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For Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County

www.ecpac.org

January 15, 2019



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INTRODUCTION

The Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County (ECPAC) has worked to build a network of partners forming a coordinated early childhood system since it was founded in 2004. ECPAC is one of 34 councils created through legislation in 2007 to improve and sustain the affordability, capacity, accessibility and quality of early childhood services in the areas of early learning, health, social-emotional-mental health, and family support and parent education. As such, it developed an effective, independent organization that nurtures and maintains a network of partners, leads collective direction setting and strategic planning efforts, and secures the partner and financial resources needed to take action on shared strategic goals. The ECPAC partnership includes over 45 organizations with over 75 individuals, including partner staff, family partners, elected officials and other stakeholders that convene to maximize the impact of systems serving young children and families in early childhood years in an effort to increase children's school readiness, wellbeing and success.

In October 2017, ECPAC leaders and elected officials gathered during the Early Childhood Policy Summit to identify top policy priorities for the upcoming years. ECPAC partnered with Joining Vision and Action (JVA) to facilitate learning and decisions on next steps toward implementation and advancing policy on these efforts for early childhood. With a primary focus on social-emotional health and overall wellbeing, the report from the 2017 summit identified four policy priority areas. The following three priorities are the primary focus for this report, with the fourth policy area (access to affordable, high-quality early care and education and full-day kindergarten) reported separately. Specifically:

- **Providing services and supports where families and children spend time.** Identify innovative approaches and models that bring services to where families and children already spend time. Minimize transportation, fear and stigma barriers. Support agency-level policies that allow flexibility in funding, service location requirements, etc.
- **Changing social norms through research-based framing and shared messaging.** Identify opportunities to integrate and spread existing early childhood development and mental health messages, shifting social norms to embrace the value of collective responsibility for a thriving community, and expanding public and political will for policy change. This may entail maximizing organization-level policies to embed shared messaging across agencies and service systems.
- **Bolstering economically diverse neighborhoods.** Better understand and address policies that perpetuate the impressive network of partners forming a strong, coordinated early childhood system serving Adams County.

To best inform ECPAC on development of policy solutions for the identified policy areas, JVA used the following methods:

1. A **literature review** to analyze opportunities at the national, state, county and city levels for impacting policy and guiding decision-making.
2. **Models research** of six communities across the nation for insight into successful implementation, innovative approaches, lessons learned and advocacy strategies for improving outcomes for children and families.
3. **Key informant interviews** with seven local elected officials to get their perspectives and viewpoints to better understand, identify and advance policy and advocacy for Adams County.
4. **Focus groups with family and community members** to get their responses to the top priorities identified for Adams County and Colorado. Information from the two focus groups was incorporated with data from three focus groups for families conducted by Growing Home,¹ which collaborated on ECPAC's work regarding policies to support children's social-emotional development and overall wellbeing.
5. **Focus groups or "think tanks" featuring organizational leaders** identified by ECPAC leadership to gain perspective on their priorities and solutions for issues in the three areas prioritized as a result of the 2017 summit.

The research process culminated in a decision-making session on November 29, 2018, with the ECPAC board. The following board members participated in the decision-making meeting:

Jill Atkinson, ECPAC Vice Chair II; Community Reach Center, Director

Drew O'Connor, Unison Housing Partners, Deputy Director

Justin Cutler, ECPAC Chair; Parent

Anita Deshommes, ECPAC Treasurer; Growing Home, Chief Financial and Operations Officer

Alix Hopkins, Tri-County Health Department, Nurse Manager

Jessica Messier, Parent

Nicole Kinney, Department of Human Services, Head Start Family Services Manager

Kristen Morel, Mapleton Public Schools, Director of Early Education

Carrie Morris, ECPAC Secretary; Developmental Services, North Metro Community Services, Director

¹ Growing Home provides dual-generation programs to nurture children, strengthen families and build community. Retrieved from <http://www.growinghome.org/mission/>

The following report provides the ECPAC agenda for policy and advocacy, and it presents a summary of the research methods, findings and potential implications for ECPAC based on JVA's findings.

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

There is no lack of research that highlights the tremendous impact of what happens to, around and with children during their first few years of life. Approximately 90 percent of a child's brain is developed by the time they reach age 5,² and early childhood resources are critical to an individual's development, with effects reaching far into adulthood.

Research shows positive outcomes of increased likelihood of graduation, employment, having a savings account and owning a home. Moreover, these impacts stretch beyond the child and family, having influence on the economy, safety and overall wellbeing of their communities.³

Understanding how best to communicate the critical nature of early childhood resources and to advocate for their support is key to advancing the health of the individual child and the community. To gather a range of data and best incorporate diverse voices to better understand ECPAC's role in promoting three policy priority areas, four primary methods were used: literature review, models research, key informant interviews and focus groups (both with community members and organizational leaders). The following provides an overview of each of these methods.

Literature Review

To provide insights into three of ECPAC's focus areas and uncover foundational information for the other components of this work, JVA conducted a literature review to discover approaches and best practices that others have identified through related efforts and research. In addition to reviewing sources of information identified by ECPAC, JVA examined relevant scholarly and topical articles, books, organization websites and other sources (e.g., dissertations, conference proceedings).

Models Research

The organizations identified for the models research were selected based on suggestions by ECPAC leadership, a national scan of organizations and the literature review. Organizational materials were reviewed and interviews were conducted with the six communities identified, to better understand successful implementation of innovative approaches and lessons learned, and to gain insights into advocacy strategies. The six models included in this review are outlined below.

From the research and interviews with the six communities selected for the models research, information was obtained on the areas of service delivery, approach to advocacy, policy issues, lessons learned, role of partnership, strategies and messaging.

² Calman, L., & Tarr-Welch, L. (2005). *Early childhood education for all: A wise investment*. Retrieved from <http://web.mit.edu/workplacecenter/docs/Full%20Report.pdf>

³ Ibid.

Community/Model #1: Estes Valley Investment in Child Success (EVICS)

Located in Estes Park, CO. [Participants](#) in Civic Canopy and Early Childhood Colorado Partnership Shared Message Bank. Program description per the website: “The goal of this project was to increase community awareness of, and investment in, early childhood needs and services, and to build community support for a systemic approach to the provision of high-quality early childhood services. EVICS developed a task force of community members who were trained to inundate the community with messages about the importance of strong child development and child care as the Estes Valley is experiencing issues for families trying to access quality, affordable care. The taskforce developed a PowerPoint slide deck with the support of the Early Childhood Colorado Partnership to help them in their effort to build public support. In addition, EVICS developed ads for local papers promoting their messages.”

Community/Model #2: Earlier is Easier

Located in metro Denver. [Participants](#) in Civic Canopy and Early Childhood Colorado Partnership Shared Message Bank. Program description per the website: “Earlier Is Easier is a collaborative of 28 Denver-area organizations working collectively to promote the value of interacting with children from birth to age three. Our messaging encourages simple activities related to talking, reading, singing, playing, laughing and writing that parents and caregivers can do each day to foster healthy brain development while also building strong emotional bonds.”

Community/Model #3: United Way of the Greater Triangle

Located in Morrisville, NC. Participants in [National Network/2Gen Learning Community](#), with programs and approaches across all two-generation (2Gen) core components: early childhood, economic supports, health, postsecondary/adult education, social capital and workforce. Description per its [website](#): “We make sure vulnerable children and their families matter because where you live affects how you live. This includes access to quality childcare, affordable housing, access to healthy food, good jobs, and overall well being. United Way of the Greater Triangle (UWGT) is committed to a family-centered, collaborative approach that is an effective way of working for nonprofits and for families.”

Community/Model #4: Familia Adelante/Family Forward

Located in Bronx, NY. Description of organization, per its [website](#): “Familia Adelante/Family Forward is group of agencies and individuals who work collaboratively in Bronx, NY with one common goal – to strengthen New York City families. Familia Adelante/Family Forward empowers families by helping them establish and achieve short and long term goals in the areas of economic stability, educational opportunities and family wellness. We utilize a Whole Family Approach that addresses the needs of both children and parents together.”

Community/Model #5: Family Strengthening Network

Located in Bridgeton, NJ. Description of organization, per its website: “[The Family Strengthening Network](#) (FSN) works with families toward achieving their dreams for success in every area of life. Trained Family Advocates work directly with families to

develop a plan for goal accomplishment, and they provide resources and tools for families to complete their plans. In addition, families have access to educational seminars and small groups for areas that are important for family wellbeing. Families participate in fun community events and volunteering opportunities to strengthen family bonds.”

Community/Model #6: Community Partnership for Child Development

Located in Colorado Springs, CO. Participants in [National Network/2Gen Learning Community](#), with programs and approaches for the following 2Gen core components: early childhood, economic supports, health, postsecondary/adult education and social capital. [Community Partners for Child Development](#) (CPCD) was founded in 1987 with Catholic Charities and manages the Head Start program in El Paso County. Beginning with funding to serve 300 children in one program, it now has about 1,800 children in the program. CPCD is in 63 classrooms in six school districts in the county and on the Fort Carson Army post. It has partnerships with Early Connections Learning Centers, School District 11 and 10 family childcare homes.

Key Informant Interviews: Elected Officials

An important part of exploring the policy options for ECPAC is to understand the policy landscape and views of elected leaders. Elected leaders often have current and historical input on policy issues. Interviews were conducted with seven Adams County elected officials on the policy issues determined at the 2017 Early Childhood Policy Summit. Several elected officials were invited, and interview participants included two state legislators, two from city councils in the county, and three Adams County commissioners.

The elected officials were asked to share their top concerns for families in their districts, and the top concern expressed was related to the economic issues their constituents are facing—many of the issues raised regarding potential policy stemmed from this concern. Additionally, overall key themes that emerged from the interviews with elected officials included:

- Focus on early care and education (ECE) and connecting with schools is important.
- Funding is a major barrier to improving services and economic security.
- Greater coordination with other jurisdictions is needed in Adams County.
- Transportation systems need to be improved.
- Fears and concerns from the immigrant community are impacting their access to services.
- There is not enough affordable housing in Adams County.

The policy overview, policy barriers and policy opportunities are described under each of the priority areas.

Community Focus Groups

Participants in the focus groups for families and communities were referred through ECPAC and partners working with ECPAC. Focus group questions were designed to gather feedback from participants in the areas of services and supports where families and children spend time, changing social norms through research-based framing and shared messaging for Adams County and Colorado, and bolstering economically diverse neighborhoods. JVA conducted two focus groups for family and community members, with a total of four participants. In addition, findings from three focus groups with a total of 24 participants conducted by Growing Home are incorporated into the results below.

Organizational Leaders Focus Groups

Two focus groups for organizational leaders were held, with a total of 15 participants representing the following organizations and programs:

- Adams 12 Five Star Schools
- Adams County Human Services Department
- Almost Home, Inc.
- City of Thornton
- City of Westminster
- Clinica Family Health Services
- Colorado Child Care Assistance Program – Adams County
- Community Reach Center
- Colorado’s Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC)
- Every Child Pediatrics
- Growing Home
- Kids First Health Care
- Tri-County Health Department
- Unison Housing Partners
- Mile High United Way – United Neighborhoods

FINDINGS AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

The following sections highlight key findings and potential strategy implications for ECPAC based on three priority areas:

1. Providing services and support where families and children spend their time (“Providing services and support”)
2. Changing social norms through research-based framing and shared messaging (“Changing social norms”)
3. Bolstering economically diverse neighborhoods (“Bolstering neighborhoods”)

Providing Services and Support

This section includes analyses of the findings to identify innovative approaches that maximize service provision where families and children already spend their time and minimize barriers to accessing these locations or services.

Literature Review Findings

The following bullets share **broad themes or focal points** included in existing research as successful approaches or helpful to consider for the focus area of *providing services and support where families and children spend their time*. Specifically:

- **Community and cultural centers.** This includes supporting localized centers for peer-to-peer connection, as well as integration of service providers, to increase ease of access and remove transportation barriers. Intentionally building or designating physical locations (i.e., community centers, parks, etc.) for community gathering supports what is often reported as one of families’ biggest strengths and sources of resilience—a network of people. By having a place to gather, community members are able to leverage their resources, arrange or provide childcare or supervision for working parents (thus supporting economic stability), access social connections for both children and adults, and instill cultural and spiritual values from an early age.⁴
- **Multigenerational approach.** This includes integrating and deploying 2Gen approaches across service providers and programs. Successful

⁴ Wilder Research, Development and Training, Inc., and University of Minnesota. (September 2016). *Prenatal to age 3: A comprehensive, racially-equitable policy plan for universal health child development*. Retrieved from http://www.buildinitiative.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Work/Recent%20Events/PrenatalToAge3_Plan_9-16.pdf

(footnote continued)

strategies for implementing 2Gen approaches include an equation of three main elements: education, economic supports and social capital. Early indications from emerging two-generation approaches highlight the importance of “mutual motivation” when both parents and children have access to opportunities.⁵ As parents, specifically mothers, can develop and make progress in their own lives (through continuing education, employment training, etc.), they become more interested and invested in the advancement of their children (engaging more with development activities, working with children to complete homework, etc.).⁶ Also, similar to the value of the networks as a whole, multigenerational approaches help to honor cultural values, pass along valuable knowledge, and problem-solve threats to family or community cohesion.⁷

- **Formal and informal networks** of family, friends and neighbors. This includes connecting with or reaching out to nonstructured networks (family and friends) to provide services and access to information—capturing more families without relying on connection to childcare assistance or provider programs. As noted above, these networks provide an opportunity to relay and model cultural values, such as discipline, persistence, courage, etc., as well as exposure to other cultural values and the practice of interdependency.⁸ Acknowledging and honoring the value of the strong “village” approach to caring for children and families, in addition to providing spaces (community forums, involvement with organized groups or efforts) to share their ideas, is helpful for building bonds with informal caregiving groups. As one study participant shared, “[Our] strengths need to be engaged, and we need to feel free to ask questions in community settings and let our ideas be known.”⁹
- **“Security programs” investment.** This includes support for and connection with programs that support security and acquisition of food, housing, transportation, employment, childcare, etc. When investing in or

⁵ Mosle, A. & Patel, N. (2012). *Two generations, one future: moving parents and children beyond poverty together*. The Aspen Institute. Retrieved from ascend.aspeninstitute.org/resources/two-generations-one-future

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Wilder Research, Development and Training, Inc., and University of Minnesota. (September 2016). *Prenatal to age 3: A comprehensive, racially-equitable policy plan for universal health child development*. Retrieved from http://www.buildinitiative.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Work/Recent%20Events/PrenatalToAge3_Plan_9-16.pdf

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

(footnote continued)

advocating for policy and practice change within these areas, use of a culturally sensitive lens is also recommended. One example is working with public and private insurance companies to increase reimbursements for family services, such as doulas who provide culturally responsive emotional support and prenatal, birthing and postpartum care.¹⁰

- **Online or other nontraditional options.** This includes providing online options for consultation, check-ins or access to care (telehealth, meetings with community case managers or service providers, etc.)

Models Research Findings

Through the models research and interviews, the following emerged as best practices and lessons learned in service delivery that could improve outcomes for children and families. Specifically, it is critical that:

- Programs are rooted in the community so that the community members become familiar with the program and can build relationships with each other and program staff.
- Services are comprehensive for children and families, such that a variety of services are offered at preschools and within schools.
- ECE organizations support the needs of children and their families.

“We prioritize parent engagement and implement a social-emotional approach for all kids in the program.”

Organizations also shared lessons learned and innovative approaches regarding work with families and children that are relevant to providing services and supports; feedback shared reveals the following advice:

- Stay focused on the best possible outcomes and services for children and families.

“When we keep the focus of the children and families in mind, it helps staff tap into their passion for why they come to work.”

- Involve all agencies in data collection for individual family plans.
- Incorporate two-generational or whole-family approaches, with intentional services and opportunities focused on both the child and the adult for stability, education, family wellness and social connectedness to break the cycle of poverty.

¹⁰ Ibid.

- Partner/integrate with school districts for children with special needs.
- Engage with families by having someone walk alongside them regardless of the challenge.
- Help children develop educational goals along with the goals that are developed with their families.

Additionally, throughout the models research, there was an emphasis on the role of partnerships, regardless of policy focus area. This feedback revealed the following actions as critical for creating movement:

- Reach out to schools, human service agencies and other agencies to provide children and families with comprehensive services and supports including health, education and mental health services.
- Strengthen connections with school districts and community health organizations.
- Seek funding from grants and foundations to pay for staff time in collaborative efforts.
- Consider a shared database and budget.
- Create memorandums of understanding (MOUs) to outline the vision and clearly identify roles and understanding of roles with collaborative organizations.
- Coordinate workshops and services.
- Understand that children and families are “all of our clients.”
- Recognize that collaborative work is slow and takes time.

Two quotes from the leaders interviewed for the models research underscore the importance of partnerships:

“It is important to have every voice at the table and a diverse perspective of voices across the table.”

“Our collaboration is effective because each person/organization brings their own expertise.”

Key Informant Interview Findings

Through the interviews, the elected officials provided their perspectives on service provision where families and children spend time. The policy overview, barriers and opportunities identified from their responses are presented below.

Policy overview

Elected officials stressed the importance of education, affordable housing, healthcare, public transportation and immigrant families' fears as issues that impact services and support where families spend their time.

Elected officials also shared that there are many organizations to help communities, but most are stretched thin. They brought up many community issues, including lack of affordable housing, homelessness, lack of public transportation access that extends throughout the county, and immigrant family fears of getting services.

"Families are so busy that their (focus) is often on food, health, school and jobs."

"Schools are an important place to make impacts on families."

Policy barriers

The policy barriers that emerged included lack of funding and financial strains on families, lack of affordable and accessible preschool, lack of affordable healthcare, and transportation and language barriers.

Interview participants expressed that:

- Schools are underfunded, pointing out that some are even going to shorter school weeks.

"Negative community outcomes come from lack of funding afterschool programs." (e.g., middle-schoolers having nowhere to go and increasingly getting into trouble)

- Lack of funding for schools is associated with lack of state funding, and with limits on the resources the state can provide.
- Charitable organizations should help in meeting community needs, but they are often stretched financially as well.

"We can't do it by ourselves—like homelessness—it is a county issue."

Policy opportunities

The elected officials interviewed discussed the following areas for policy opportunity:

- Support adequate funding for community needs.
- Provide resources in multiple languages.

Community Focus Group Findings

The focus groups with families provided information on service provision where families and children spend their time.

Overview

Families and community members that participated in the focus groups were asked about their views on policy¹¹—or rules set by government, business, service organizations or individuals; and advocacy¹² as defined by people giving support for a cause or proposal. Issues that were discussed by and for families were immigration and the stigma of cultural beliefs, race and ethnicity. Concerns and fear were expressed for family members, especially in the Hispanic and Muslim communities.

“I think a lot of families are going through this (immigration issues) like us, but it is not something that they want to divulge. We have been trying to get my husband permanent residency for two years.”

Identified challenges

Parents responded that they encounter obstacles or barriers in the following areas:

- Homelessness and affordable housing
- Health, mental health, and maternal mortality and morbidity issues
- Receiving outdated information
- Affordable activities for children and families, such as water parks or museums
- Jobs paying a living wage
- Agency requirements such as income and family-size eligibility that make it harder for working families to qualify for needed services
- Debt
- Stress
- Access to crisis services
- Having easier access to preschool services

Two quotes from community focus group participants described the need for preschool access:

¹¹ Policy is a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by government, political party, business or individual. Retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/policy>

¹² Advocacy is public support for a particular cause or proposal. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/advocacy>

“Some parents opt out of preschool and then have to pay for expensive daycare. Some preschools have to be your local school or center and you have to live in that ZIP code or zone and be low income, or your child has to have a medical condition. If you make a little more, they can turn you down.”

“Preschool makes a difference. When my son began school, he had 20 words. By Christmas break, he had 200 words.”

Identified solutions

Participants offered several solutions to some of the issues and challenges discussed around housing, immigration, access to preschool, and support for maternal and mental health, including:

- Provide mentors and guidance for families.
- Continue ECPAC’s reach in the community for parenting classes and community cafés and talk about the five protective factors.¹³
- Get more money for family needs.
- Provide emergency housing for families.
- Provide transportation for school choice.
- Have more efficient resources and systems for getting help.
- Offer affordable and available childcare and healthcare.
- Offer updated information on services and supports for families.
- Coordinate eligibility requirements, making it easier for families to qualify for services (i.e., income, family size and other documentation).
- Hire staff who are passionate and willing to help.
- Have access to translators for families.
- Provide opportunities for students to be in mixed school settings (upper- and lower-income students, with students wearing uniforms).
- Destigmatize mental health by having access to education, support and services for children and families.

“ECPAC really empowers me as a parent.”

¹³ The five protective factors are 1) social emotional competence, 2) knowledge of child development and parenting, 3) concrete support in times of need, 4) social connections, and 5) parent resilience. Retrieved from

<http://www.partnershipforsafefamilies.org/uploads/3/4/5/6/34564414/fiveprotectivefactors.pdf>

Organizational Leader Findings

To learn about approaches for services and supports where families spend their time, organizational leaders were asked about the policy implications, issues and changes needed to best minimize barriers to services for families.

Overview

The organizational leaders that participated shared examples of where families spend their time and how they get services. Some of these locations are in schools, healthcare settings, preschools, parks and recreation centers, churches, and housing and social service agencies. As the folks on the ground, they felt there are many organizations and government agencies doing the work to connect families to services, such as Covering Kids and Family Coalition, school district accountability groups, those providing community navigation services and kinship family programs. Participants also discussed the governmental jurisdictions of the cities, Adams County and the state Legislature that oversee the policies and funding for the work.

Barriers

The organizational leaders in the focus groups provided in-depth examples of where there are barriers for the public in getting services. These include a limited transportation system in Adams County, complicated enrollment systems, language barriers, legal immigration status, lack of affordable housing, family legal matters and lack of access to healthcare, especially for adults and parents. They also stated that care is sometimes not culturally responsive, and translations into more languages are needed.

“There is no clear policy [for homelessness] because it would be different from the policy for the sheriff or parks... It’s all over the place.”

Public transportation “is tremendously unconnected, with RTD not reaching large parts of the county. Even if they could use RTD, it may be a three-hour bus ride to Human Services.”

Additional barriers described as affecting the services and supports where families and children spend their time were the following:

- Walkability

“Some neighborhoods don’t have any sidewalks; people have trouble finding a safe, walkable route for getting their kids to school.”

- Citizen awareness of available resources

“There’s lots of stuff out there people don’t know about.”

- Capacity of service agencies

“You hear a lot about a wait list; that includes affordable housing. There’s a two- to three-year wait list—even to get a voucher.”

- Public safety and health

“We hear from residents about the impact of marijuana and smoking in public. Legal smoking allows more public use of marijuana and opioid use. It’s affecting park spaces as they become dumping grounds, including for needles.”

“The perception of crime and the reality of crime” are affecting people’s sense of safety and comfort using these public spaces.

- Funding; specifically, limited funding across the board—more demand than capacity
- Immigration status

“Certain services are available only to residents. But lots of mixed-status families are afraid to apply [for services like Medicaid or other assistance] even for legal family members because they’re afraid of what’s going to happen.”

- Changes in Medicaid

“The state has integrated health and behavioral health, and there are limitations to who can be served based on the organization’s contracts with the regions. This affects a big piece of ECPAC.”

- Parity of care for mental and physical health

Solutions

Solutions recommended from organizational leaders included:

- Regional collaboration so that Adams County families know where to go to get what services
- Asking funders for resources to address current needs, not just new projects.

Potential Implications for the ECPAC Partnership

Considering the key findings noted above, the following represent **broad action steps** that are linked to positive outcomes for *providing services and support where families and children spend their time*.

- **Advocate for flexible funding** to support community-led initiatives and structures. This is true for all levels (local, state, national) and sources (government, foundation) of funding. To dissuade objections based on lack of structured outcomes, knowledgeable community partners can help to marry community-identified needs with evidence-based practices or resources. In the same vein, ask funders for resources to address current needs, not just new projects.
- **Add the voices of families and community members** to conversations on funding opportunities and initiative planning. Not only does this honor community-specific values and interests, it also ensures that funding is not put toward resources or initiatives that will not be used. To support and inform all parties, it is also important to keep channels of communication and information sharing open between formal and informal groups (boards, nonprofits, community groups, etc.). Specifically for informal groups, it's also important to consider communication preferences (e.g., text or social media versus email) and availability (e.g., as affected by overnight shifts, child pickups).
- **Emphasize coordination and collaboration** among agencies or organizations that share common populations. This also includes local businesses that may have opportunities for co-location with other services or partnering for community connection. Specifically, shared data and information practices—within the bounds of HIPAA regulations and reasonable sharing—support better communication with families and partners, which helps to minimize negative impact on families as a result of spending excess time completing paperwork or having unnecessary repeat conversations. Specifically, promote regional collaboration so that Adams County families know where to go to get what services.

“Our collaboration with ECPAC, Growing Home, and the Housing Authority is working together to hear what people want.”

- Promote a **greater emphasis on technical education**, in addition to college preparation for young people.
- **Provide resources in multiple languages.**

Changing Social Norms

This focus area seeks to identify opportunities to best integrate existing early childhood development and mental health messages within the community, as well as implementation strategies specifically designed to spur community participation and advocacy for early childhood efforts. The following sections present the key findings across research methods and highlight potential implications for ECPAC moving forward.

Literature Review Findings

The following bullets share **broad themes or focal points** presented throughout existing research as successful approaches and helpful to consider for the focus area of *changing social norms through research-based framing and shared messaging*.

- **Community connection, inclusion and outreach.** This includes creating opportunities for community members to share in conversations with each other, as well as with community leaders and providers. Additionally, ensuring that communication pieces, as well as processes, are coordinated and consistent across all levels of participation (state, local, community) contributes to greater success of the overall initiative.¹⁴
- **Emphasis beyond parental responsibility.** This includes moving from the “family bubble” concept of parents and families being solely responsible for and able to advance child wellness and thriving to recognition of the environmental factors that influence these outcomes.¹⁵ Using examples that go beyond the family—impact on other adults in the community, implications on economic health and safety, etc.—helps the greater community feel more connected to and responsible for the early development of children, even when they have none of their own.¹⁶
- **Use of metaphors.** This includes using concrete examples of unrelated processes, which can help audiences understand the concepts related to early childhood efforts while not requiring experience with or buy-in for

¹⁴ Center for the Study of Social Policy. (2013). *Building communities that help young children and families thrive. A national survey by Early Childhood-LINC: A Learning and Innovation Network for Communities*.

¹⁵ FrameWorks Institute. (2015). *Framing child & youth development FrameWorks message brief for the National Collaboration for Youth and the National Human Services Assembly*. Retrieved from http://frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF/NationalAssembly_MessageBrief_March2015.pdf

¹⁶ FrameWorks Institute. (2009). *Framing early child development message brief*. Retrieved from http://frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/ECD/e cd_message_brief_2009.pdf

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early childhood efforts.¹⁷ For example, the Early Childhood Colorado Partnership Shared Message Bank suggests the “serve and return” metaphor for talking with others about childhood brain development: *Brains are built through back-and-forth interaction, much like a game of tennis, ping pong or volleyball. Healthy development occurs when young children “serve” through babbling, gestures or words, and adults “return” by getting in sync with the child.*¹⁸

- **Emphasis on group impact.**¹⁹ This includes any messaging around marginalized populations moving away from individual accounts of hardships, racism or inequality toward group experiences or benefits. Specific to telling stories from individual accounts related to racism, “the dominance of such stories reinforces the notion that racism is primarily about individual actions rather than embedded in social structures.”²⁰

Models Research Findings

The models research revealed several findings relevant to ECPAC’s focus on changing social norms. Specifically, interviewees were asked to describe how the organizations play a role in advocacy; feedback included the following:

- Training family advocates and ensuring that parents have skills to be able to advocate for themselves and their children
- Having a shared governance model so parents can be involved as leaders
- Helping families set and articulate goals, and building an action plan on how to accomplish those goals with resources to complete the plan
- Connecting with neighbors, church and community for family strengthening
- Connecting families with each other
- Participating in professional groups that perform advocacy to stay on top of things

¹⁷ Early Childhood Colorado Partnership. *Shared Message Bank*. Retrieved from <http://eccp.civiccanopy.org/message-platform/>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ O’Neil, Moira. (2009). *Invisible structures of opportunity: How media depictions of race trivialize issues of diversity and disparity*. FrameWorks Institute. Retrieved from http://frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF_race/cognitive_media_analysis_race.pdf

²⁰ FrameWorks Institute. (2009). *Framing early child development message brief*. Retrieved from http://frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/ECD/ecd_message_brief_2009.pdf

- Creating the space for conversations that advance advocacy learning, which may be similar to [The Colorado Children's Campaign](#) or [Clayton Early Learning](#)

One leader interviewed for the models research underscored their advocacy approach as follows:

“We empower parents to have skills to advocate for themselves and for their children.”

Additionally, the following emerged as being important aspects of messaging to improve outcomes for children and families, based on the interviews and materials from organizations involved in the models research:

- Send the message that early childhood is about the current and future workforce.
- Encourage providers to understand and share the science around brain development and why it is important.
- Ensure that messages are aligned and shared among groups, families and community (i.e., providers or collaborative members share messaging with and for parents and the business community).
- Be clear on exactly what you want, and create messaging around that.

“ECPAC has been good about messaging for early childhood. Continue that effort and provide statewide messaging.”

Key Informant Interview Findings

The interviews with elected officials provided their perspectives on how to change social norms through research-based framing and shared messaging for Adams County and Colorado.

Policy overview

Elected officials were asked to describe stigmas, beliefs and resulting social norms that impact policies in their communities. Areas that emerged were racial and ethnic bias, the Taxpayer’s Bill of Rights (TABOR) Amendment (which restricts revenues for all levels of government), language barriers and access to college.

Policy barriers

Policy barriers to changing social norms that were identified included racism, lack of affordable and accessible transportation, and language. One official pointed out “one school district has students who speak over 100 languages.”

The interviewees also mentioned that the largest population that encounters barriers in the county is Spanish speakers.

Another official suggested that going to college is a social norm that may be unattainable for some. The officials also said that as in many communities, immigrants and their families do not feel safe.

“There is a lot of bias in communities in Adams County.”

Policy opportunities

Policy opportunities that emerged through interviews with elected officials in the areas of changing social norms included increasing awareness and resources for addressing the following: immigration and refugee fears, children with trauma, the need for preschool and kindergarten, and school funding. This includes providing clear information on who can qualify for services and supporting those dealing with economic insecurity.

Specific points in these areas included:

- Support communities facing adverse norms, such as the immigrant population.
- Provide better and more affordable public transportation systems and investments in affordable housing. One interviewee suggested that zoning policies spread out affordable housing so that low-income communities were not all in one place but rather dispersed.

“There is a need to have conversations across jurisdictions on the issues that often cause economic segregation. Some come from actions of the municipalities not wanting an issue in their own backyard.”

Community Focus Group Findings

Overview

Perspectives from the parents in the family and community focus groups around changing social norms considered the existing early childhood development and mental health messages within the community, as well as implementation strategies specifically designed to engage community participation and advocacy for early childhood efforts.

Identified challenges

Parents described some of the challenges that get in the way of developing and promoting positive social norms, including:

- Lack of services in some parts of Adams County
- Stigma of immigrants causing mistreatment of that community
- Lack of access to/difficulty of getting into early childhood programs

Identified solutions

Participants in the family and community focus group also suggested the following solutions to these challenges:

- Hold a campaign of immigrant awareness that can be an advocacy effort.
- Promote organizations that are supporting families well, such as Growing Home, A Precious Child (in Broomfield) and ECPAC that are serving families well.
- Provide messaging with a positive view of parents.

“Parents should be listened to, treated well, with cultural sensitivity and without judgment.”

Organizational Leader Findings

Overview

Feedback from the organizational leaders revealed that the emphasis for changing social norms should be on integrating existing early childhood development and mental health messages into the community and implementing strategies designed to engage and enroll community participants into advocacy for early childhood efforts. Toward that end, organizational leaders were asked to consider stigmas and perceptions of social norms, barriers or challenges for families, and solutions and examples for shared messaging in the area.

Barriers

The participants expressed that some of the positive social norms of Adams County are focused on education—that is where many families interact with one another. Negative social norms discussed included racism and immigrant fears that impact some families when they do not seek needed services because of immigration policies.

The organizational leaders mentioned the following barriers relating to social norms:

- Stigma around seeking services such as [Women Infants and Children \(WIC\)](#), [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#), and [Medicaid](#)
- Agency silos across the county: Knowledge of community resources is lacking for some in the community, and some agencies are unaware of services provided by other organizations.
- Self-imposed personal boundaries from residents prevent them from going to another area in the county for services.

“In Westminster, the original section is around 77nd Avenue, and there are residents who won’t go north of 92nd because they have built their own boundaries in their heads.”

Solutions

Organizational leaders suggested the following solutions for changing social norms through research-based framing and shared messaging:

- Create policies to respond to the cliff effect, which describes the phenomenon when families have small changes in income and are cut off from benefits as a result.
- Encourage more collaboration across organizations and have organizations highlight positive social norms when they are evident.
- Increase participation on community advisory committees when there are opportunities.
- Develop messaging that is relevant and appears where families and community members can easily access it (e.g., on Spanish radio stations and in bilingual flyers).

Potential Implications for the ECPAC Partnership

Considering the key findings noted above, the following represent **broad action steps** that are linked to positive outcomes for *changing social norms through research-based framing and shared messaging*.

- **Connect with local and statewide groups** to adopt shared outcome expectations, adding those that include culturally responsive elements, including safe and enriching homes, secure attachment and sustained language development.²¹
- **Focus on broad, all-inclusive messaging** to pose the benefit of change to the larger whole, and the responsibility of greater society to see those benefits come to fruition.
- **Use “with” language** to prevent implications or feelings of separateness when communicating about child, family and community services. For example, talk about working *with* parents.
- **Explain child development processes** to avoid the concept that raising children is a “just add water” situation and to help audiences understand the ongoing and societal benefits of supporting early childhood education

²¹ Wilder Research, Development and Training, Inc., and University of Minnesota. (September 2016). *Prenatal to Age 3: A comprehensive, racially-equitable policy plan for universal health child development*. Retrieved from http://www.buildinitiative.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Work/Recent%20Events/PrenatalToAge3_Plan_9-16.pdf

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- and development. Furthermore, using metaphors to explain these developmental processes has proved helpful.²²
- **Implement diverse graphics, photos and quotes** within written communications to support personal connections with the material (seeing someone like them) and to broaden the literal picture of what community looks like.²³
 - **Support communities facing adverse norms**, such as poverty, the immigrant population and refugees. Prepare resources to address issues of race and ethnicity with specific support for immigrants and undocumented families.
 - **Expand so more people become involved in and aware of ECPAC efforts.** This might include creating more structured opportunities for people to come together to discuss issues.
 - **Clearly define ECPAC's policy goals** as they relate to how it currently provides services, and promote those policy goals by **connecting with legislators for their involvement and support.** Provide messages that are clear and strengths-based on identified policy and advocacy efforts.
 - **Use data to drive policy** decisions and share that data with others.

“ECPAC is viewed as a clearinghouse for data and information, and they are needed for wise policy decisions.”

- **Expand and promote shared messaging on early childhood**, and craft messaging related to policy and advocacy for Adams County and Colorado.

Bolstering Neighborhoods

This section seeks to identify how to shift away from policies and community mindsets that perpetuate segregation of neighborhoods toward those that understand the benefits of diverse, mixed-income neighborhoods on child outcomes. The following sections include key findings from the research, as well as potential implications for ECPAC.

²² Examples of these metaphors linked with development stages have been developed by FrameWorks and are available via the Early Childhood Colorado Partnership Shared Messaging Tool Kit, found at <http://eccp.civiccanopy.org/message-platform/#section1>.

²³ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2008). *More race matters. Race matters toolkit*. Retrieved from <https://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-MoreRaceMatters3-2008.pdf>

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Literature Review Findings

The following bullets share **broad themes or focal points** presented throughout existing research as successful approaches and helpful to consider for the focus area of *bolstering economically diverse neighborhoods*.

- **Changes to zoning laws, regulations or practices.** This includes review and update of any formal processes that perpetuate concentration of poverty (e.g., only allowing apartment complexes or specifically low-income housing within specific areas of the community.)²⁴
- **Opportunities for work and employment training.** This includes increasing localized access to work (and better access via available methods of transportation), as well as opportunities to advance skill-building and thus greater possibility for increasing livable wage.²⁵
- **Support for access to quality early care and education.** This includes support of local resources and programs that emphasize the value of preschool education.²⁶
- **Review of income eligibility rules or other requirements.** This includes review of income guidelines or regulations across multiple programs (geared toward supporting lower-income populations) to discover any competing or contradictory thresholds that may inhibit stability or accumulation of assets.²⁷
- **Focus on racial equity for all.** This includes using messaging for efforts that move away from focusing on the broad “value” of diversity from an intellectual perspective toward highlighting the mutual benefit of finding solutions to inequalities. “Without clear explanations of why finding solutions should matter to all Americans apart from ‘spicing’ up their

²⁴ Kahlenberg, Richard D. (August 3, 2017). The walls we won't tear down. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/03/opinion/sunday/zoning-laws-segregation-income.html>

²⁵ The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research and the Brookings Institution. (2015). *Opportunity, responsibility, and security. A consensus plan for reducing poverty and restoring the American dream*. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Full-Report.pdf>

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Wilder Research, Development and Training, Inc., and University of Minnesota. (September 2016). *Prenatal to age 3: A comprehensive, racially-equitable policy plan for universal health child development*. Retrieved from http://www.buildinitiative.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Work/Recent%20Events/PrenatalToAge3_Plan_9-16.pdf

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neighborhoods, it is unlikely that such frames will lead to widespread support for policies aimed at achieving racial justice and equity.”²⁸

Models Research Findings

The models research interviews identified the following policy challenges in implementing programs that may have potential implications for bolstering neighborhoods:

- Effects of comprehensive immigration reform on immigrants and undocumented families

“In the current atmosphere regarding immigrants, it is harder to recruit Latino families.”

“We encourage families to know and share that the program is a safe place to be.”

- Focus on eligibility and access for early childhood programs
- Impact of national and federally imposed changes in programs for longer days and longer years for schools

Interviewees also expressed the need to recognize the value of having collaborative voices at the table and a diverse perspective of voices across the table.

Key Informant Interview Findings

The interviews with elected officials provided their perspectives on bolstering economically diverse neighborhoods. The policy overview and identified policy barriers and opportunities from their responses are presented below.

Policy overview

Interviewed elected officials indicated that “economic segregation” may not be a term that is commonly used. However, descriptions of ways to bolster economically diverse neighborhoods included discussions on the presence of racism, bias and segregation based on income in Adams County. As a result, there are systematic impacts on different communities and differences in school districts, and workplace opportunities may be limited.

Quotes from the interviews with elected officials around these impacts include:

²⁸ O’Neil, Moira. (2009). *Invisible structures of opportunity: How media depictions of race trivialize issues of diversity and disparity*. FrameWorks Institute. Retrieved from http://frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF_race/cognitive_media_analysis_race.pdf

“There are historically low-income areas, and it will take time to change them.”

“The national sentiments from leadership that reject refugees are prevalent in Adams County. I had a constituent who told me that if I can make America white again, I will vote for you.”

“Telling my personal story of ‘bias’ experiences has been impactful in advocating for those in underrepresented areas.”

Policy barriers

According to the elected officials, policy barriers are associated with party politics, funding for communities, language, transportation, homelessness and affordable housing, and inadequate and inequitable school funding.

One official pointed out that “for economically disadvantaged families, there is often more pressure on being breadwinners rather than focusing on their own futures.”

Others mentioned that state policymakers have not focused enough on the public transportation system in Adams County. The majority of the officials also mentioned homelessness as a growing issue in the county, noting that it was an issue statewide.

Policy opportunities

The following policy opportunities related to bolstering economically diverse neighborhoods emerged from the interviews with elected officials:

- Explore a different model for school funding that is not based on property taxes. This would allow for increased funding in communities for more equitable resources for children.
- Support the increase of the child care tax credit. Families that need it most would have a tax credit that would reduce what they owe to the IRS.²⁹
- Support and encourage organizations to comply with family medical leave policies. Job loss when a child is born causes greater challenges for parents, especially those who are in low-income situations.

²⁹ The Bell Policy Center. (2018). *Testimony: Support expanding child care expenses income tax credit*. Retrieved from <http://www.bellpolicy.org/2018/03/12/child-care-expenses-income-tax-credit/>

Community Focus Group Findings

Overview

The term “economic segregation” was described to parents as being the separation of a social group because of their sex, race, culture, and/or economic stability. When asked to describe their experiences with economic segregation, participants shared that it:

- Creates separation that brings high stress levels that directly impact parent health and family wellbeing
- Exposes kids to negative environments
- Produces “inequality” because of “poor treatment” and lack of proper resources in schools
- Causes embarrassment for kids when parents don’t speak English
- Maintains institutional classism and racism that we have to deal with in society

“Some people don’t have access [to services] that exist in other parts of the community.”

Focus group participants described social problems that increase segregation in neighborhoods, including lack of communication; segregation in the community among the Hmong, Latino and “American” populations; and prejudging people and treating them based on those judgments or stereotypes without knowing them.

“If you look Hispanic, they treat you differently, they don’t try to learn your language and don’t try to speak with you.”

Identified challenges

Participants expressed the following challenges to bolstering economically segregated neighborhoods:

- Inequities in education
- Limited resources for health, dental care and socialization

Participants described an experience where they felt left out, at the [Great Outdoors Colorado](#) (GOCO) summer camp funded by scholarships. Parents who had no computer could not apply because the application process was online; there was no access in Spanish; and Hispanic children that attended were self-conscious about speaking their language and had challenges adapting.

Identified solutions

Parents offered the following solutions for building an economically diverse neighborhood:

- Have good values at home and bring those outward.

- Be respectful of others.
- Start conversations with neighbors and get to know them.
- Build a diverse society that has education so everyone can learn about each other.

Organizational Leader Findings

Organizational leaders were asked to consider economic segregation and the barriers that impact it, as well as opportunities or solutions to address the barriers and lessen impact for children living in these communities. These discussions focused on bolstering economically diverse neighborhoods by learning how to shift from policies and community mindsets that perpetuate segregation of neighborhoods toward those that understand the benefits of diverse, mixed-income neighborhoods on child outcomes.

Overview

Organizational leader participants had robust conversations about the economic segregation and economic diversity of Adams County. They said there are a lot of economically segregated communities because of many factors, including history, schools, affordability of homes, and people's desire to live near others like themselves. Participants also shared that transportation, both public transportation and driving, have major impacts on communities.

Many focus group participants identified lack of affordable housing options around Adams County, adding that little was being done about it by their government officials. They would like to see greater coordination across communities and the county. School choice was seen as having a negative impact in that it causes segregation in the school systems. The groups also expressed that there is a lot of "not in my back yard" mentality across municipalities in Adams County ("NIMBYism"), which further speaks to the need to shift social norms.

With the rising cost of living in Adams County, the group suggested that a focus by policymakers on affordable housing as well as renters' rights is necessary. They also indicated that funding and fairness in the school systems should also be a priority. Finally, they wanted more coordination across the county to respond to the needs of people seeking services.

Barriers

Organizational leaders described the following policy barriers to bolstering economically diverse neighborhoods:

- Immigration and language
- Transportation

“The nature of Adams County is that there are certain places where services live; in other areas, there’s nothing. So for people who have transportation issues, it’s difficult.”

- Gentrification and planning

“[Economic segregation] is terrible planning—the opposite of mixed income or mixed use. It’s a failed approach to homelessness.”

- Funding of public education

“The stratified income levels and multiple school districts make it challenging for parents, especially in communities that are economically segregated.”

Solutions

Organizational leaders in the focus group identified the following solutions or opportunities:

- Welcome all people

“Agencies should be clear that all are welcome and be outward-facing and go where low-income people are and speak Spanish [or their language].”

- Hold politicians accountable and work collaboratively on important issues

“Politics and bureaucracy can get in the way. Faith-based and nonprofit organizations are going to really have to take the lead.”

- Enhance public transportation
- Manage gentrification

“Formation of a conservation land bank/land trust. We are not going to be able to completely deflect gentrification, but to soften it so people who want to stay in the area can.”

Potential Implications for the ECPAC Partnership

Considering the key findings noted above, the following bullets represent **broad action steps** that are linked to positive outcomes for *bolstering economically diverse neighborhoods*.

- **Review current building and zoning regulations** for discriminatory practices and for opportunities to increase equitable access to neighborhood-based resources, thereby also opening up areas for mixed-income residents to interact at an economic (local businesses) and social (community centers) levels.
- **Review school boundaries and enrollment zones** to identify opportunities to expand student eligibility and school options, thereby also increasing socioeconomic diversity and integration within educational settings. Concurrently, it is recommended to review transportation plans (available school and public bus routes) for any needed adjustments to further support boundary updates.
- **Focus on increasing access to preschool and postsecondary** learning opportunities to close gaps, both academically and financially.
- **Advocate for and emphasize the value of family-focused workplace policies and benefits** to help workers with children be able to better balance and support both.
- **Implement equity impact assessments** to help policymakers or community leaders to take pause to help reduce or prevent inequities and discrimination. Specifically focused on race, the Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) can be implemented during decision-making processes to examine how different racial and ethnic groups are likely to be affected by a proposed action or decision. Elements of this assessment tool include identifying stakeholders, engaging stakeholders, identifying and documenting racial inequities, examining the causes, clarifying the purpose, considering adverse impacts, advancing equitable impacts, examining alternatives or improvements, ensuring viability and sustainability, and identifying success indicators.³⁰
- Consider **family advocates and mentors** in addition to parent training.
- Listen and respond to the voices of parents (e.g., parent preferences for receiving information and messaging in community groups and conversations, through text messages and social media).
- **Create opportunities for mixed groups** including parents, family and community, and leaders to connect.
- **Provide tools for navigating services in different languages.**
- Develop and/or promote **cultural sensitivity training for front-line staff.**

³⁰ The Center for Racial Justice Innovation. (2009). *Racial equity impact assessment*. Referred to within Annie E. Casey Foundation Race Forward resources for early childhood. Retrieved from <https://www.aecf.org/resources/racial-equity-impact-assessment/>

- **Support transparency around lack of resources and waiting lists.**
- Work with policymakers to increase affordable housing options and renters' rights.
- Explore a different model for school funding that is not based on property taxes.
- Support the increase of the child care tax credit.
- Support and encourage organizations' compliance with maternity leave policies.

“Women should not be fired for being pregnant.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Recommendations to Guide Successful Policy

Common themes emerge in reviewing the above data to formulate research-informed actions that ECPAC and its partners can begin implementing immediately. Specifically, ECPAC could develop equity impact assessments and capitalize on the leadership, convening, and support role it has, as well as honor and include family voices and perspectives, use clear and intentional communication, and work to expand the awareness and perceived relevance of early childhood-related issues beyond providers, specifically to businesses and elected officials. The following bullets offer suggested **action steps** that will guide and support the recommendations by priority area, as noted in the next section.

1. Continue to prioritize and sustain **ongoing recruitment for and representation of families on boards and subcommittees** within the ECPAC framework. To support families' interests and honor their insights, this may include adding stipends or other meaningful compensation to the annual budget.
 - Advocate for child- and family-serving **partner agencies to add family and/or client representation** to their boards and subcommittees, with consideration of adding stipends or other meaningful compensations to their annual budget.
 - Develop and **consistently implement community feedback opportunities** (recurring town halls, representation at community events) or mechanisms (surveys via phone/email/paper, "office hours") that are culturally responsive, accessible and meaningful.
2. Review current external marketing and communication materials for **alignment with messaging best practices**, including the use of metaphors.
3. Review and update as needed materials geared toward families **to reflect "with" language and recognition of cultural values** (strong extended family networks, character traits, etc.), presenting ECPAC resources as a way to support, not supplant, those unique and important community-based offerings.
4. **Expand and sustain ECPAC's professional development offerings that give providers and partners specific talking points** for discussing early childhood (using metaphors, emphasizing impact to community, etc.) within their own professional and personal networks, to increase consistency of language throughout the community. Include training on how partners can learn more about policy issues and gain advocacy skills.

5. Employ an **equity and impact assessment process** throughout ECPAC decision-making processes. Using the Racial Equity Impact Assessment as a guide,³¹ potential screening questions may include:
 - Who may be most affected by and concerned with the issues related to this proposal?
 - Have stakeholders from this group been informed, meaningfully involved and authentically represented in the development of this proposal? If no, how can that occur now?
 - Who may be most advantaged or disadvantaged by this proposal or action?
 - What adverse impacts or unintended consequences may occur?
 - What changes could be made to this policy to advance equity for identified groups affected?
 - Do we have appropriate benchmarks and processes in place to identify success, track outcomes and remain accountable to all involved parties?
6. Introduce and advocate the use of an equity and impact assessment process **with partner agencies and community leaders**, specifically elected officials and other Adams County policy decision-makers.
7. Continue to engage in conversations with key community stakeholders, with initial focus on **creating consistency of language and buy-in for considering equity and impact within every decision-making process**. As interest and commitment grows or is solidified, begin to engage in specific conversations related to specific issues, such as equity-based changes to building and school enrollment zones.
8. Position (or identify current) ECPAC staff, partners or allies to **serve on communitywide decision-making boards and commissions**. Although adding awareness across all government groups and entities would be the ultimate goal, the most aligned opportunities (and priority connections*) may be: Adams County Foundation,* Board of Adjustment,* Building Code Board of Appeals, Citizen Review Panel, Community Corrections Board, Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Advisory Council,* Cultural Council, Family Preservation Commission, Head Start Policy Council, Library District Board of Trustees,* Open Space Advisory Board, Planning Commission,* Retirement Board, Tri-County Health Department Board, Unison Housing Partners,* and Workforce Development Board.*

³¹ Ibid.

9. Reach out to **local businesses to identify opportunities for partnership**, specifically with those identified as community “hubs” or key employers of ECPAC constituents. Potential questions for exploration may include:
 - What information might ECPAC and its partners be able to provide for and through that business to relay to its patrons? (e.g., literacy kits, community café schedules, other parenting resources, food or compensation for hosting outreach or “hub” events)
 - What issues might the business be facing (e.g., absenteeism due to family-related issues) that ECPAC could help support via current programs and services, or through connections to local decision-makers?
10. Continue or begin to work with other local and statewide initiatives focused on policy related to young children and families around statewide policies for early childhood (e.g., the [Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance](#); the [Early Childhood Leadership Commission](#); the [Colorado Center for Law and Policy](#); [9to5 Colorado](#); the [AFDC Coalition](#); and the [Early Childhood Summit](#)).
11. Identify an equity lens partner to promote socioeconomic integration and address racial and cultural issues.
 - Advocate for flexible funding to support community-led initiatives and structures at the local, state and national levels.
 - Include the voices of family and community members in initiative planning and funding opportunities.
 - Provide advocates and mentors for families and support families in advocating for themselves and their community.

Overall themes of these recommended action steps are for ECPAC to continue to build, maintain and grow relationships throughout Adams County. To help find success with specific policies or efforts, it is essential to identify the true needs of a community by speaking with its members directly and to communicate these goals clearly and in a way that demonstrates the benefit to the whole. From this place of communitywide buy-in, more specific policies will be able to be heard, valued and enacted.

Recommendations and Opportunities by Priority Area

Building off these broader recommendations, feedback and insights gathered through the literature review, models research, focus groups and interviews highlight strategies and action steps for ECPAC to consider as it seeks to address the three priority areas.

Providing Services and Supports

The following recommendations are proposed to impact services and supports where families and children spend their time:

1. **Advocate for flexible funding to support community-led initiatives and structures at the local, state and national levels.** Flexible funding involves funding that is reliable and can be used for general operations, multiyear grants and indirect costs.³²

Opportunities for the ECPAC Partnership:

- Identify appropriate community-led initiatives that align with ECPAC's priorities.
 - Seek funding from local municipalities to strengthen identified community-led initiatives.
2. **Identify shared outcomes and data sharing across Adams County.** The importance of building trust in engaging partners to identify shared outcomes and share data is critical. Trust among individuals and agencies has benefits for determining success in collecting shared data.³³ Specific and clear guidelines on what the outcomes are and how data is shared should be established.³⁴

Opportunities for the ECPAC Partnership:

- Connect with current partners to determine initial steps toward shared outcomes and data sharing for Adams County.
 - Decide on shared goals and specific roles and responsibilities for each agency involved.
 - Determine methodology (e.g., focus groups, surveys) for the process of gathering data.
 - Create mechanisms for gathering annual input from ECPAC staff and families. The mechanisms would build knowledge from family voices to inform policies and present data to influence change with decision-makers (e.g., annual focus groups).
3. **Identify and address institutional policy barriers in efforts toward an integration process in Adams County.** Barriers that have prevented

³² GEO (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.geofunders.org/what-we-care-about/flexible-reliable-funding>

³³ Cashman, S. B., et al. "The Power and the promise: Working with communities to analyze data, interpret findings, and get to outcomes," *American Journal of Public Health* 98, no. 8 (August 1, 2008): pp. 1407-1417.

³⁴ Lansky, D., Bass, G., Ayres, I., Benson, L., & Radin, B. (2007). Data-driven policy. *Issues in Science and Technology*, 24(1), 11-16. Retrieved from <http://www.istor.org/stable/43314588>

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successful integration of community efforts include individual perceptions, cross-cultural differences, and lack of trust in the process and of other agencies' motives.³⁵ Outlining and addressing institutional policy barriers will assist in steps to integrate efforts in Adams County.

Opportunities for the ECPAC Partnership:

- Track and implement lessons learned from previous efforts.
- Establish common goals.
- Provide cooperative incentives.
- Determine mutually beneficial outcomes for agencies.

Changing Social Norms

Recommendations proposed to integrate existing early childhood development and mental health messages into the community and implement strategies designed to promote community participation and advocacy for early childhood efforts are as follows:

1. **Promote successful campaigns such as the shared message bank** through the Early Childhood Colorado Partnership message platform and FrameWorks Institute. In 2015, the Early Childhood Colorado Partnership (ECCP) convened more than 25 stakeholders along with FrameWorks Institute and GroundFloor Media to develop Colorado's Early Childhood Shared Message Bank. The shared message bank is informed by a FrameWorks research brief developed specifically for the message bank project and shares scientific knowledge for advancing early childhood work.³⁶ The message bank promotes a collective voice, engages more audiences, mobilizes action around strong early childhood development and addresses early adversity and toxic stress in children. Intentional, audience-specific messages for businesses, community members and groups, community resources/services, educators, healthcare providers and parents/caregivers are provided.

Opportunities for the ECPAC Partnership:

- Encourage use of messages that are positive for caregiver and adult, as well as parent influence on positive early childhood development.

³⁵ Keller, Kirsten M., et al. "Barriers to Information Sharing." *Facilitating Information Sharing Across the International Space Community: Lessons from Behavioral Science*, RAND Corporation, 2013, pp. 3–10. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/j.ctt5hhw06.8.

³⁶ O'Neil, M. & Haydon, A. (2015). *Talking toxic stress and resilience in Colorado*. FrameWorks Academy. Retrieved from <http://eccp.civiccanopy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Talking-Toxic-Stress-and-Resilience-in-CO-ResearchBrief-Final-2015.pdf>

- Support community efforts to avoid language such as “vulnerable families,” “at-risk children” or “resilient children.”
 - Craft language that addresses children and families “who live in communities that lack resources.”
2. Incorporate 2Gen language into community messages.

Opportunities for the ECPAC Partnership:

- Incorporate two-generational or whole-family approaches, with intentional services and opportunities focused on both the child and the adult for stability, education, family wellness and social connectedness.
 - Address physical and mental health needs of low-income parents and their children toward increased adult participation in the workforce while promoting education and development for children.
 - Provide advocates and mentors for families and support families advocating for themselves and their community.
3. **Provide opportunities for community members to converse with each other and have their voices heard by community leaders and providers.** The process of getting input from community members on policy and advocacy struck a chord among interview and focus group participants. Community members want to be heard, and leaders are open to proactive dialogue for community change.

Opportunities for the ECPAC Partnership:

- Develop a plan for convening groups for conversations on policy issues and topics (e.g., affordable housing, race and ethnicity, working across municipalities).
 - Create mechanisms for gathering annual input from ECPAC staff and families. The mechanisms would build knowledge from family voices to inform policies and present data to influence change with decision-makers (e.g., annual focus groups).
 - Host an advisory committee or event to hear from diverse voices on issues like race and ethnicity in Adams County using tools from the FrameWorks Institute Toolkit.
4. **Provide training and information on rights and messaging to encourage immigrant families to feel welcome to seek services.** The National Immigration Law Center provides messaging and talking points that are useful when working with and welcoming immigrant families. Be aware that the public charge rule can deny entry to the United States, a green card or other legal status, and could allow officials to deny

application from immigrants for public programs, medical care, food or shelter.³⁷

Opportunities for the ECPAC Partnership:

- Explore ECPAC's role in developing equity impact assessments and in identifying an equity lens partner.
- Provide a multilingual resource guide to Adams County residents for services that includes a guide specifically addressing immigrant and refugee supports.
- Work with partner agencies to identify a process and messages for understanding federal and state laws that protect the privacy of those who apply for or receive healthcare coverage, nutrition, economic support or other public benefits.³⁸

Bolstering Neighborhoods

The following recommendations are proposed to support a shift from policies and community mindsets that perpetuate neighborhood segregation toward policies and mindsets that understand the benefits of diverse, mixed-income neighborhoods for child outcomes.

1. **Partner with schools and the community on review of boundaries and enrollment zones** to identify potential changes in policy and legislation. Enrollment zones are the geographic area determining the school where a student attends. In Adams County, the boundary change process for schools can be public or administrative. Public changes impact large areas of the district, and attempts are made for minimum impact on current students and schools. Meetings are held for public input when these changes are proposed. Administrative boundary changes occur when there is an urgent need and usually impact a smaller area of the district or uninhabited areas.

³⁷ National Immigration Law Center. Retrieved from <https://www.nilc.org/issues/economic-support/how-to-talk-about-public-charge-pif/>

³⁸ Center for Health Progress. Retrieved from <https://www.nilc.org/issues/economic-support/how-to-talk-about-public-charge-pif/>

Opportunities for the ECPAC Partnership:

- Connect with schools in Adams County to determine next steps for review of boundaries and enrollment zones.
 - Notify the community of public meetings on changes to boundaries.
2. **Support paid family leave policies and other family-friendly practices at the state level.** The state of Colorado does not currently have or require paid maternity or family medical leave. Opportunities for workers to receive income assistance to replace income while not working are limited. Some employers offer maternity or family leave benefits, though this is not required by law. HB17-1001 was introduced in 2017 but was not enacted.³⁹ The bill would require employers to allow employees to take unpaid time off to attend academic activities.

Opportunities for the ECPAC Partnership:

- Support legislation that puts families' needs first.
 - Develop messaging that provides community information on legislation and updates related to paid family leave and other family-friendly policies.
3. **Support policies that respond to the needs of families facing loss of public benefits.** Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Program have been cut with the 2017 legislation enacted to repeal and deeply cut Medicaid. These cuts impact families' ability to make ends meet.

Opportunities for the ECPAC Partnership:

- Work with families and community partners to identify messages that decrease stigma related to poverty and use of public assistance.
 - Make information on public assistance and other services/resources available to families in Adams County.
4. **Support legislation for full-day kindergarten.** Colorado's school districts that do offer full-day kindergarten cover the cost by charging tuition, absorbing it in their budgets or seeking outside funding.⁴⁰ Colorado's Legislature has considered bills to fund full-day kindergarten but has not passed one. In 2018, voters rejected Amendment 73, which would have increased taxes on individuals earning at least \$150,000 a

³⁹ Colorado General Assembly. Retrieved from <http://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb17-1001>

⁴⁰ Funding for full-day kindergarten in Steamboat Springs was approved through a 2016 tax. Voters in the districts of Fort Lupton Re-8 and Clear Creek approved mill levies to fund full-day kindergarten.

year to fund full-day kindergarten. With a Democratic majority controlling both houses and the governorship, 2019 will be an excellent year to work with the Legislature to fund full-day kindergarten statewide.

Opportunities for the ECPAC Partnership:

- Publicize the successful outcomes of full-day kindergarten programs
- Advocate for funding to pay for full-day kindergarten that does not include charging families tuition (e.g., consider a phased-in plan to fund full-day kindergarten in the neediest school districts, and add new districts as additional funding is secured). Work with school districts to re-allocate funding to preschool
- Develop a communications plan with short fact sheets and key messages to keep stakeholders invested in the campaign and have uniform talking points.
- Support legislation that reflects some of the National Education Association's policy priorities for full-day kindergarten, which include:⁴¹
 - 1) Mandatory full-day attendance
 - 2) Teacher certification
 - 3) Class size of about 15 students
 - 4) Professional development opportunities for educators
 - 5) Full funding of full-day programs
 - 6) High-quality curriculum that addresses all aspects of early childhood development (ECPAC could help districts evaluate curricula)
 - 7) State learning standards that are aligned with first-grade learning standards
 - 8) Age-appropriate assessments that inform classroom teaching and learning
 - 9) Emphasis on parent involvement

5. Define ECPAC's role in impacting transportation issues for families.

Transportation issues have an effect on social determinants of health for families. When families are stressed by not having a car or access to affordable transportation to and from work and getting their child to school, it contributes to health issues.

Opportunities for the ECPAC Partnership:

- Advocate for additional funding to support bus passes.

⁴¹ National Center for Education Statistics. 2006. *Full-day kindergarten: An advocacy guide*. Retrieved from http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/mf_kadvoguide.pdf

- Support and advocate for policies to improve RTD access and affordability in Adams County.
 - Monitor state budget proposals around transportation.
6. **Support policies to increase and diversify affordable housing options.** For families with income below the poverty level, affordable housing can be difficult to find, and families often move from one place to another. According to the 2017 Adams County Needs Assessment, the affordability gap, or median sales price and costs of what residents can reasonably afford, increased by 200 percent from 2006 to 2015.⁴²

Opportunities for the ECPAC Partnership:

- Work across municipalities to convene meetings for elected officials and service organizations to connect across jurisdictions in the county regarding homelessness and housing.
 - Work closely with city leadership to identify and support areas of equitable access to affordable housing.
 - Advocate for zoning for affordable housing throughout the county.
 - Support strong accountability processes for affordable housing programs.
7. **Support reauthorization to continue the Child Care Expenses Tax Credit for Colorado families.** HB17-1002 offsets costs for raising a child and provides a maximum credit of \$2,000 per year for each child under age 17. The bill expires after tax year 2020 and is needed for low-income families to help them work. Families could have an extra \$500 or \$1,000 in child care cost reimbursement with the tax credit, which is significant for those below the poverty line.⁴³

Opportunities for the ECPAC Partnership:

- Show support of current credit and support legislation to reauthorize it, working along with other nonprofit organizations.
- Consider encouraging witnesses who have received the credit to testify on behalf on the legislation.

⁴² Retrieved from

<http://www.adcogov.org/sites/default/files/Adams%20County%20HNA%20Full%20DRAFT%202-7-17.pdf>

⁴³ Colorado General Assembly. Retrieved from <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb17-1002>

Final Suggestions for Next Steps

In addition to the specific recommendations in the three priority areas identified above, JVA also suggests the following actions and next steps for ECPAC to consider in prioritizing activities to advance their policy and advocacy agenda.

1. Present the Policy and Advocacy Report and documents to the community leaders and partners.
2. Identify tactics and strategies to accomplish each prioritize area for the policy and advocacy agenda.
3. Determine potential opportunities to connect the report with the Stories of Impact.
4. Form an ECPAC policy committee. The policy committee would oversee ECPAC policy positions and work; follow current policy issues and propose policies when governmental entities are acting; and prioritize policies to follow after implementation.
5. Share a policymaking toolkit with community members and partners.

This toolkit is designed for organizations and community members for greater awareness and empowerment in advocacy. The kit would include the following resources:

- Fact sheet on the policymaking process. This fact sheet would provide details of how to approach policymaking.
 - Map of governmental policymaking. The map would be specific to Adams County, with city councils, school districts, the County Commission and the state Legislature included.
 - Resource guide for researching policy proposals. This guide would provide legal resources, research organizations and state agency information.
6. Continue to inform elected officials and other community leaders about sound policy for young children and families.

ECPAC Board Review of Recommendations

The ECPAC Board of Directors met to review the recommendations from the above report and gave overall acknowledgement that some recommendations were validation of what ECPAC is already doing and others are broad recommendations that ECPAC will provide leadership and advocacy to pursue. In addition, the board recognized that:

- Immigration is at the forefront of people's concerns. Though ECPAC and other agencies addressed the issue intentionally about two years ago, present realities point to the need to continue to make this a priority.
- Findings reflected advocacy more than policy.

- Early childhood is a backbone to ensuring a community succeeds and is inclusive of broader issues (e.g., housing, immigration).
- ECPAC's role involves convening voices of the community.
- Everyone has a role to play in policy and advocacy; that is social norming.
- Development of an organizational and partnership culture that supports people asking for policy change is needed.

A strategy screen was developed to guide prioritizing the recommendations. The board agreed that criteria for decision-making would consider:

- Guiding all policy and advocacy efforts with an equity lens
- Ensuring that the scope and capacity for ECPAC to lead, convene and support is primary
- Addressing the capacity of community partners and community members
- Using a two-generational (2Gen) approach
- Supporting families in advocating for themselves
- Alleviating risk around abuse and neglect for families (child abuse and neglect prevention grant)
- Having data-driven policies
- Making work across municipalities a priority

After the facilitated process, the board prioritized the following initial areas of focus to consider for their upcoming policy and advocacy agenda based on the proposed actions and recommendations.

Overall Priorities to Guide Successful Policy

The following actions were prioritized by the ECPAC board from the overall recommendations proposed:

1. Continue or begin to work with other local and statewide initiatives focused on policy related to young children and families—for example, the Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance, the Early Childhood Leadership Commission, the Colorado Center for Law and Policy, 9 to 5, the All Families Deserve a Chance (AFDC) Coalition, the Early Childhood Summit.
2. Provide advocates and mentors for families, and support families advocating for themselves and their community.
3. Explore ECPAC's role in developing equity impact assessments and in identifying an equity lens partner.

Providing Services and Supports

The following area was determined as an initial action for the ECPAC board in considering impact services and supports where children and families spend their time.

1. Advocate for flexible funding to support community-led initiatives and structures at the state, local and national levels.

Changing Social Norms

The area below was prioritized by the ECPAC board as important in considering policy towards changing social norms:

1. Provide training and information provide training and information to partners and families on common messaging to support more supportive social norms (including immigrant families in feeling welcomed to seek services).

Bolstering Neighborhoods

The focus below is the recommendation that the ECPAC board agreed for initial to consideration shifting mindsets and policies that increase understanding of benefits of diverse, mixed-income neighborhoods for child outcomes.

1. Support policies to increase and diversify affordable housing options across municipalities in Adams County.

Appendix: ECPAC Policy and Advocacy Toolkit

POLICY AND ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

Introduction

This toolkit was developed for the Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County (ECPAC) to support its advocacy and policy agenda. The toolkit includes definitions of advocacy and policy, types and phases of policymaking, recommendations on materials to create, notes on how to tell if your policy and advocacy efforts have been effective, and a map of Adams County government.

Definitions

Advocacy is work that is focused on creating change (that may or may not require changes in the law) through identifying, embracing and promoting a cause, whereas public policy is often conceptualized in terms of the actual goals, laws, rules and funding priorities that are set by elected officials (Avner, 2004).

In our governmental systems, like our organizational systems, we have decision-makers. Their role is to collect information and make decisions on how to run systems, including funding, rules, and checks and balances. Advocacy allows individuals and organizations to have input, to advance their mission, and to impact their communities.

What is advocacy?

Advocacy involves identifying, embracing and promoting a cause. Advocacy is an effort to shape public perception or to effect change that may or may not require changes in the law.

Lobbying is a form of advocacy specifically focused on influencing legislation. It includes communication with decision-makers to change a specific policy through legislation. This can be done directly by a person or organization or indirectly by grassroots work to have others contact legislators seeking policy change. For example, we are often asked to send letters to our Congress members about a decision they are making.

Note: The Internal Revenue Service has set limits on lobbying for some (501(c)(3) organizations. They cannot spend a substantial part of their budget on these activities. This is known as the “no-substantial part” rule.

What is policy?

Policymaking is the work of creating a policy to oversee a project, entity or program. How it is made depends on the overseeing entity.

Public policy is the combination of goals, laws, rules and funding priorities set by elected officials at the federal, state and local levels through the legislative process.

Types of Policymaking

Organizational

Organizational policymaking is dependent on each organization and its processes. For example, nonprofits have boards that set up the organization and determine the roles of individuals overseeing different pieces of the organization's work, including often an executive director, who oversees other staff.

To change policy in an organization, the process often includes similar components to governmental policymaking.

Phase 1

- Determine a policy need
- Determine who has jurisdiction over the policy
- Determine how to change the policy (who makes the decision?)
- Determine stakeholders impacted by the policy
- Determine arguments in support of the change
- Determine arguments that could be made against the change

Phase 2

- Gather data to support arguments in favor and to respond to arguments against
- Gather stakeholder input
- Plan for working with the entity (and its leaders) needed to change the policy
 - This includes meeting with leaders prior to decision-making
- Plan for long-term policy implementation and measuring outcomes

Phase 3

- Ask for the policy change from the decision-maker.
 - This can take the form of a letter, meeting with a board, meeting with an executive director, etc.

Phase 4

- If change passes, work with implementers to plan and implement
 - This is also an opportunity to include the stakeholders in the process

Phase 5

- Monitor policy implementation (and many times, new policymaking needs come out of this!)

Overall recommendations:

- Be clear on what is needed
- Be concrete with facts and data
- Listen and include input from stakeholders in drafting policy

Governmental

Phase 1

- Determine a policy need
- Determine who has jurisdiction over the policy and who the decision-maker(s) are to change it.
 - For example, the rules for state-created programs are overseen by the state Legislature and the executive entity charged with implementation, such as the [Colorado Preschool Program](#), which is overseen by the Colorado Department of Education.
 - [Health First Colorado](#) is Colorado's Medicaid program, funded by federal and state dollars with state and federal jurisdiction.
- Determine how to change policy (who makes the decision?)
 - There are two types of governmental policymaking
 - Regulatory—Regulatory policy encompasses rules made by the executive-branch agencies implementing the laws. These agencies must stay within the scope of the law they are interpreting, but they have important impacts on how policies are implemented. For example, the state Department of Education creates rules that schools must follow.
 - Statutory—Statutory policy is made by legislative bodies; these policies are provided to the executive-branch agencies to interpret and write rules to implement.
- Identify stakeholders impacted by the policy
 - Policymaking often affects many stakeholders. It is important to consider as many stakeholders as possible. Governmental policymaking can have much broader and more complicated impacts. For example, in healthcare policymaking, the goal may be to help consumers get healthcare, but there will be impacts on providers and insurers. One recommended way to determine these stakeholders is to map them out with a group.

- Determine arguments
 - Create arguments in support
 - Anticipate arguments against

Note: Governmental policymaking can also be based on politics, which should be considered and included when crafting and anticipating arguments. For example, bigger-picture issues such as budget are often considerations when it comes to creating policy. Impacts will also reflect which political party has a leadership role in a legislative body. That party decides the decision-making process for a policy proposal, as well as best solutions.

Phase 2

- Gather data to support arguments in favor and to respond to arguments against
- Gather stakeholder input
- Plan for work with the entity needed to change the policy
 - This includes meeting with leaders prior to decision-making— even more so in governmental policymaking. Note: This can be lobbying, for tax purposes. See definition of lobbying in definitions.
- Plan for long-term policy implementation and measuring outcomes

Phase 3

- Ask for policy change from decision-maker(s)
- Use all of the data and stakeholder input gathered (prepare, prepare, prepare!)

Phase 4

- If policy change passes, work with implementers to plan and implement policy
 - This is an opportunity to include stakeholders once again in the process

Phase 5

- Monitor policy implementation. Many times, new policymaking needs come out of this!)

Overall recommendations on policymaking:

- Be clear on what is needed
- Be concrete with facts and data
- Brainstorm all stakeholders possible
- Collect stories to illustrate the need for the policy

- Listen and include input from stakeholders in policy

Policy Document Recommendations

In advancing a policy, preparation of certain documents can be useful. These documents help educate decision-makers and stakeholders about the policy issue and the need for change.

- Plan for policy-making phases. (Outline is provided above.)
- Memorandum for policy-maker on the policy change needed. This document is often written by an organization proposing the change and makes the arguments in favor of the change.
- Fact sheets for the public. These explain the need for and potential benefit of the proposed policy change.
- Fact sheets for the decision-maker on the issue. These provide information on the need for and potential benefit of the policy change, as well as information on arguments against the change being proposed.
- List of supporters of the policy, and why they support it. These supporters can be called on to help with passing the policy when the decision is being made.
- Collected stories. One of the most challenging pieces of policy-making is collecting stories of individuals who need the policy and would be impacted. It is always advised that these be collected early and as part of the development of the policy issue and response to it.

Determining Impacts

Ask the following questions to determine the effects of your efforts in the realms of policy and advocacy:

- Policy
 - Has the policy need been met?
 - Are the stakeholders satisfied?
 - Are there continued needs?
- Advocacy
 - Is there increased visibility for the organization as an advocate on an issue?
 - Is there improved community engagement?
 - Is there increased knowledge and support around the issues?

Adams County Governmental Map

- School Districts
 - [District 1 \(Mapleton\)](#)
 - [District 12 Five Star Schools](#)
 - [District 14 \(Commerce City\)](#)
 - [District 26J \(Deer Trail\)](#)
 - [District 27J \(Brighton\)](#)
 - [District 28J \(Aurora\)](#)
 - [District 29J \(Bennett\)](#)
 - [District 31J \(Strasburg\)](#)
 - [District 32J \(Byers\)](#)
 - [Westminster Public Schools](#)
- Municipalities
 - [Aurora](#)
 - [Bennett](#)
 - [Brighton](#)
 - [Commerce City](#)
 - [Federal Heights](#)
 - [Northglenn](#)
 - [Westminster](#)
 - Note: There are also metropolitan districts.
- Adams County
 - [Adams County](#)
 - [Board of Directors](#)
- State
 - Executive Branch—implements the laws
 - [Governor](#) (includes all branches)
 - [Department of Education](#) (is overseen by a [State Board of Education](#))
 - [Attorney General](#)
 - [Treasurer](#)

- [Secretary of State](#)
- [State Legislature](#)—writes the laws
 - House
 - Senate
- [Courts](#)—interpret the laws
- Federal—impacts states with rules related to the programs it funds
 - [Executive](#) (President)—implements the laws
 - [Legislative](#) (Congress)—writes the laws
 - [Courts](#)—interpret the laws

Creating a Policy Committee

A policy committee for ECPAC could oversee the *governmental policymaking* needs for ECPAC and the community it serves. The policy committee could include representatives from ECPAC leadership, ECPAC staff and the ECPAC community.

Committee responsibilities could include:

1. Determining policies ECPAC needs for its own work, and beginning the policymaking process with those
2. Monitoring city and county policy decision-making, both by councils and commissions and regulatory bodies
3. Monitoring state policy decision-making, by the Legislature and executive branches
4. Identifying a process for gathering input on policy and advocacy needs for ECPAC partners and community (e.g., leaders, employees). This could include annual surveys of these communities, an annual facilitated meeting and other ideas