



Early Childhood Leadership Commission

EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNICATION EFFORTS IN COLORADO

SEPTEMBER 2016

*“If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder,
he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can
share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement,
and mystery of the world we live in.”*

– Rachel Carson





Dear Early Childhood Stakeholder,

Raising and caring for young children is the most important, and challenging, work in an adult's life. In order to ensure Colorado's future generations achieve their full potential, we have an obligation to support parents' and caregivers' understanding of and engagement in their relationships with young children. More than that, according to 2014 survey results from a national polling group, ensuring children get a strong start in life is a *top priority* for Coloradans, second only to increasing jobs and economic growth, and well ahead of reducing the tax burden on families.

We all have a role to play in supporting parents and caregivers both for the benefit of Colorado's children and for the future economic prosperity of the state. The Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC), Colorado's state advisory council for early childhood, is charged to develop strategies to increase the access, quality, and equity of services and supports for pregnant women and children birth through age eight. A cornerstone of this work is effective communication with parents and caregivers.

In 2015, the ECLC designed the Early Childhood Communication Collaborative to raise awareness of the important role parents and caregivers have in child development; highlight the number and variety of parent and caregiver communication and engagement efforts; and, ultimately, find ways to better support and connect with parents and caregivers.

We are pleased to present this report of the Early Childhood Communication Collaborative, *Early Childhood Communication Efforts in Colorado*, which examines the state of efforts from the perspective of parents, caregivers, and providers. The report also provides recommendations for local and state decision-makers, the business and philanthropic communities, and service providers to advance effective education and engagement for parents and caregivers concerning early childhood.

We hope this report spurs further ideas and actions on behalf of pregnant women and children birth through age eight so that parents and caregivers feel fully informed and supported in their work to ensure every child in their care is valued, healthy, and thriving.

Barbara Grogan
ECLC Co-Chair

Anna Jo Haynes
ECLC Co-Chair

Lt. Governor Donna Lynne
ECLC Co-Chair

Executive Summary

Parents and caregivers are a young child's first and most important teacher. Interactions between children and these adults lay the foundation for a host of developmental outcomes including cognitive, social-emotional, and physical health. It is imperative that parents and caregivers (including Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregivers) understand how to support young children's optimal development and consistently use that knowledge in their role as caregivers.

Unfortunately, despite a myriad of efforts across the state, many Colorado parents and caregivers indicate they don't know where to turn for information and support. In addition, they often feel judged, inadequate, and alone when they are most stressed about their relationships with children in their care.

The Early Childhood Communication Collaborative conducted a statewide survey of communication efforts that are aimed at reaching parents and caregivers with information or resources regarding early childhood, prenatal through age eight. More than 380 respondents from a variety of organizations provided information about numerous ongoing communication efforts across Colorado.

Currently, every county in the state reports a variety of communication efforts, with even the most remote, least populous areas reporting a minimum of 30 efforts. Most efforts are small, many reaching less than 2,000 families, and are centered around families of children five years and younger. Most use low-cost tactics, and due to limited budgets, few are able to evaluate the impact of their efforts. Surprisingly few programs indicate that they focus on special populations like Spanish-speaking families. By and large, providers want research and tools to help them become more effective in their communication efforts.

Despite the numerous communication efforts in every county in the state, focus groups with parents and caregivers indicate that there is almost universal confusion about what information is available on child development and where to find it. While parents and caregivers express a strong desire to learn, even basic information is not cutting through the clutter; there is no consensus about what "early childhood development means" or how and when development occurs. Parents and caregivers want to feel engaged and supported within their communities but often feel isolated instead.

Eleven recommendations are offered and are organized around three major areas for improvement:

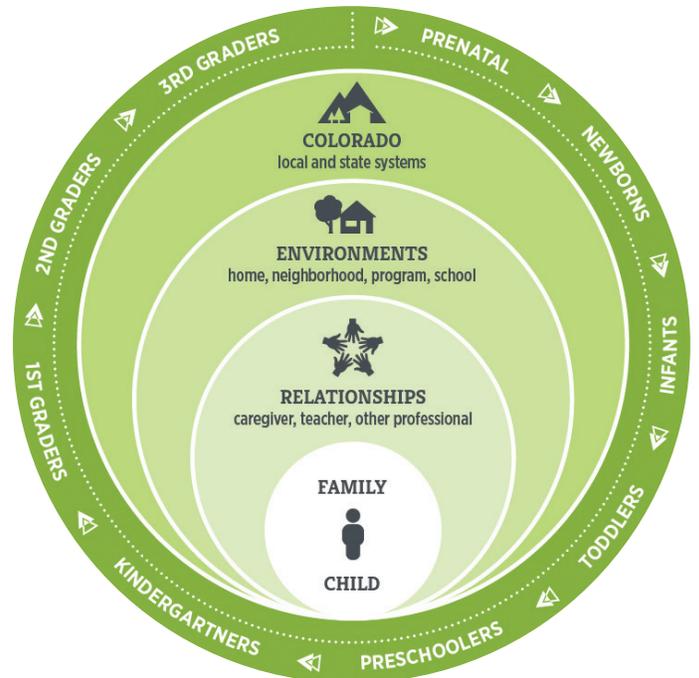
- **Reduce communication "noise"** resulting from inconsistencies or duplicate efforts that are unevenly targeted to families and caregivers in regions with different communication needs.
- **Increase the quality of communication**, including the use of effective content, enhanced communication training for trusted messengers that connect with parents and caregivers, and a heightened focus on effective tactics.
- **Provide greater emphasis on the two-way, responsive engagement** of parents and caregivers that will generate more positive outcomes for children's cognitive and social development.

The Early Childhood Leadership Commission will work in partnership with others to prioritize implementation of these recommendations in the coming year.

Introduction

Colorado prospers when our future leaders, young children across the state, receive the support they need to be valued, healthy, and thriving from professionals, environments, and entire communities. That support starts with communication that conveys the right information at the right time and in the right way to engage and empower parents and caregivers in their challenging role.

Unfortunately, despite a myriad of efforts across the state, many Colorado parents and caregivers indicate they don't know where to turn for information and support. In addition, they often feel judged, inadequate, and alone when they are most stressed about their relationships with children in their care. Instead, these adults should feel supported by the communities in which they live so that no one is afraid to reach out when they need help. Coloradans care about parents and caregivers; we must do better in conveying support.



The Early Childhood Colorado Framework, or Framework, (Appendix I), the shared vision for young children and families, outlines the state's core outcomes for access, quality, and equity in the domains of Family Support and Education; Health and Well-Being; and Learning and Development. The *Framework* illustrates the importance of working collectively at all levels of the early childhood system—from the adults who directly interact with children, to administrators, business and community leaders, and elected officials.

With the child and family at the center of the *Framework*, coordinated action to **promote and share knowledge** and **connect and empower families** are core strategies to achieve optimal outcomes. These priority strategies for action must be effectively implemented across multiple circles of influence—within relationships, environments, and local and state systems (above).

This report summarizes the current Colorado communication landscape and offers a set of recommendations to reduce the noise, increase the quality of parent and caregiver messaging, and boost engagement to mobilize and inspire parents and caregivers toward action. Let's work together to create a culture of support for the first and most important teachers of young Coloradans so that we achieve our vision that all children are valued, healthy, and thriving.



The National Context

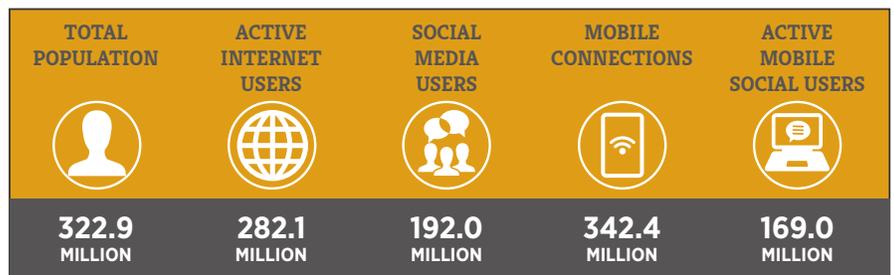
Across the nation, states are grappling with how to best support parents and caregivers given evolving demographics. Today, almost half of the nation’s young children (birth through five years of age) live in low-income households, those with an annual income of \$44,700 for a family of four. Of all major industrialized countries, currently children in the United States are more likely to live in single-parent households, mostly headed by mothers.

Parents want what is best for their children. Multiple national studies have found that parents would like to know more about developmental milestones and benchmarks. Parents who know more are more likely to have quality interactions that support their child’s healthy development.

Parents want knowledge and believe that effective parenting can be learned. However, parents experiencing factors such as poverty, a single-parent household, low-educational attainment, language barriers, and cultural or geographic isolation may be particularly challenged to find the information and support they desire to best help their young children develop. Many parents say they lack the information and support needed to assist them. Sadly, half of parents indicate they are not getting the support they need during the most critical moments when they feel overwhelmed or stressed.

While parents and caregivers crave knowledge, they also indicate they don’t know where to turn for information. This is despite the fact that we are living in the midst of an information explosion that has revolutionized our knowledge sharing and seeking behavior. Nationally, almost nine of ten adults (87%) are active internet users, three in five (59%) are active social media users, and there are more mobile phone subscriptions than the entire U.S. population (106%).

Yet, mothers and fathers are overwhelmed by the sources of help and generally question the quality of the information. Sixty-eight percent say there is so much information available it is hard to know who to trust; this feeling is more common among fathers (47%) than among mothers (29%).



Source: We are Social's Digital in 2016 Report

Despite, or perhaps because of, the overwhelming amount of information and widespread internet use, parents consistently turn to trusted relationships for advice. The top three resources most often accessed by parents and their perceived level of effectiveness are: the way my parents raised me¹; medical professional like pediatricians; and my partner/my child’s other parent.

RESOURCE	EFFECTIVENESS	USAGE
The way my parents raised me	64%	91%
Medical professionals like the pediatrician	62%	89%
My partner/my child’s other parent	66%	89%

Source: ZERO TO THREE's National Parent Survey

Similarly to parents, national research indicates that informal caregivers turn to trusted relationships for support as well. Caregivers often assume their role after taking care of their own child and then moving to care for the children of other relatives and neighbors; thus, these relationships are strong and foundational. Caregivers also crave information and training but often don’t know where to turn for information and services.

¹ This finding is not consistent across all demographics; parents in more challenging circumstances indicate a desire to parent differently, and “break the cycle” of their own childhood experience.

The Colorado Context

Today, almost 42% of Colorado's young children (birth through five years of age) live in low-income households. For Colorado's Hispanic/Latino and Black/African-American children, this is even more pronounced. Fortunately, with a recovering state economy, poverty rates are declining after several years of growth.

Colorado's population continues to shift. Nearly one-third of Colorado children (31%) are Hispanic/Latino, and 46% of Colorado's students are students of color. Approximately 14% of students are English Language Learners. Approximately 31% of Colorado children live in single-parent households, and 22.8% of children are born to single-mothers.

While we still do not have statewide information about how developmentally ready children are for kindergarten, we do know that by the end of third grade, many children are not reaching critical learning milestones. In fact, 58% of Colorado fourth graders are not proficient in reading, and the achievement gap among children of color and children living in poverty or low-income families is significantly more pronounced.

Across the state, people are working to change community conditions to better ensure children are supported to thrive. The *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* details a number of desired outcomes that are known to increase a child's chances for success including the bolstering of a family's knowledge to support healthy development.

Outcomes > access, quality and equity

Family Support & Education **Health & Well-Being** **Learning & Development**

QUALITY

- Family knowledge and capacity support children's healthy development and learning
- Families advocate for high quality comprehensive services and supports that lead to future success

- All health care providers, including mental health, deliver coordinated, family focused care
- Settings and practices promote strong relationships, social and emotional development, appropriate nutrition and physical activity

- Formal and informal care environments and education practices reach the highest levels of quality
- Adults understand and support children's learning and development, including social and emotional
- All settings provide effective transitions across and within programs, schools and systems

Source: *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* Family Support & Education Quality Outcomes

To achieve these desired outcomes, two major *Framework* strategies are necessary:

- **Connect and Empower Families**
- **Promote and Share Knowledge**

In 2015, the Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) created the Early Childhood Communication Collaborative (ECCC) in response to recent state research that examined a select number of parent awareness campaigns among the early childhood industry across Colorado and found:

- **An uneven saturation of messages and messengers across the state;**
- **Uneven parent and caregiver awareness of messages in both formal and informal childcare settings; and**
- **Many exemplary efforts, but limited understanding of the overall impact of the combined efforts.**

The ECCC was charged to explore the coordination of existing and emerging parent and caregiver awareness and engagement efforts in Colorado. The work of the ECCC included convenings of an ECLC-appointed Steering Committee to guide the work (Appendix IV) and soliciting input from a broad-based Advisory Partner group to serve as subject-matter experts (Appendix V).

This broader context is complicated and multi-faceted. There are home visiting programs, family resource centers, parenting workshops, learning communities for informal caregivers, and texting and mobile applications. In addition to early childhood-focused organizations, many other entities such as libraries, public health agencies, schools, and parks and recreation systems are striving to reach parents and caregivers with information and services. However, despite this rich environment and strong desire to communicate with parents and caregivers, efforts do not always reach those for whom they are intended. There remains a sense of isolation for parents and caregivers, a lack of knowledge about early childhood development, and a dearth of targeted information about where to turn for support.

The results are detailed in this report, along with recommendations generated through robust discussion about parents, caregivers, messages, and messengers with numerous partners, including the ECCC Steering Committee and Advisory Partners. These recommendations focus on **noise reduction**, **quality**, and **parent and caregiver engagement**. They recognize important opportunities available at both the local and state level to further support parents and caregivers in their important role of helping young children thrive.



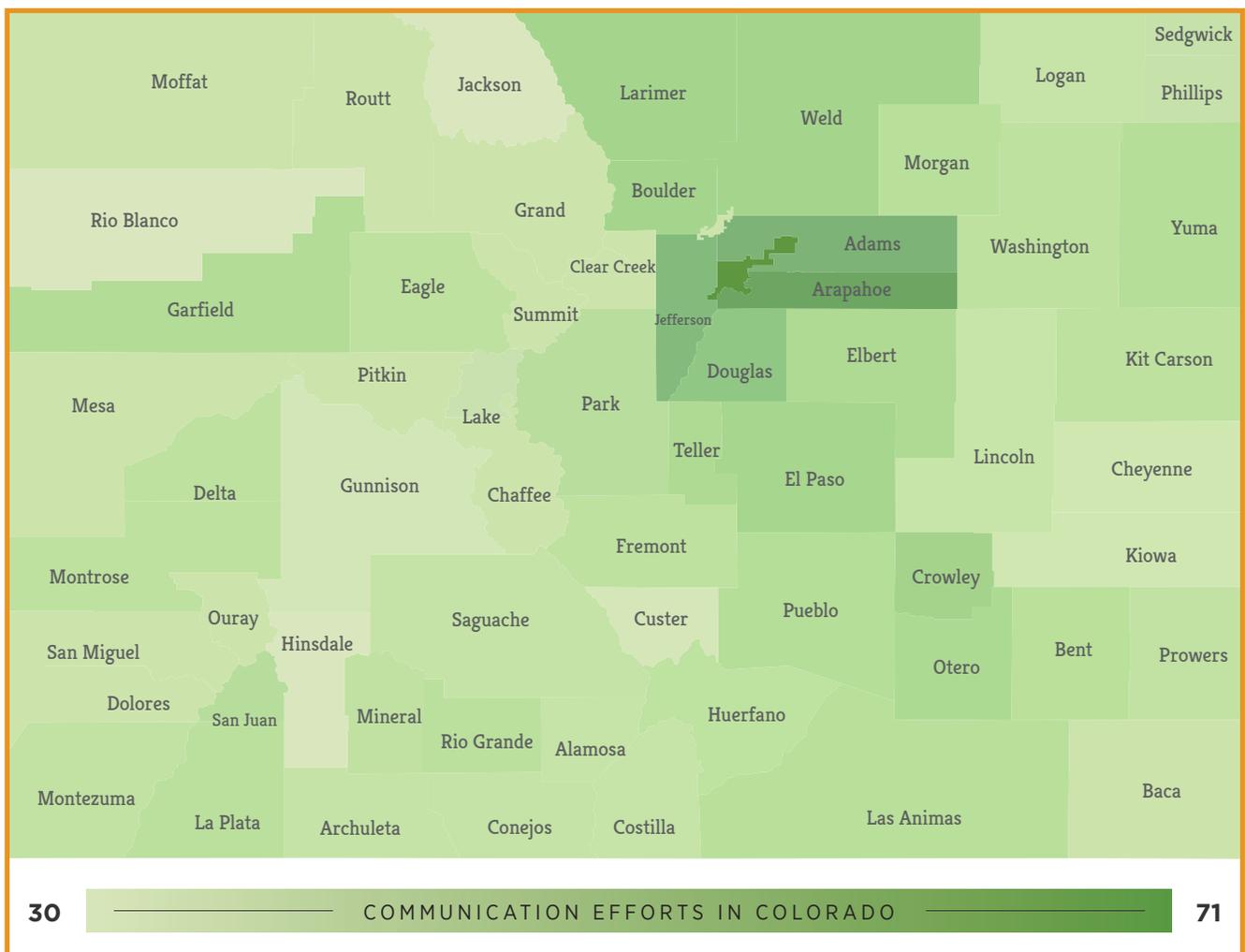
**“As a caregiver, I am worried that he is safe and sound
(...) that nothing happens to him physically.”**

Communication Efforts in Colorado

The Early Childhood Communication Collaborative conducted a statewide survey of communication efforts aimed at reaching parents and caregivers with information or resources regarding early childhood, prenatal through age eight. More than 380 respondents from a variety of organizations provided information about numerous ongoing communication efforts across Colorado. The following are some major findings.

A Multitude of Messages Across the State

Currently, communication efforts reach every county in the state, with even the most remote, least populous areas reporting a minimum of 30 efforts. Primary messages to parents, caregivers, and children are almost evenly targeted across the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* domains of Family Support and Education; Health and Well-Being; and Learning and Development.



TOP 5 PRIMARY MESSAGES

Primary Messages	Number of Efforts
> Family Support & Education: Access to family supports -----	29
> Family Support & Education: Parent/caregiver training and support services -----	35
> Health & Well-Being: Health -----	33
> Learning & Development: Early childhood development -----	26
> Learning & Development: Early literacy -----	24

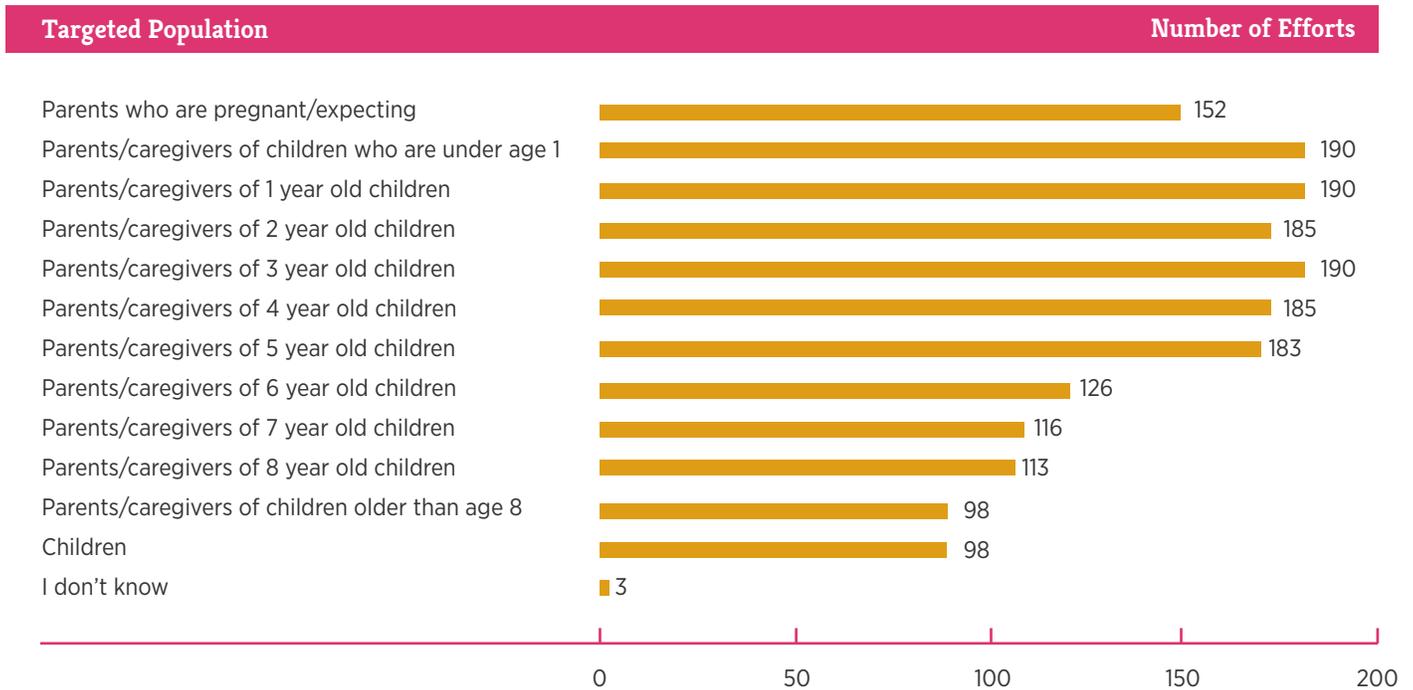
OVERALL MESSAGES

	Number of Efforts
> Family Support & Education: Access to family supports -----	66
> Family Support & Education: Family, friend, and neighbor support -----	15
> Family Support & Education: Parent/caregiver training and support services -----	87
> Family Support & Education: Policy/Advocacy -----	10
> Health & Well-Being: Child Abuse Prevention -----	34
> Health & Well-Being: Dental/Oral Health -----	9
> Health & Well-Being: Early screening/special needs -----	29
> Health & Well-Being: Health -----	53
> Health & Well-Being: Immunization -----	19
> Health & Well-Being: Maternal Depression -----	7
> Health & Well-Being: Mental Health -----	29
> Health & Well-Being: Nutrition/obesity -----	17
> Health & Well-Being: Physical activity -----	8
> Health & Well-Being: Pregnancy/prenatal health -----	16
> Health & Well-Being: Safety -----	6
> Health & Well-Being: Substance issues/prevention (drugs, smoking, alcohol) -----	8
> Health & Well-Being: Toxic stress -----	5
> Learning & Development: Brain building -----	23
> Learning & Development: Child care and preschool access -----	19
> Learning & Development: Child care or preschool quality -----	23
> Learning & Development: Early childhood development -----	68
> Learning & Development: Early literacy -----	39
> Learning & Development: K-12 school options -----	4
> Learning & Development: School readiness -----	48
> Learning & Development: STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) -----	10

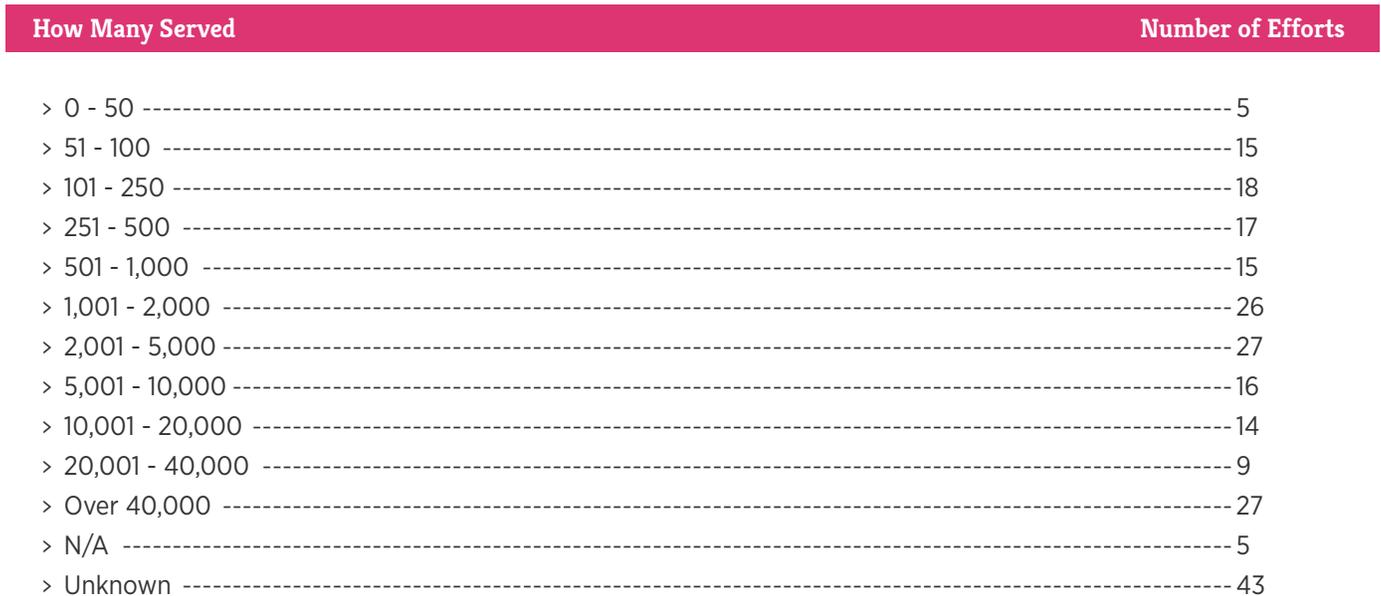


A Variety of Ages Served, Including Children

Efforts are centered around parents and caregivers of children five years and younger. Surprisingly, almost 100 respondents indicate their efforts specifically target children rather than adults.



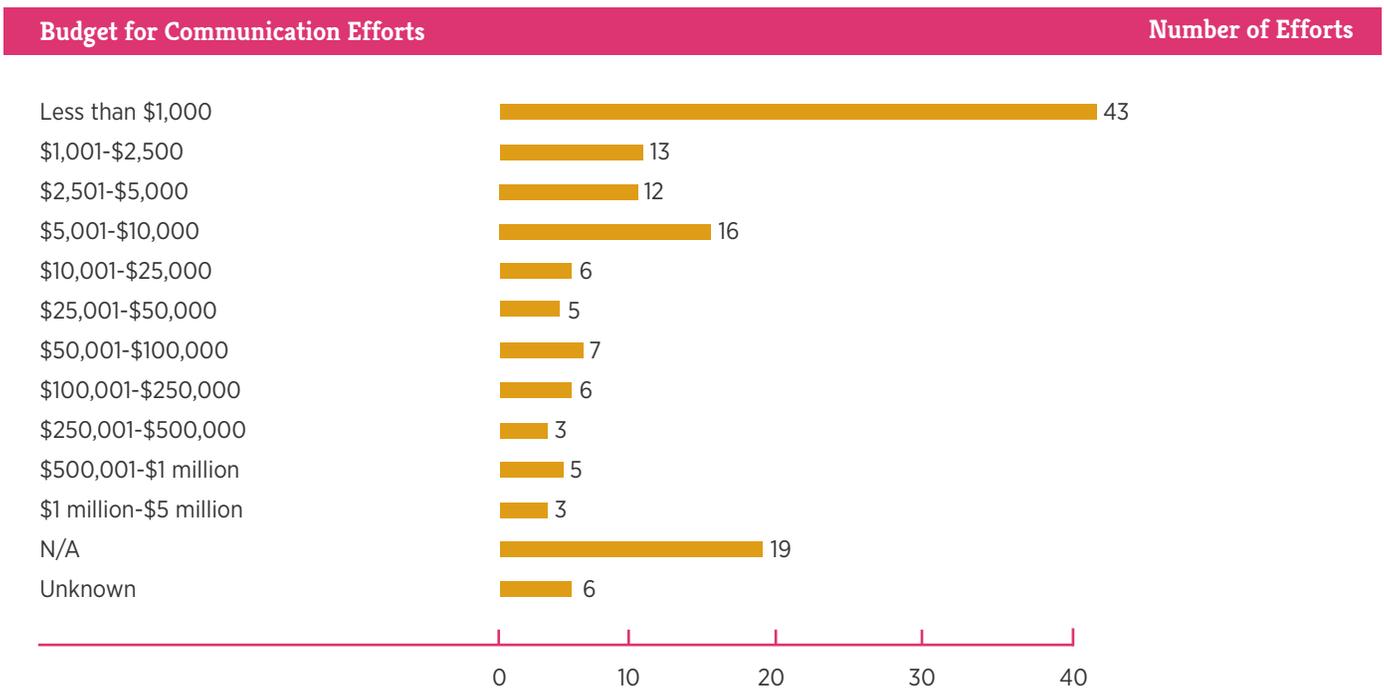
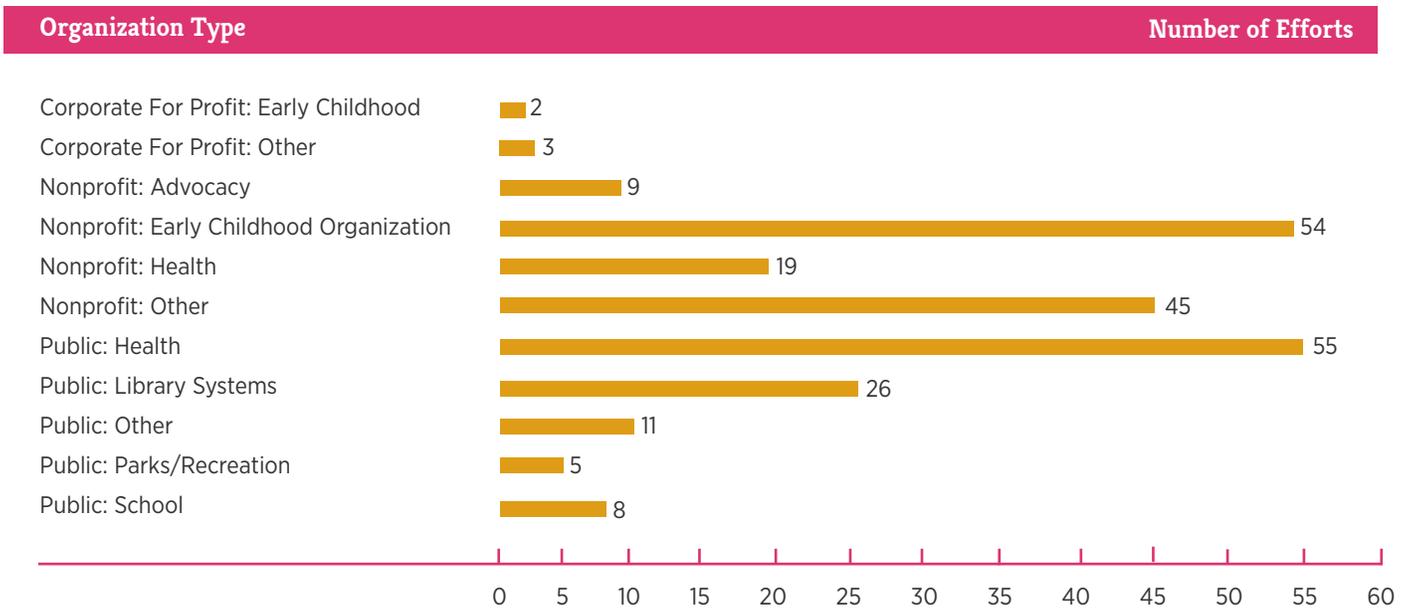
Half of respondents indicate their efforts reach 2,000 or fewer children and families.



“In this community, it is almost like it is a bad thing to ask for help. They look at you like you are doing something wrong.”

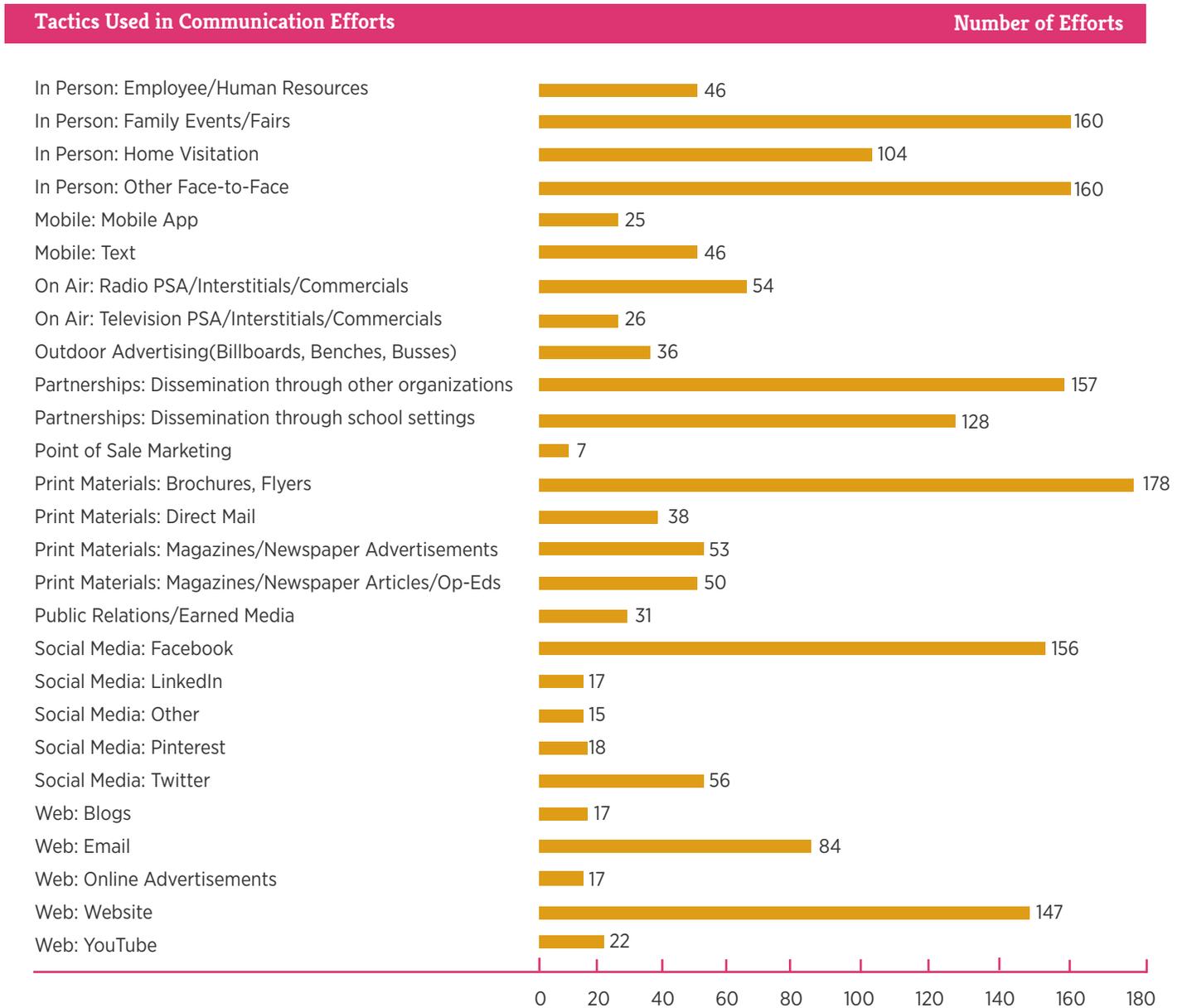
A Variety of Organizations with Relatively Lean Efforts

Organizations that span service sectors are actively communicating to parents and caregivers. However, budgets are lean, meaning outreach may not be as broad or deep as is desired. Respondents that indicated small or unknown communication budgets likely have communication efforts that are integrated into program services.



Budgets Limit Communication Approach and Impact is Unknown

Not surprisingly, the majority of communication tactics are low cost approaches such as in-person communication, flyers, and social media. Little is known about the impact and effectiveness of communication efforts. Less than 31% of organizational respondents indicated that they had engaged in an evaluation of their communication efforts.



“The biggest challenge is to raise your children differently than you were raised and better.”

Tailoring to Risk

For those who indicated their efforts target special populations, the vast majority are generally communicating with low-income children and families. Only one percent indicate they are targeting families that are English Language Learners (two efforts) or specifically Spanish speaking families (three efforts). This is surprising since 14% of Colorado's students are English Language Learners. Additionally, only one percent of efforts target children with special needs. More research is needed to understand this finding and ensure communication efforts are both appropriately targeted and culturally relevant.

Deepening Expertise

Overall, respondents indicate a strong desire for research and tools that would strengthen the impact of their efforts. Respondents were asked to rank and prioritize five options for additional communication support. Of those that responded to this question, one in four indicate that research around impactful messages and strategies is a top need (ranked as the first or second priority), and almost 30% indicate they are seeking a resource of effective messages across various areas of early childhood development. Over 100 respondents ranked the need for a statewide communication effort that would symbolize Colorado's broader commitment to early childhood development as one of their top three priorities.

“This is surprising since 14% of Colorado’s students are English Language Learners.”



“I feel I can never do enough.”

A Colorado Perspective: Talking with Parents and Caregivers of Young Children about their Needs, Wants, and Anxieties

The Early Childhood Communication Collaborative conducted eight focus groups of parents and caregivers in four Colorado communities (four in English and four in Spanish in the communities of Denver, Eagle, Longmont, and Colorado Springs). There were a total of 95 participants, at least half of whom were caring for children below age three. All participants were from low income households (less than \$45,000 per year) and at least 70% were not engaged in early childhood supports and services.

The focus groups were intended to evaluate parent and caregiver understanding of the importance of early childhood development, explore anxiety points, gauge the barriers to accessing information and services, and test, locally, some of the findings from the 2016 Zero to Three National Parent Survey.

Major themes uncovered in these focus groups can be categorized as follows: Openness, Anxiety, Confusion/Knowledge Gaps, Loneliness, Lack of Help, and Desire to be Valued and Supported.



Openness. Colorado parents and caregivers are eager to learn about all aspects of child development and are open to support and training. However, they do not know where to find the support they want. Parents and caregivers are open to actively searching for information to help with child development if the information is provided in a way that suits their needs. All participants expressed a need for a smart directory (Siri-style) that can provide up-to-date information about where to go for the specific resources and services. “We need a smart directory. Something I can tell what I need to, and it responds with the places that can offer the solution.”

Anxiety. Parents want and feel pressured to be better parents than their own parents. However, they also affirmed that still they turn to their own parents and grandparents for advice and information. This finding is consistent with the National Parent Survey. Parents are concerned about everything involving their children: their learning, safety, health, and well-being.

Parents have concerns about the option of child care, due both to expense and to concerns about how their children will be treated (especially if the child is not verbal and, thus, can’t report about their day). Parents also expressed that they felt that their children learn more and learn faster at home.

Caregivers are primarily concerned about the safety of the children under their care. Caregivers are also concerned about the cultural differences between themselves and the families of the children under their care; these differences may impact their approach to care. Consequently, there is a gap between the approach caregivers use in raising their own children versus the children under their care. “I raise my children in a totally different way because each family is different, and I want to avoid problems with the parents.”

Confusion/Knowledge Gaps. Among parents and caregivers there is no consensus about what the term “early childhood development” means. Consistent across all participants was a sense that major knowledge and skill development begins after the age of one, with some indicating major development begins closer to age five. Only a handful of focus group participants believed that child development starts during pregnancy or at birth; the vast majority (89 of 95 participants) believed child development starts after the first year of age.

While most parents and caregivers correctly believe that the physical brain begins developing during pregnancy, they underestimate the importance of relationships and interactions once a child is born. A plant metaphor seemed to best reflect their ideas of brain development, with a healthy brain being the result of genetics and nutrition. Once the child is born, the belief is that brain development can be impacted by nutrition, but the majority of parents and caregivers believe it is mostly impacted by genetics and cannot be changed.

Among focus group participants, there is universal confusion about where to find good information or support concerning child development. Almost all of the parents and caregivers were not able to name a single local resource that could provide them with trusted information or support.

“I need someone to lean on, you can’t lean on air.”

Loneliness and Lack of Help. Regarding their parenting role, there is a sense of loneliness: parents feel they are on their own. All parents expressed that their greatest need is for support. “I need someone to lean on, you can’t lean on air.” This sense of loneliness was amplified in the rural areas.

Both parents and caregivers expressed a belief that, “it takes a village” to raise a child, and many of them are seeking that “village” of individuals to help support their efforts, but without luck. However, parents are afraid and overly cautious about the kind of people who are around their children. “I do not trust anybody to take care of my kids because of things that happened to me.” “You have to be careful who watches your kid, I was fortunate I had my mom.”

Lastly, most young parents and caregivers noted they are afraid of asking for help. “In this community, it is almost like it is a bad thing, because they look at you like you are doing something wrong when you ask for help.”

Desire to be Valued and Supported. Parents and caregivers feel a lot of pressure. They experience a great deal of external judgment and criticism over their parenting skills. They feel that they can never do enough. “Especially with my autistic son, we get judged all the time. I’ve parented in a number of states and there are judgmental people all over, but here (...) is the worst.”

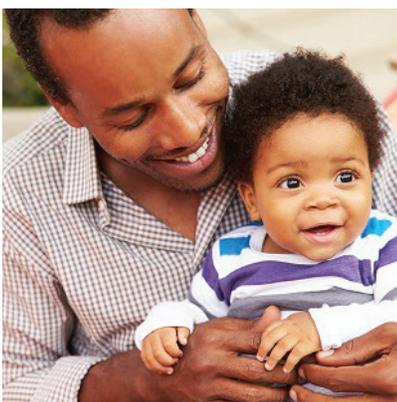
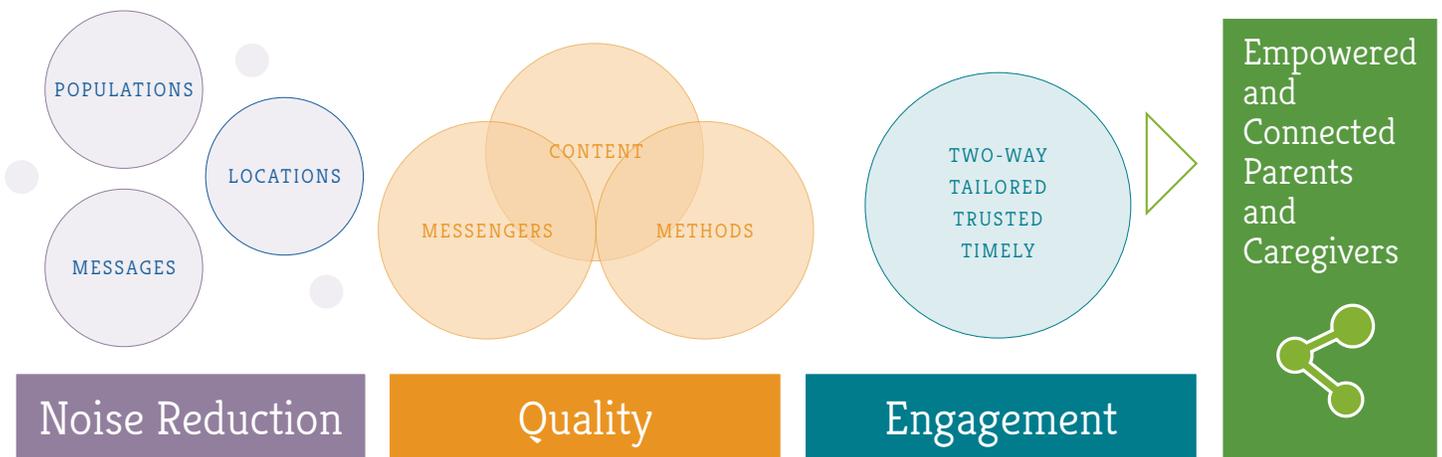
They want to know that other community members value and care for them in their role as parents and caregivers. This sense of being undervalued was most evident among fathers. “We are paying for what our fathers did. They were not close to us, and now people do not value fathers like me who really care and are dedicated to their kids.”

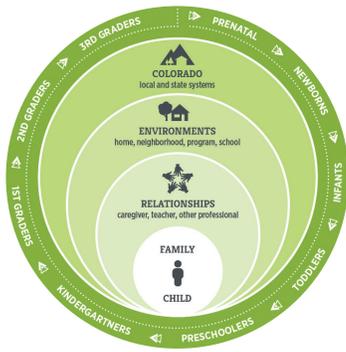
“I do not want to be my mother. I want to break the cycle with my child. I can fail at anything else. I just can’t fail at this.”

Recommendations

The Early Childhood Communication Collaborative offers the following eleven recommendations for consideration, based on information obtained through the state survey and focus groups, ECCC Steering Committee and Advisory Partners' input, prior state research, and national information. Recommendations, rooted in the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework*, are organized around three major areas for improvement:

- **Reduce communication “noise”** resulting from inconsistencies or duplicate efforts that are unevenly targeted to families and caregivers in regions with different communication needs.
- **Increase the quality of communication**, including the use of effective content, enhanced communication training for trusted messengers that connect with parents and caregivers, and a heightened focus on effective tactics.
- **Provide greater emphasis on the two-way, responsive engagement** of parents and caregivers that will generate more positive outcomes for children's cognitive and social development.





The following chart offers a set of recommendations in each of these areas. Recommendations are coded to the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* circles of influence to indicate for whom the recommendation provides the most support—family/child, relationships with caregivers and other professionals, environments like programs or neighborhoods, or local and state systems. The left column indicates the category of stakeholder that might provide leadership in implementation efforts.

Noise Reduction

Direct Service Providers		Balance messages with interest. Increase communication efforts on the topics about which families most want to learn. <i>(Source(s) behind this recommendation: National research; Colorado Survey; Focus Groups.)</i>
Funders	 	Match reach with risk. Align supply and demand for special populations (e.g., Spanish-speaking families) and for regions of the state with increased risk outcomes (e.g., high rates of maternal depression). <i>(Source(s) behind this recommendation: Colorado Survey; Focus Groups.)</i> Consider a campaign. A campaign will be the most effective approach for specific statewide priorities. Exploring the approaches and impact of other statewide efforts (e.g., the child abuse and prevention campaign to promote the statewide hotline) will help determine the optimal conditions for an effective campaign. <i>(Source(s) behind this recommendation: Elementive & Sector Brands reports; Colorado Survey; Focus Groups; Steering Committee; Advisory Partners.)</i>
Statewide Conveners		Learn and Share. Continuously monitor new communication efforts as they arise and share relevant information, tools, and resources with stakeholders. <i>(Source(s) behind this recommendation: Elementive & Sector Brands reports; Colorado Survey; Advisory Partners.)</i>

Quality

Local Conveners		Increase messengers' communication expertise. Provide opportunities to learn and share information on effective communication delivery – especially strategies that lead to engagement – with programs and services with limited capacity. <i>(Source(s) behind this recommendation: Colorado Survey; Steering Committee.)</i> Tailor content and methods to goals. Consider the variety of purposes for communication and respond appropriately with impactful messages and tactics. Different words and phrases may increase general public support for a program but may not encourage individual parents and caregivers to enroll. Different tactics (e.g., websites, social media, handouts) are differentially effective, depending on goals. <i>(Source(s) behind this recommendation: Advisory Partners; Focus Groups.)</i>
Funders & State-Level Decision Makers	 	Support the use of high-quality, tested content. Encourage the use of high-quality and effective messages, either by encouraging the evaluation of messages and tools or utilizing messages or frames that have been researched and tested. <i>(Source(s) behind this recommendation: Colorado Survey; Steering Committee; Advisory Partners.)</i> Explore impact. Support the exploration of what is working, and what is not, for Colorado parents and caregivers. <i>(Source(s) behind this recommendation: Colorado survey.)</i>



Engagement

Direct
Service
Providers



Emphasize two-way, tailored communication. Two-way communication with trusted partners is still a preferred method especially in times of great stress, but technology has benefits also. Explore how technology may complement in-person communication or be more responsive and tailored (e.g., live chat capabilities) to meet the needs of parents and caregivers. *(Source(s) behind this recommendation: National research; Steering Committee; Advisory Partners; Focus Groups.)*



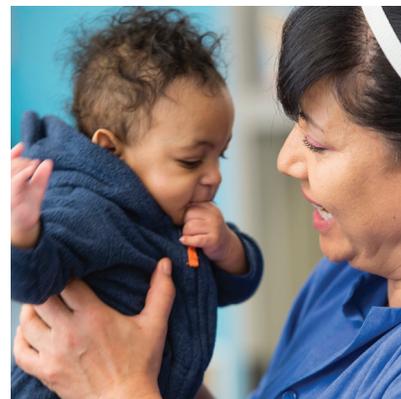
Increase responsiveness in times of need. Parents and caregivers often feel most alone when they are most stressed and in need. Explore how to provide more support when most needed especially for hard-to-reach parents and caregivers who are not already engaged in programming. *(Source(s) behind this recommendation: National research; Focus Groups.)*

Business
Community



Build capacity in other relationships. Build capacity with the myriad of family, friends, and neighbors – especially those individuals that parents indicate they most often seek out for advice. Communities are filled with adults who interact with parents, caregivers, and children (e.g., coaches, teachers, grandparents); building their capacity to communicate and model developmentally appropriate information will create a web of support. Explore avenues for training and engagement of these adults (e.g., coaches' clinics, church groups, and senior organizations). *(Source(s) behind this recommendation: Steering Committee; Advisory Partners.)*

“Maybe there are places, and I just do not know about them because I do not know where to look for information.”



Next Steps

As a result of this effort, the Early Childhood Leadership Commission and stakeholders in this effort understand more acutely the needs of parents and caregivers in their desire to be the best, first, and most important teacher of young children in their care. We understand so much more about the myriad of efforts across the state aiming to support parents and caregivers. We know that great, effective work is happening and is reaching many families. We also have a sense of how we're falling short in communication and how to make improvements in the areas of noise reduction, quality, and engagement.

We all have a role to play in helping the parents and caregivers that are raising the next generation of Coloradans to reach their developmental potential. The Early Childhood Leadership Commission believes strongly that improving the effectiveness of parent and caregiver awareness and engagement will best be achieved through **a partnership that includes businesses, state and local government, foundations, direct service providers, and most importantly, the parents and caregivers at the center of this work.**

The ECLC will continue to foster these partnerships and garner commitment from leaders within the early childhood system to ensure families benefit from communication efforts that engage them and help them feel more supported and become more empowered to do the best for the children in their care.

We hope you join us in these efforts, which will help to ensure our shared vision that every young child is valued, healthy, and thriving.

Acknowledgements

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Appendices

These documents can be found online at www.earlychildhoodcolorado.org.

- I. Early Childhood Colorado Framework
- II. Elementive Marketing Solutions Report - “Awareness Campaigns-Colorado Environmental Scan”
 - a. Sector Brands Report - “Communications Strategy Recommendations to Support a Statewide Early Childhood Public Awareness and Engagement Effort”
 - b. Mapping Survey of Communication Efforts –
 - Data Dashboards
<https://public.tableau.com/profile/shift.research.lab#!/vizhome/ECCC719/Story>
 - Additional Survey Charts and Narratives
- III. A Colorado Perspective: Talking to Parents and Caregivers of Young Children about their Needs, Wants and Anxieties
- IV. Early Childhood Communication Collaborative Steering Committee
- V. Early Childhood Communication Collaborative Advisory Partners

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