

The Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County (ECPAC) is committed to ensuring sound policies exist for children and families towards our mission “to build a community where every young child and their family can reach their full potential.” Adams County has consistently ranked in bottom five of twenty-five rated counties for overall child well-being. As a result, ECPAC is committed to the following related population indicators:

- Prevent and Mitigate against the impacts of poverty and child abuse and neglect
- Prevent poor academic outcomes
- Mitigate against the impacts of teen pregnancy

In October 2017, elected officials and community leaders met and identified 4 Policy Priorities for further study to identify potential policy levers that can help improve population level indicators. The four priorities for further study included:

1. **Affordable, Quality Early Childhood Education, Including Preschool and Full-Day Kindergarten:** Move policy levers that expand access to affordable and quality early childhood education, including child care, preschool and full-day kindergarten across Adams County. Maximize existing resources like the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program while advocating for expanded access to meet county need.
2. **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.
3. **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, expanding public and political will for policy change. This may entail maximizing organization-level policies to embed shared messaging across agencies and service systems.
4. **Bolstering Economically Diverse Neighborhoods:** Better understand and address policies that perpetuate the segregation of neighborhoods, including but not limited to housing and education. Build public understanding of the benefits of diverse, mixed income neighborhoods on child outcomes.

As a result, ECPAC hired consultants to identify policy opportunities at the institutional, city, county, and state levels that can help improve outcomes for children and families in Adams County. As a result, two reports have been completed addressing the four policy priorities. This information will guide the ECPAC partnership’s work over the next couple of years as we work together to improve early childhood outcomes in Adams County.

Based upon the results of these reports, the ECPAC Board has prioritized the following policy levers:

Overall Recommendations to support successful policy efforts: (in no particular order of importance)

1. Include voices of family and community members
 - a. Continue to prioritize and sustain ongoing recruitment for and representation of families on boards and subcommittees within the ECPAC framework.
2. Align with efforts of other local and state initiatives
3. Align with messaging best practices to ensure policies and advocacy support the changing of social norms and train community partners and families in use of messaging
4. Use an equity and impact assessment process in decision making
5. Increase partnerships with needed stakeholders, including businesses and elected officials

EPCAC Policy Priority Recommendations: (in no particular order of importance)

Changing Social Norms

Recognizing that existing social norms related to poverty and seeking support can impact how policies should be passed or implemented and funds are dispersed, ECPAC is committed to support messages that help reduce stigma and lead to improved equitable policies and services.

1. Work with families and community partners to identify messages to decrease stigma related to poverty and use of public assistance, building off successful existing campaigns; Train community to use messages
2. Use 2 Generation language to help community understand complexities and pathways out of poverty
3. Highlight impact of poverty on young children

Providing Services where Families and Children Spend Time

Reducing barriers to accessing services and that time is a commodity for families of young children, including teen parents, ECPAC is committed to increasing “family resource center hubs” throughout Adams County.

1. Advocate for flexible funding to support community-led initiatives and structures at the local, state, and national levels; Seek funding at local levels including local Municipalities to accomplish efforts.
2. Use shared outcomes and data sharing agreements.
3. Identify and address institutional policy barriers as efforts towards integration progress – track and implement lessons learned; Consider shared “intake” forms.
4. Increase partnerships with local businesses to adopt Family Friendly Practices and offer resource information to employees who are parents/caregivers of young children.

Bolstering Economically Diverse Neighborhoods

Research shows that when children live and learn in economically diverse settings, their academic performance is higher. *U.S Department of Education, Diversity and Opportunity 2017*

1. Support reauthorization of the Child Care Expenses Tax Credit for Colorado families, which offsets the costs of raising a child, providing a maximum annual credit of \$2,000 for each child under age 17.
2. Consider policies impacting Social Determinants of Health:
 - a. Transportation: Identify and advocate for changes for transportation barriers for families with young children; Advocate for additional funding to support bus passes or other forms of transportation; Consider restrictions within this funding
 - b. Housing: Support policies to increase and diversify affordable housing options and protect renters’ rights; Zoning; Land Use; Work closely with Cities and support collaboration/alignment between Cities as needed.
3. Support Paid Family Leave
4. Support policies that respond to the needs of families facing loss of public benefits and consider policies impacting eligibility differences

Affordable, Quality Early Education and Kindergarten

Research demonstrates when children of low income attend high quality early care and education programs, they are more likely to have higher school performance, less likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system, and more likely to earn more than their like peers at the age of 27. *Heckman*

1. Add Capacity by Creating New Programs and Expanding Existing Programs by addressing policy barriers at state and municipal levels (zoning, land use, etc) as well as address barriers to start up for programs
2. Strengthen the Professional Workforce Pipeline by aligning with state-level efforts
3. Maximize Co Child Care Assistant Program (CCCAP) Utilization
4. Increase CCCAP Reimbursement Rates by working with Adams County to consider increase to market rate
5. Increase the Number of Community Partners Using Co Preschool Program by working with School Districts
6. Implement Early Head Start in Adams County through potential expansion grant
7. Increase the number of Adams County Businesses utilizing the Child Care Tax Credit through business outreach

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