina is now a lead preschool teacher, with plans for more studies. She reflects on her studies: "The class on the [Exceptional Child] stuck with me. **I apply what I learned with all students**; we all have struggles and gifts, and things we need to work through. I take the time to know individuals, **which makes for much more of a rich environment.**"

Beyond post-secondary school, Emma Goforth and Marais Pletsch with the Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) Maternal and Child Health Program note the value of ongoing trainings, symposiums and other events. **"These events help us connect with other agencies, other staff, other programs who are doing direct touch with families—to really understand what other people are doing ... It's a way to engage with thought partners,"** shares Emma.

Dolores Ramirez, chief program and impact officer at Growing Home, notes that its staff attended a conference funded by ECPAC and learned more about a long-term case management and mobility mentoring program called the EMPATH Model. Initially the only agency west of the Mississippi using the model, Growing Home has since worked with 33 families to help them overcome the stressors of poverty by providing a system for simplifying complex issues into reasonable action steps. Dolores says the program "has very quickly become a core project that we are hoping to continue to host and expand ... [and] grow it to eventually serve 200 families."



Sharon Penna, a member of the nurse support program through TCHD, has benefited from multiple ECPAC offerings. Through a Trauma-Informed Care training, she was reminded that "everybody comes from a different background ... providers need to be empathetic and meet them where they are." Sharon also raved about an **"amazing, amazing presentation"** in an infant mental health class. Working with a first-time mother, she used some of the materials that really **"helped [the mother] understand how her baby was developing and thriving** as [her daughter] grew."

### What is involved ...

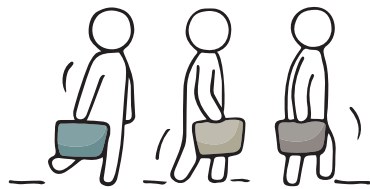
#### LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- **Providing or co-hosting** topic-specific trainings and learning events. Most popular topics include Toxic Stress, Equity, Social-Emotional Development and Trauma-Informed Care.
- **Making available to community professionals who work in related fields** a chance to implement what was learned and have a long-lasting impact

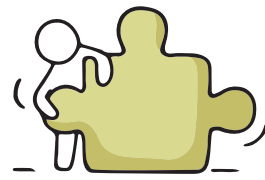
#### SCHOLARSHIPS

- Offering financial assistance through **scholarships for degree or certification programs in Early Care and Education**
- **Paying fees for professionals** to attend conferences and summits

### What the numbers show...



- Of trainings focused on health and mental health topics:
- **100%** of attendees reported they would **apply new skills at their jobs.**
  - **100%** of attendees reported they **would share information** they received with others.
  - **92%** reported feeling like they **better understand children and families.**



Just in the 2017–2018 year, ECPAC provided 42 total trainings with 30 unique topics, **impacting 827 professionals** in the fields of early learning, family support and education, and health and mental health.



**167 college scholarships** have been provided to local early care and education professionals.

### THE BIG TAKEAWAY



**Through individual learning, participants return to their workplaces with new ideas and approaches. As a result, professionals report feeling more knowledgeable and able to provide higher-quality services, helping children and families experience better outcomes.**

### How you can get involved...



#### —SHARE—

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#### —GIVE—

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