



ECPAC
EARLY CHILDHOOD
PARTNERSHIP
OF ADAMS COUNTY

Affordability & Accessibility of Quality ECE Programs in Adams County

Report presented to the
Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County



Andrew Brodsky, Ph.D.
Brodsky Research and Consulting

Stacy N. Howard, Ph.D.
Independent Consultant

January, 2019

Appendix and updates by ECPAC ~ April 2019

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Executive Summary	3
Introduction & Background	6
The Status of Children in Adams County	8
Affordability of ECE Programs	12
Availability of Licensed ECE Programs	15
Public Funding Sources for ECE Programs.....	30
Unmet Need for ECE Programs in Adams County	38
Conclusion & Recommendations	40
Appendix A: Results from the Adams County Business and Family Focus Groups	46
Endnotes.....	51

About the Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County

Since its founding in 2004, the Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County (ECPAC) has worked to build an impressive network of partners into a strong, coordinated early childhood system serving the entire county. The Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County is one of 34 such Councils created through 2007 legislation to improve and sustain the availability, accessibility and quality of early care and education services in the areas of Early Learning, Health, Social-Emotional-Mental Health, and Family Support and Parent Education.

The team has 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 act on shared strategic goals. The ECPAC partnership includes more than 45 organizations with more than 75 individuals including partner nonprofit organizations, families, ECE programs, government and elected officials and other stakeholders. The mission of ECPAC is to build a community where every young child and their family can reach their full potential. It is with this mission in mind that the ECPAC team commissioned a research study to better understand the accessibility and affordability of early care and education programs in the community.

Executive Summary

This report presents a picture of the availability and affordability of high-quality early care and education (ECE) programs in Adams County and estimates the costs to serve unmet need. The report is organized into four main sections, which investigate the status of children in the county, the financial challenges facing families in accessing high-quality care, the availability of licensed capacity in the county, and the cost of unmet need for high-quality ECE services.

Early care and education programs offer learning opportunities for thousands of young children

and have a profound positive impact on their readiness for school. While access to affordable, high-quality ECE programs is essential, demand far outstrips capacity across the state and Adams County is no exception. Fewer than 11,000 licensed slots are available for the nearly 29,000 children ages birth to five who have all parents in the labor force.

The Status of Children in Adams County

Adams County is home to nearly 37,000 children younger than five, among the highest rates in Colorado. Nearly 10,000 of these children live at or below the poverty line, which is equal to \$25,100 for a family of four. More than 40 percent of children in the county qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, including two districts with more than 80 percent of children eligible for free or reduced price lunch (Adams 14 School District with 87 percent and District 50 Westminster Public School District with 81 percent).¹ The highest-poverty neighborhoods are in Commerce City, to the south and west of Denver International Airport (DIA); the extreme southwest corner of the county near its border with Denver; and the southern area of Brighton.

Affordability of ECE Programs

A major obstacle to access ECE programs for many families is the cost. In 2018, a single adult with one preschool-aged child in Adams County would need to earn at least \$25.41 per hour (\$53,669 per year) to cover basic needs, including spending 55 percent of her income for housing and child care alone. Families with more than one child in care at a time face a particularly high burden. A single parent family with one infant and one preschool-aged child would need to earn \$35.61 per hour (\$75,207 per year), of which 38 percent would go to pay for child care.



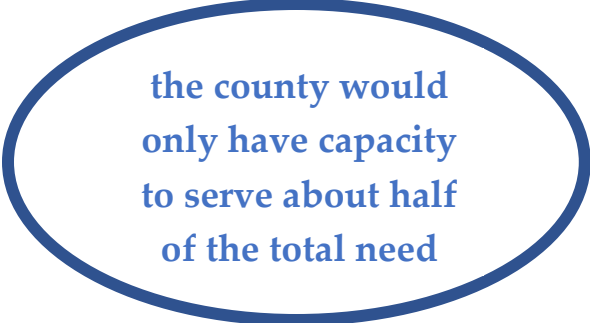
Cost of Care for Families Living or Working in Adams County

The most recent market rate from the Colorado Department of Human Services (2018) illustrates the high costs of care for families living or working in Adams County. A family with a five-month-old infant pays between \$44 and \$71 per day for full-time care in a center, or between \$11,500 and \$18,400 per year. The median income in Adams County is \$65,442 and with ECE costing up to 40 percent of family income, many families cannot afford this expense and either opt to stay out of the workforce or find patchwork ECE solutions including family, friends and/or neighbors.

Availability of Licensed ECE Programs

In total, Adams County has a licensed capacity of 10,688 for children birth to five in licensed settings. However, the population of children younger than age five in the county is about 36,000, meaning that the capacity could serve only about 30 percent of the population on a full-time basis. Even if it was

assumed that only 50 percent of likely participants attended full-time, reflecting the national average, the county would only have capacity to serve about half of the total need.



the county would only have capacity to serve about half of the total need

Need and Capacity in Local Communities

About 77 percent of the county’s 10,688 licensed slots for young children are in community programs, including centers and family child care homes, while the remaining 2,462 slots are part of school district preschool programs primarily serving four-year-old children. Availability of quality care also varies throughout the county. For example, for families living or working in the District 1 Mapleton area, 78 percent of the 470 available slots are at quality Level 3 or higher. However, for families living or working in the District 27J Brighton area, only about 31 percent of the 1,583 slots have high-quality ratings.

Quality of ECE Programs

As of Fall 2018, Adams County had 300 licensed providers serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, including 82 center-based providers, 156 family child care homes and 62 school district preschools. The majority of slots are in quality Level 1 programs (42 percent), while 37 percent of slots have high-quality ratings (Level 3 or higher).

Maintaining financial sustainability, while providing high-quality care is a constant challenge for ECE programs. Adams County programs at higher quality levels are likely losing several thousand dollars per tuition-paying family.

Public Funding Sources for ECE Programs

Several public funding sources are available to help defray the costs of ECE programs, including the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), which funds the Colorado Child Care Assistance program, the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP), the Denver Preschool Program (DPP), and Head Start. In Adams County these public sources cover only about 28 percent of the total current cost of child care, with the remaining 72 percent covered by families.

Unmet Need for ECE Programs in Adams County

Current public funding through the four major public funding streams for ECE in the county total only about \$25 million. Thus, there is a vast unmet need for child care in the county, equal to over \$320 million. Of the communities in the metro area, Federal Heights has the worst ratio of children per slot, with only one slot per almost 10 likely

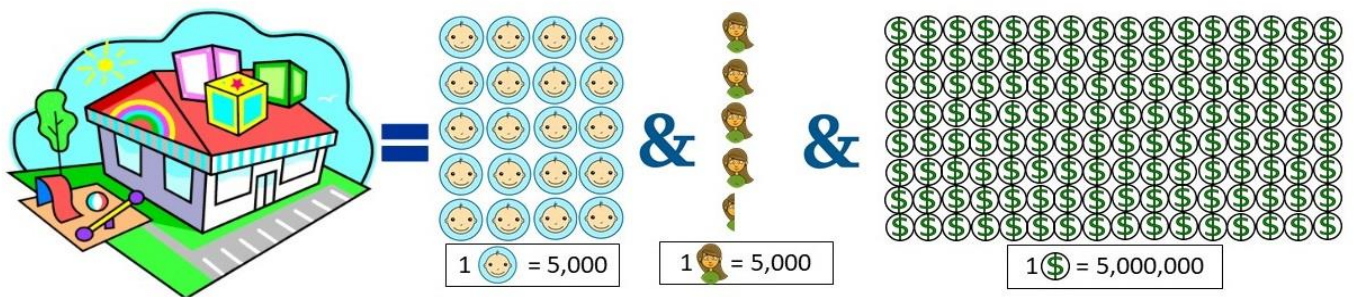
participants (1:10). Across the entire county, the rural community of Strasburg has the greatest challenge of access, with over 12 likely participants per slot (1:12).

Recommendations

The following practical recommendations are drawn from the study’s findings to help improve access to affordable, high-quality ECE in the county. These recommendations include adding capacity, and funding to do so, by creating new programs or expanding existing programs; strengthening the professional workforce pipeline; maximizing CCCAP utilization and increasing reimbursement rates; increasing the number of community partners using CPP; implementing Early Head Start in Adams County; continue efforts to improve quality of ECE across the County; and consideration to increase access, affordability, and quality through contributions made to the Child Care Contribution Tax Credit.

Introduction & Background

While parents are children’s first and most important teachers, early care and education (ECE) programs offer learning opportunities for thousands of young children and have a profound positive impact on their readiness for school. Across the state, the industry is essential to the economic health of communities and is comprised of licensed centers, family child care homes and preschool programs in school districts. In Colorado, these programs serve more than 100,000 children in more than 5,000 licensed settings, employ more than 22,000 professionals, and add nearly \$640 million to the state’s economy per year.²



Early care and education programs serve two distinct purposes that impact families and children. For working families, these programs are critical supports during the working day. Some programs are open for 12 hours per day to accommodate working families’ schedules and commutes. For children, high-quality ECE sets the foundation for

successful future learning. The long-term effects of these experiences are dramatic. Longitudinal research has demonstrated improvements in achievement scores, higher graduation rates, reduced juvenile crime, higher earnings well into adulthood, and even improved lifelong health outcomes.³

While access to affordable, high-quality ECE programs is essential, demand far outstrips capacity across the state and Adams County is no exception. Fewer than 11,000 licensed slots serve the nearly 29,000 children ages birth to five who had all parents in the labor force.⁴ This means Adams County only has enough ECE slots for 38 percent of the children who may need them while their parents work.

In 2011, there were 2.5 children ages birth to five with a working parent for each ECE slot in the county.⁵

In Adams County, 70 percent of children ages birth to five live in households with all parents working, higher than the statewide average of 64 percent.⁶ Table 1 shows the percentage for all the school district catchment areas and ranges from 41 to 71 percent of young children.

Table 1: Percent of Children Ages Birth to Five with All Parents in Labor Force⁷

School District	Percent of Children
District 1 Mapleton	67%
District 12 Five Star Schools	65%
District 14 Commerce City	53%
District 26J Deer Trail	41%
District 27J Brighton	71%
District 28J Aurora	62%
District 29J Bennett	56%
District 31J Strasburg	64%
District 32J Byers	45%
District 50 Westminster	64%
District RE3J Keenesburg	70%
District RE 50J Wiggins	64%

This report presents a picture of the availability and affordability of high-quality ECE programs in Adams County, and estimates the costs to serve unmet need.

The report addresses the following research questions:

- What is the status of children in Adams County?
- How affordable is care for families?
- What is the current availability of ECE programs in Adams County?
- What is the distribution of licensed slots in community and district providers?
- What is the distribution of high-quality ECE slots?
- What public funding sources exist for ECE?
- What are the patterns of use and eligibility for CCCAP across the county?
- How much unmet need for ECE exists in the county? What is the geographical distribution of this unmet need?
- How much would it cost to fulfill the unmet need?

The report is organized into four sections. The “Status of Children” section describes the current population and need in the county. The “Affordability” section describes the financial challenges facing families in accessing high-quality care. The “Availability” section describes how much licensed capacity exists in the county, including the availability of quality programs, and the “Unmet Need” section investigates how much additional ECE services are needed and how much it would cost to meet that need.

The Status of Children in Adams County

Located in the Denver metro area, Adams is the state's fifth largest county, with more than 500,000 residents.⁸ Adams County is home to the cities of Arvada, Brighton, Commerce City, Federal Heights, Northglenn, Thornton, and Westminster, in addition to the towns of Bennett and Lochbuie, and the unincorporated communities of Henderson, Strasburg and Watkins.

Adams County is home to nearly 37,000 children ages birth to five⁹, among the highest rates of any county in Colorado. In addition to high concentrations of young children in the western portion of the county, many children are concentrated near the county's southern border with Denver County. Nearly 10,000 of these children live at or below the poverty line, which is equal to \$25,100 for a family of four.¹⁰ An additional 2,000 children live in households just above the poverty line that still qualify for support

services including cash assistance. The county's rate of risk factors for young children exceeds the state average in categories including births to single mothers, teen births, children living in poverty, children enrolled in Medicaid, and English language learners.

Figure 1 presents the distribution of children ages birth to five throughout the metro area of the county, with each dot representing 25 children, while Table 2 presents a summary of population characteristics for the county's population.

Figure 1: Children Birth Ages Birth to Five in Metro Adams County

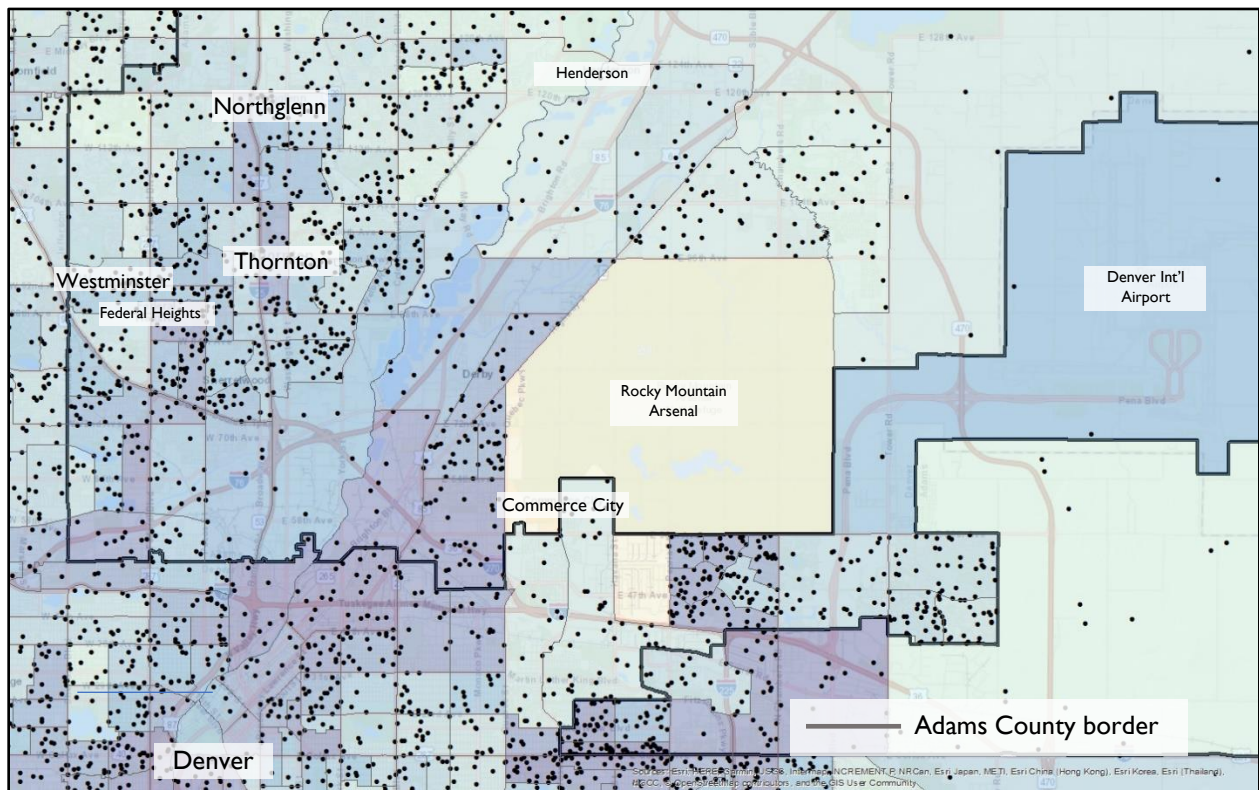


Table 2: Adams County Population Characteristics (2016-2017)¹¹

	Adams County	Colorado
Vulnerable Families		
2016 Births to Single Women	28.0%	22.8%
2016 Births to Women without a HS Diploma/GED	18.6%	11.7%
2016 Teen Births (per 1,000)	26.7%	17.8%
Family Economics and Supports		
Children Qualifying for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (Fall 2017)	49.4%	41.7%
Median Household Income (2016)	65,442	65,718
Children 18 and Younger in Poverty (2016)	15.1%	13.4%
Children Receiving WIC Program Assistance (2017)	39.3%	30.2%
Education		
Prekindergarten to 12 Student Enrollment (Fall 2017)	84,676	910,280
Kindergarten in a Full Day Program (Fall 2017)	80.2%	78.4%
English Language Learners (Fall 2017)	22.9%	14.1%
High School Graduation Rate (2017)	75.1%	79.0%
4 th Grade Students Meeting/Exceeding Expectations in English Language Arts (2017)	35.9%	44.1%
Students Meeting/Exceeding Expectations on CMAS Math (2017)	26.7%	32.8%
Students Meeting/Exceeding Expectations on CMAS Science (2017)	25.4%	30.0%

The data show that many of the county’s families experience one or more risk factors which may provide challenges for its youngest children. Nearly 30 percent of births in the county are to single women, and 40 percent of families with infants receive nutrition and health services from WIC (the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children). Furthermore, more than 40 percent of children in the county qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.¹² Research indicates that children with risk-factors including living in a single parent family or low parent education levels, especially when combined with poverty, can markedly increase the chances of adverse outcomes.¹³

Performance on assessments, such as kindergarten literacy, are closely related to poverty levels, as the following figures illustrate. Figure 2 displays the overall distribution of children by family income level, while Figure 3 displays the close relationship between poverty level and kindergarten literacy outcomes. Only 60 percent of kindergarten children in the county are meeting or exceeding kindergarten readiness benchmarks, based on data from four of the county’s largest school districts. One of these districts, which serves the highest-poverty population, reported that only 36 percent of their students reached these benchmarks.

Figure 2: Distribution of Children Birth through Five by Federal Poverty Level¹⁴

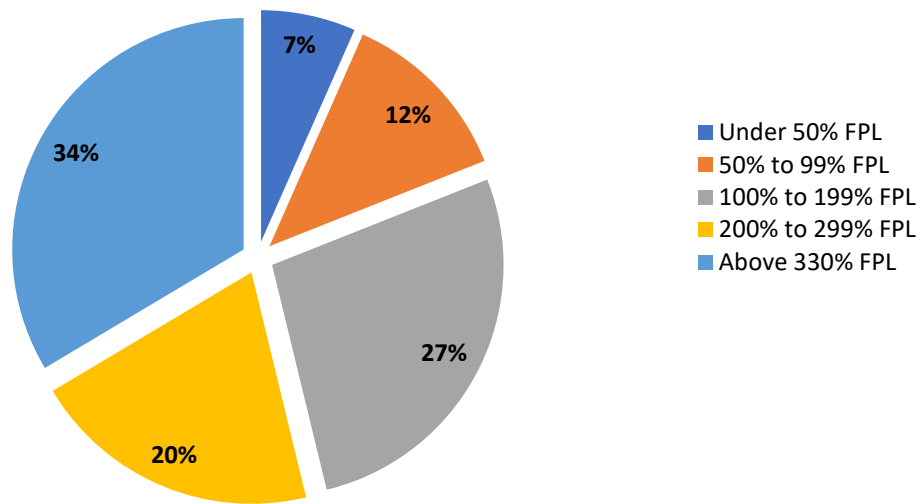
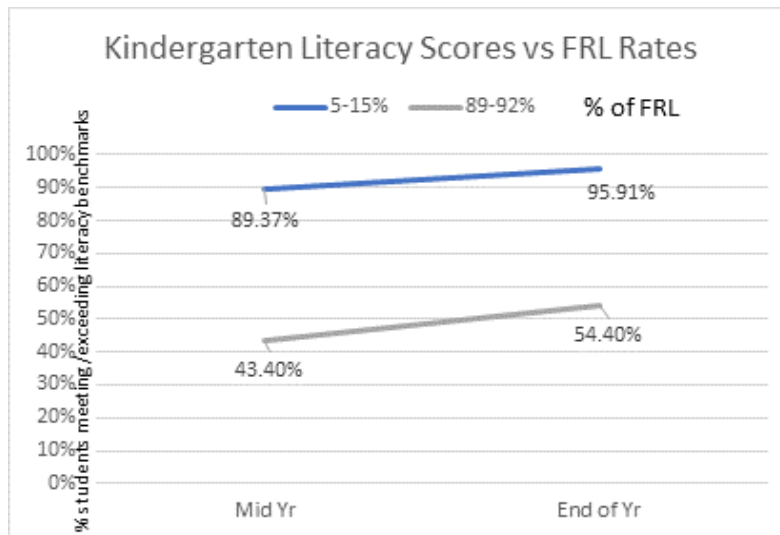
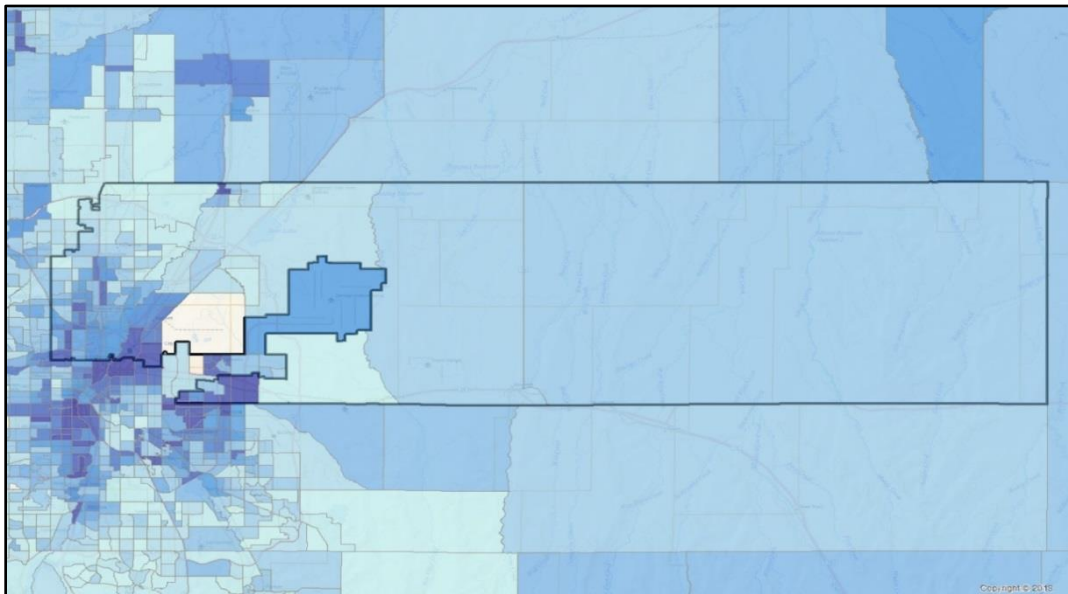


Figure 3: Kindergarten Literacy Scores for Adams County School Districts¹⁵



While poverty is endemic in many neighborhoods, it is distributed unequally throughout the county. Figure 4 indicates the distribution of poverty across the county, which is indicated by the heavy black line. Darker areas of the map indicate census tracts with higher poverty levels, ranging from less than one percent to over 60 percent across the county. The highest-poverty neighborhoods are in Commerce City, to the south and west of Denver International Airport (DIA); the extreme southwest corner of the county near its border with Denver; and the southern area of Brighton.

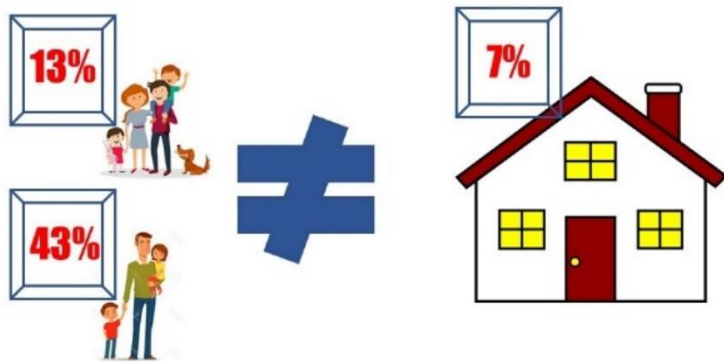
Figure 4: Poverty Levels in Adams County



Note: The irregular white area towards the West side of the county is the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, which contains no population.

Affordability of ECE Programs

There are many reasons why a family may or may not choose to enroll their children in an ECE program. The industry is a mixed-delivery model meaning that services are offered in a variety of private and public settings, but services are not always of quality, affordable or accessible. A major obstacle to accessing programs for many families is the sheer cost.



Colorado is the second-least affordable state for four-year-old center-based care, with a married household paying 13 percent of family income for care and a single headed household paying 43 percent of family income.¹⁶ These figures are much higher than the

federal recommendation that no more than seven percent of family income should be used to pay for ECE services.

A useful tool to better understand the impact of paying for programs on percentage of family income is the Self-Sufficiency Standard. This measure calculates how much income a family must earn to meet basic needs, with the amount varying by family composition and location. Basic needs include costs for housing, ECE programs, food, transportation, health care, taxes and miscellaneous household costs such as clothing and household items.¹⁷

In 2018, a single adult with one preschool-aged child in Adams County would need to earn at least \$25.41 per hour (\$53,669 per year) to cover basic needs, including spending 55 percent of her income for housing and ECE alone. A family with two adults and one infant would need to earn \$15.13 per hour (\$63,909 per year) including spending 48 percent of their family income for housing and ECE.

Families with more than one child in care at a time face a particularly high burden. A single parent family with one infant and one preschool-aged child would need to earn \$35.61 per hour (\$75,207 per year), of which 38 percent would go to pay for ECE. For many families, ECE is either the top expense or second largest expense next to rent or paying a mortgage. For many working families, subsidies and tuition assistance are not available given income thresholds. As a result of high costs of care, many parents find patchwork ECE solutions including family, friends or neighbors or are not able to enter the workforce at all.

Table 3: Annual Self-Sufficiency Standard for Various Family Types in Adams County in 2018

Expense Category	Family Type			
	Adult + Preschooler	Adult + Infant + Preschooler	2 Adults + Infant	2 Adults + Infant + Preschooler
Housing	\$16,176 (30.0% of expenses)	\$16,176 (21.5%)	\$16,176 (25%)	\$16,176 (19.7%)
Child Care	\$13,356 (24.8%)	\$28,344 (37.7%)	\$14,988 (23.0%)	\$28,344 (34.5%)
Food	\$4,704 (8.7%)	\$6,168 (8.2%)	\$7,320 (11.0%)	\$8,664 (10.5%)
Transportation	\$3,252 (6.0%)	\$3,252 (4.3%)	\$6,228 (9.7%)	\$6,228 (7.5%)
Health Care	\$4,560 (8.4%)	\$4,740 (6.3%)	\$5,328 (8.3%)	\$5,484 (6.6%)
Miscellaneous	\$4,200 (7.8%)	\$5,868 (7.8%)	\$5,004 (7.8%)	\$6,492 (7.9%)
Taxes	\$2,088 (3.8%)	\$15,852 (21.0%)	\$11,460 (17.9%)	\$15,924 (19.3%)
Self-Sufficiency Wage	\$25.41 \$53,669	\$35.61 per hour \$75,207 per year	\$15.13 \$63,909	\$19.44 per hour \$82,103

Cost of ECE for Families Living or Working in Adams County

As part of their charge to monitor trends in the field, the Colorado Department of Human Services' Office of Early Childhood commissions a market rate survey to better understand the prices ECE programs are charging families across the state. The survey reports private pay rates that do not include vouchers or subsidy rates, sliding scales, or any discounts. These are the maximum private pay rates for the regular day, not including summer, drop-in, or weekend care. The prices are directly collected from programs from each county.

The most recent market rate study presents the costs of care for families living or working in Adams County. A family with a five-month-old infant pays between \$44 and \$71 per day for full-time care in a center, or between \$11,500 and \$18,400 per year.

The median income in Adams County is \$65,442 and with ECE costing more than 40 percent of family income, many families cannot afford this expense. According to a report from the Center for American Progress, a woman earning the median salary for younger full-time, full-year workers (\$30,253 annually in 2014) who takes five years off at age 26 for caregiving would lose \$467,000 over her working career, reducing her lifetime earnings by 19 percent. A man in the same scenario, but earning the median wage for young male workers of (\$33,278 annually in 2014), would lose \$596,000 over the course of his career and would see a 22 percent reduction in lifetime earnings.¹⁸

The following tables present a breakout of the cost across age groups and settings. Costs generally decrease as children age primarily because of licensed required adult-child ratios that allow for more children per classroom.

Table 4: Prices for Full-Time ECE in Adams County: Centers¹⁹

Age	Cost for Centers Per Year	Percent of County Median income
Birth to 18 months	\$18,049	27%
18 months to 3 years	\$16,689	25%
3 years to 6 years	\$13,930	21%

Table 5: Prices for Full-Time ECE in Adams County: Family Child Care Homes

Age	Cost for Family Homes Per Year	Percent of County Median Income
Birth to 2 years	\$11,700	18%
2 years to 6 years	\$11,115	17%

Note: Costs represent the 75th percentile of market rates throughout the county. The Federal Government offers guidelines of costs and recommends the 75th percentile of current market rates, which is the level designed to give families access to 75 percent of the providers in their community.

Availability of Licensed ECE Programs

If a family is able to pay for ECE, they still may have a barrier finding a program with open slots. This is especially challenging for families with infants and children younger

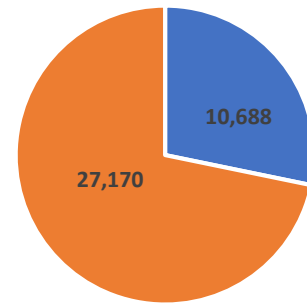
than age two. For programs, these are the most expensive classrooms to operate because of the low adult-child ratios and required teacher qualifications.

In total, Adams County has a licensed capacity of 10,688 slots for children ages birth to five in licensed settings. However, the population of children ages birth to five in the county is about 36,000, meaning that the capacity could serve only about 30 percent of the population on a full-time basis.

A realistic estimate of target ECE program participation is around 75 percent, based on participation rates for mature public preschool programs. This translates into a need of about 27,170 slots. Even if it was assumed that only 50 percent of children attended full-time, reflecting the national average, the county would only have capacity to serve about half of the total need.

Table 6 summarizes the total number of slots by community in three types of ECE settings: centers, family child care homes and school district preschools. The highlighted cells indicate that there are no existing slots in a particular community for a given provider type. For example, families living or working in Keenesburg only have access to 12 licensed family child care slots and do not have access to licensed centers or school districts. The city with the most ECE program slots is Thornton followed by Westminster and Commerce City.

Adams County Licensed Childcare



■ licensed slots available ■ slots needed

Table 6: Number of Licensed Slots in Adams County by City and Type of Setting²⁰

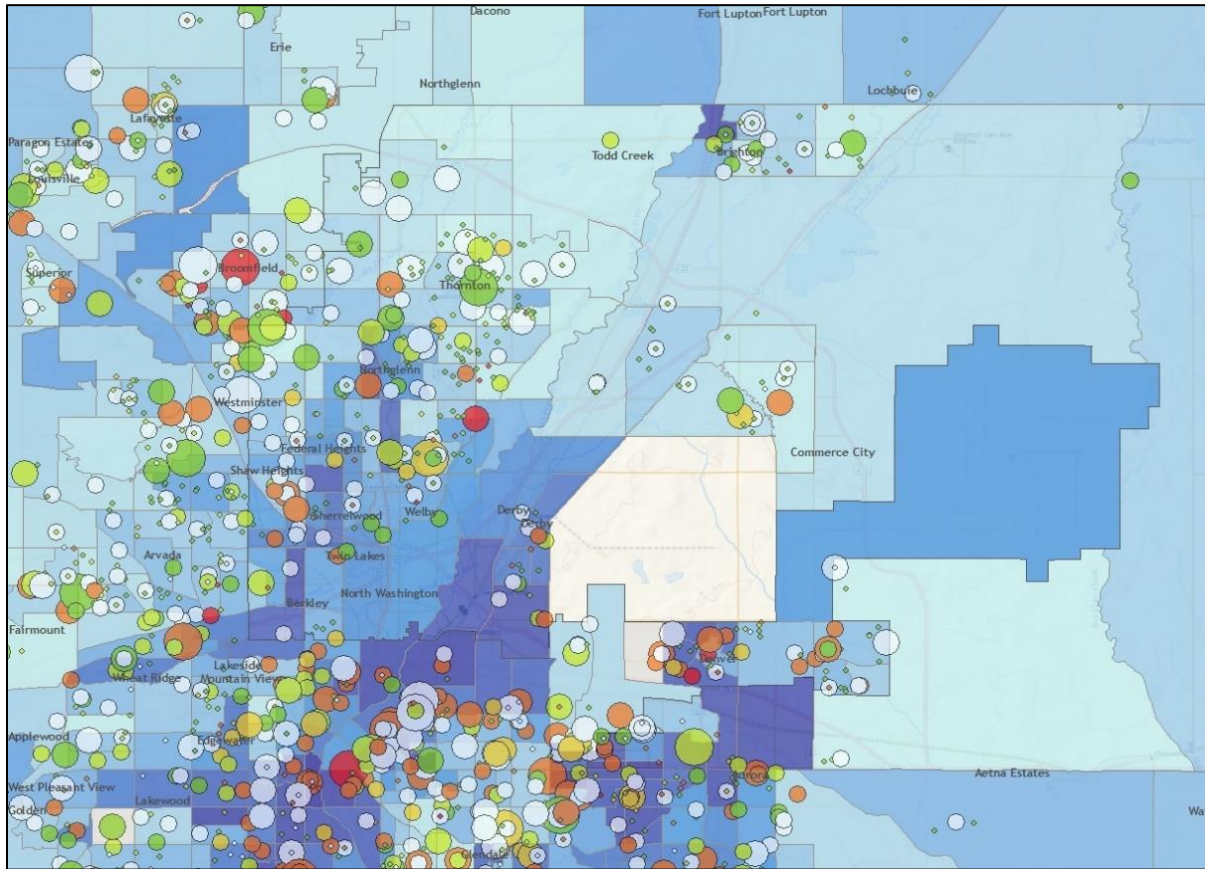
City	Center	Family Child Care Home	School District	Total Number of Slots
Arvada	125	0	16	141
Aurora	790	26	114	930
Bennett	0	6	45	51
Brighton	731	175	210	1,116
Broomfield	55	6	0	61
Commerce City	717	119	507	1,343
Denver	150	42	483	675
Eastlake	30	0	0	30
Federal Heights	88	15	0	103
Henderson	30	36	40	106
Hudson	0	6	0	6
Keenesburg	0	12	0	12
Northglenn	577	129	112	818
Strasburg	83	42	50	175
Thornton	2,362	477	647	3,486
Westminster	1,325	72	238	1,635
Total	7,063	1,163	2,462	10,688

Note: some providers with addresses in Adams County are categorized as being located in Denver or Broomfield by the CDHS database.

Geographic Distribution of ECE Program Slots

Figure 5 displays the distribution of licensed slots across the county. Larger circles indicate sites with greater capacity. The color of each circle reflects its quality rating: red circles have quality rating of Level 1, green circles have quality rating of Level 5, and orange and yellow circles represent intermediate quality levels.

Figure 5: Licensed Settings and Quality Level



Need and Capacity in Local Communities

The following maps indicate the current licensed capacity and young child population in various regions within Adams County. In each of the maps below, colored circles represent providers, with larger circles indicating greater licensed capacity and color representing quality levels. Each dot represents 10 children ages birth to five.

Figure 6: South Thornton

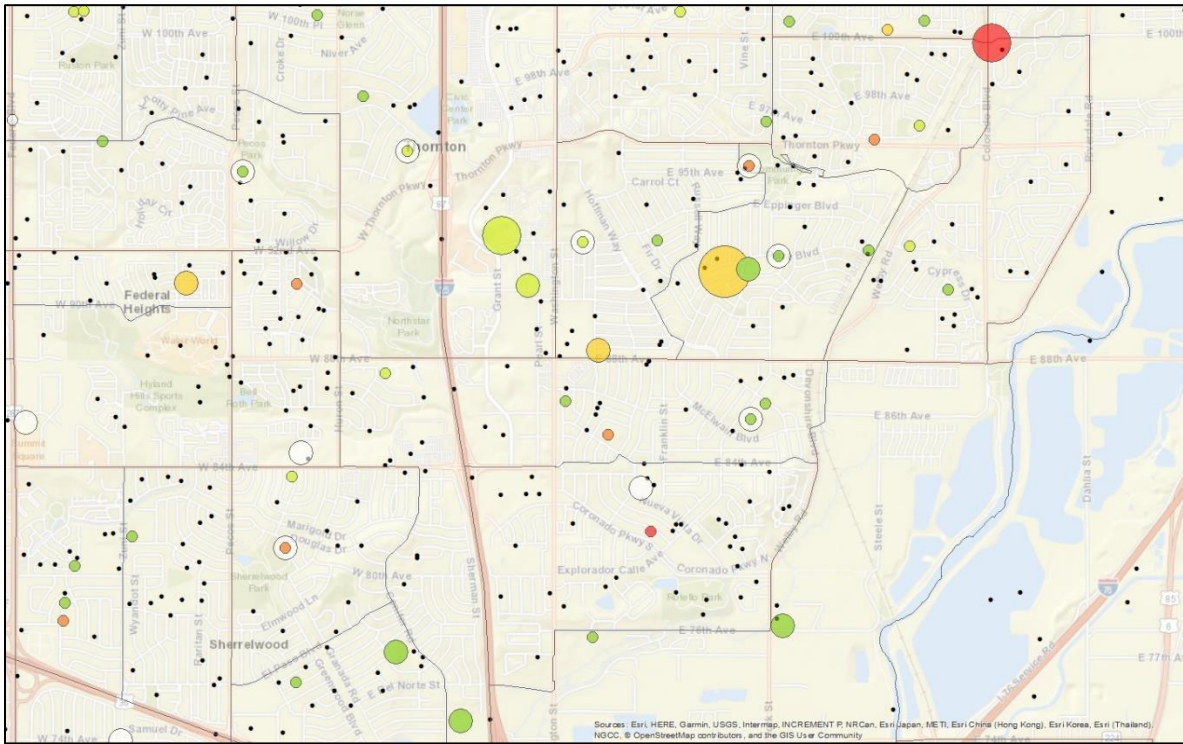


Figure 7: Westminster/Thornton

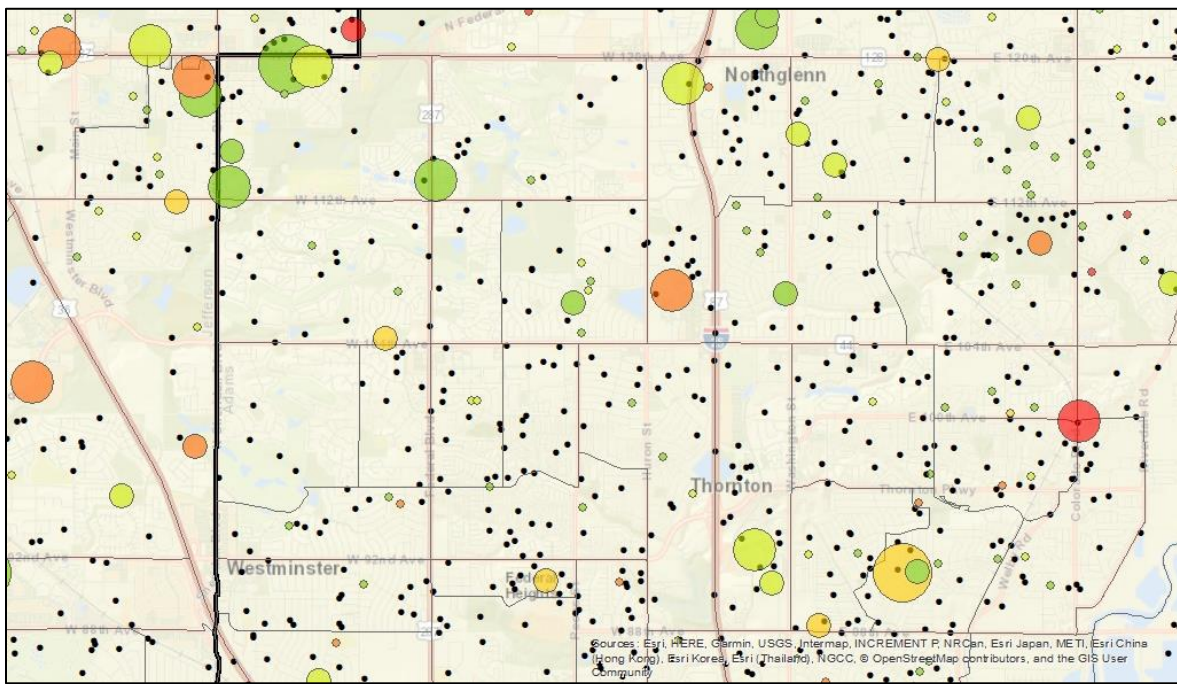


Figure 8: Federal Heights

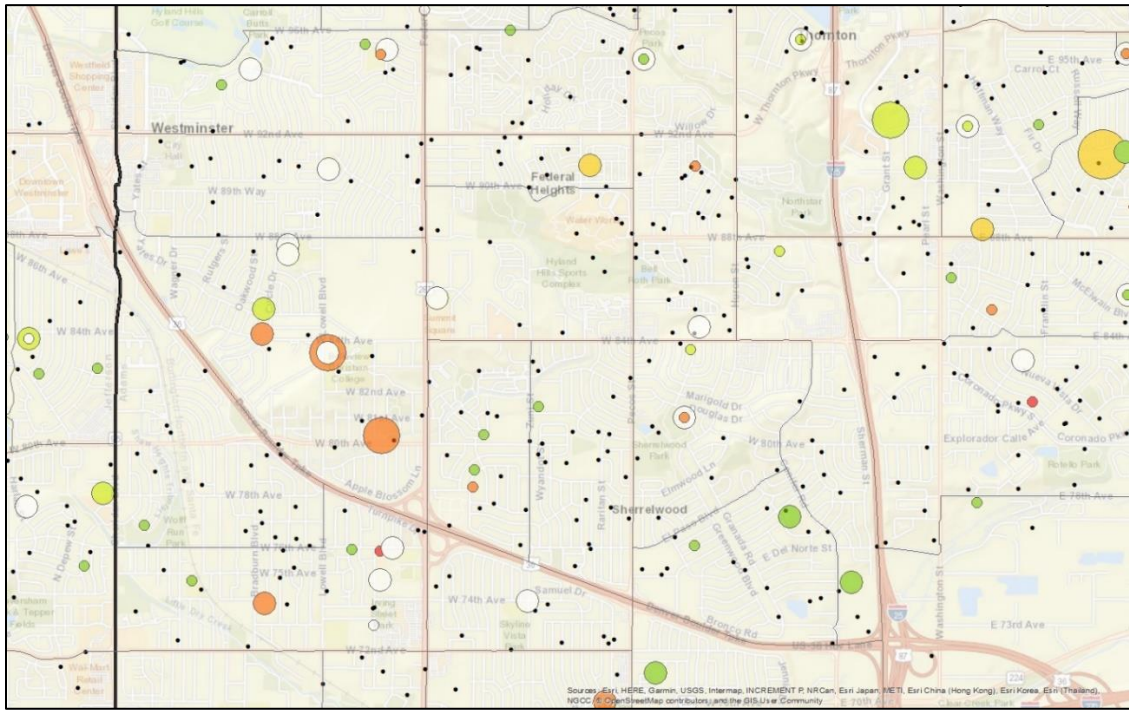


Figure 9: Commerce City

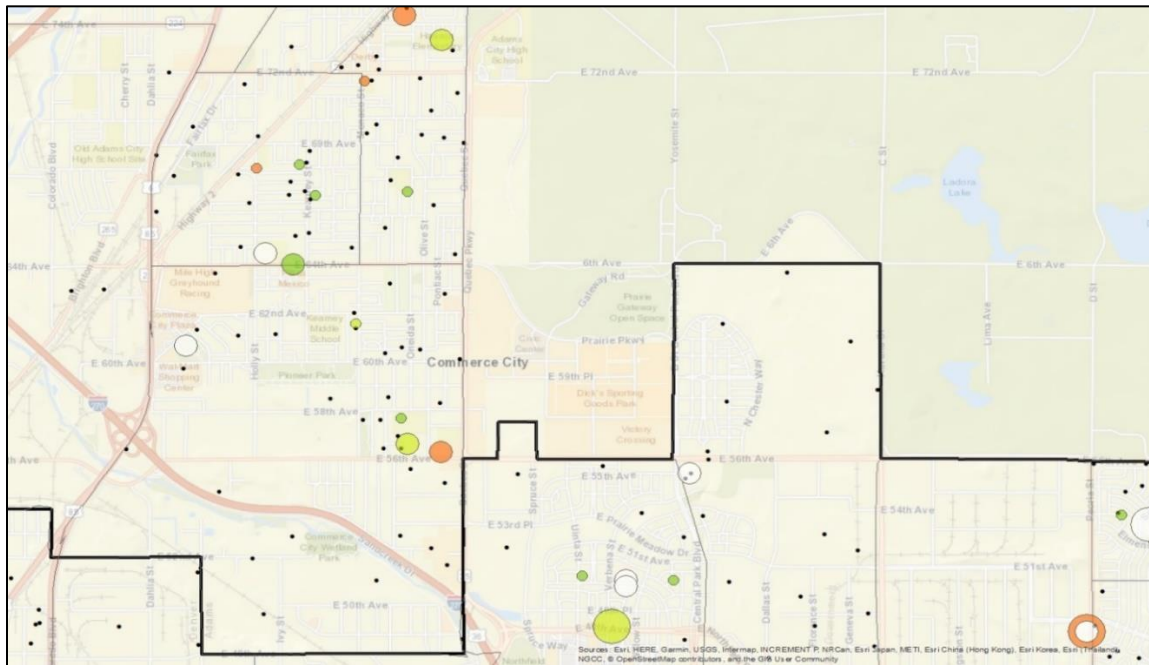
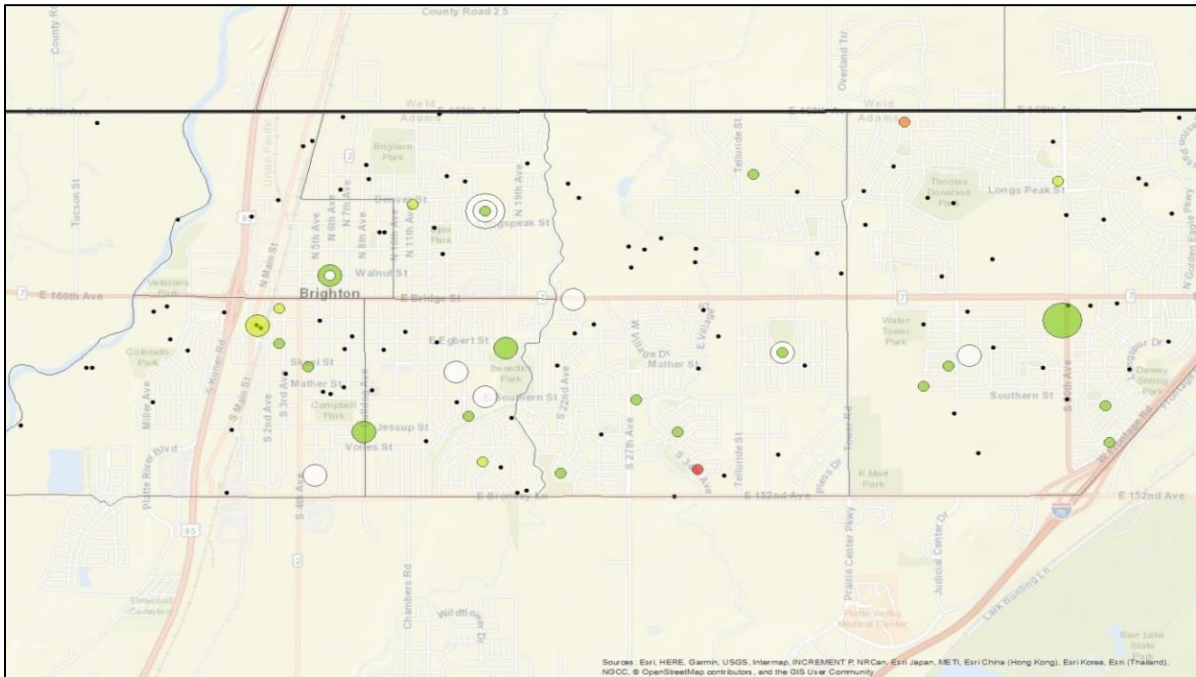


Figure 10: Brighton



About 77 percent of the county’s 10,688 licensed slots for young children are in community programs, including centers and family child care homes, while the remaining 2,462 slots are part of school district preschool programs primarily serving four-year-old children.

Table 7 presents the total number of ECE programs in the county by license type, including both community and school district providers. Of the 300 total providers, over half (156) are family child care homes. Although there are many individual licensed family child care homes, these programs are small, with the largest license type allowing for a total of 12 children.

Table 7: Number of ECE Programs by License Type

Type of Setting	Number of Providers	Number of Slots
Child Care Center	93	7,428
Family Child Care Home (1 to 8 children)	89	533
Experienced Family Child Care Home (1 to 9 children)	16	146
Large Family Child Care Home (7 to 12 children)	33	380
3 Under the Age of 2 Family Child Care (1 to 3 children age 2 or younger)	18	104
Preschool Program	51	2,097
Total	300	10,688

Availability of quality care also varies throughout the county. For example, for families living or working in the District 1 Mapleton area, 78 percent of the 470 available slots are at quality level 3 or higher. However, for families living or working in the District 27J Brighton area, only about 31 percent of their 1,583 slots are rated quality Level 3 or higher.

Table 8 displays the number of community slots at each quality rated level. While these slots are not in school district classrooms, the table displays in which school district catchment area each community-based provider is located.

Table 8: Community-Based Provider Slots in School District Catchment Areas by Quality Level²¹

Community Provider Slots in School District Catchment Area	Colorado Shines Quality Level						
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Total Level 3-5 (high quality)	All Levels (# slots)
District 1 Mapleton Area	92 (20%)	12 (<1%)	334 (71%)	32 (7%)	0	78%	470
District 12 Five Star Schools Area – Thornton/Northglenn	2,189 (50%)	884 (20%)	582 (13%)	628 (14%)	82 (2%)	29%	4,365
District 14 Commerce City Area	29 (10%)	12 (4%)	0	144 (47%)	119 (39%)	86%	304
District 27J Brighton Area	824 (52%)	244 (15%)	261 (16%)	248 (15%)	6 (<1%)	31%	1,583
District 28J Aurora Area	212 (28%)	325 (43%)	0	210 (28%)	0	28%	747
District 29J Bennett Area	6 (100%)	0	0	0	0	0%	6
District 31J Strasburg Area	30 (24%)	42 (33%)	53 (42%)	0	0	42%	125
District 50 Westminster Area	60 (10%)	211 (33%)	100 (16%)	240 (38%)	15 (2%)	56%	626
Total	3,442 (42%)	1,730 (21%)	1,330 (16%)	1,502 (18%)	222 (3%)		8,226 (100%)

Note: Four school district catchment areas have no licensed slots, according to the CDHS database: District 32J (Byers area), District RE3J (Keenesburg area), District RE 50J (Wiggins area), and District 26J (Deer Trail area)

School District Preschools

Together, the twelve school districts in Adams County operate about 23 percent of all licensed ECE slots.²² In total, Adams County has 62 school district preschools and child care centers with 2,462 slots.

Table 9 presents the total enrollment in school districts preschools in the county as of August 2018. The total number of children is larger than the number of slots because many children attend part-day preschool either in a morning session or an afternoon session.

Table 9: School District Preschool Enrollment²³

District	Number of Preschool Children Served
District 1 Mapleton	444
District 12 Five Star Schools	1,118
District 14 Commerce City	583
District 26J Deer Trail	24
District 27J Brighton	673
District 28J Aurora*	1,860
District 29J Bennett	65
District 31J Strasburg	77
District 32J Byers	43
District 50 Westminster	671
District RE3J Keenesburg	178*
District RE 50J Wiggins	59*
Total	5,795

**includes children outside of Adams County*

Across the county, nearly 60 percent of children served in district preschool identify as Hispanic, followed by 25 percent of children who identify as White. The remaining categories include Black (eight percent), Asian (five percent), Two or More (three percent) and less than one percent for both American Indian/Alaskan and Native Hawaiian.

Table 10: School District Preschool Enrollment by Race & Ethnicity

District	Hispanic	White	Black	Asian	Two or More	American Indian /Alaskan	Native Hawaiian	Totals
District 1 Mapleton	75% (331)	20% (90)	2% (9)	3% (14)	3% (16)	0%	<1% (3)	444
District 12 Five Star Schools	57% (639)	31% (352)	2% (14)	6% (66)	4% (40)	<1% (7)	0%	1,118
District 14 Commerce City	85% (496)	10% (60)	2% (13)	<1% (1)	2% (13)	0%	0%	583
District 26J Deer Trail	33% (8)	67% (16)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	24
District 27J Brighton	51% (325)	39% (247)	2% (15)	4% (28)	3% (16)	0%	<1% (3)	634
District 28J Aurora	53% (985)	15% (275)	21% (399)	7% (132)	2% (45)	<1% (18)	<1% (7)	1,861
District 29J Bennett	20% (13)	75% (49)	0%	0%	5% (3)	0%	0%	65
District 31J Strasburg	25% (19)	74% (57)	0%	0%	>1% (1)	0%	0%	77
District 32J Byers	7% (3)	86% (37)	0%	2% (1)	5% (2)	0%	0%	43
District 50 Westminster	75% (502)	19% (126)	1% (7)	2% (16)	2% (17)	<1% (2)	<1% (1)	671
District RE3J Keenesburg	39% (69)	56% (100)	1% (2)	>1% (1)	3% (6)	0%	0%	178
District RE 50J Wiggins	31% (18)	63% (37)	0%	<1% (1)	5% (3)	0%	0%	59
TOTALS	59% (3,408)	25% (1,446)	8% (459)	5% (260)	3% (162)	<1% (27)	<1% (14)	100% (5,757)

Table 11: School District Preschool Slots by Quality Level²⁴

Type of Setting	Colorado Shines Quality Level					
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	All Levels
School District Preschool Slots						
District 1 Mapleton	338	0	0	0	0	338
District 12 Five Star Schools	47	533	0	15	0	595
District 14 Commerce City	174	206	0	15	0	395
District 26J Deer Trail	0	0	0	0	0	0
District 27J Brighton	443	0	0	0	0	443
District 28J Aurora	0	0	0	0	0	0
District 29J Bennett	45	0	0	0	0	45
District 31J Strasburg	50	0	0	0	0	50
District 32J Byers	0	0	0	0	0	0
District 50 Westminster	110	0	0	372	0	482
District RE3J Keenesburg	0	0	0	0	0	0
District RE 50J Wiggins	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1,207 (49%)	739 (30%)	36 (1%)	464 (19%)	16 (<1%)	2,462 (100%)
Grand Totals (School District and Community Sites)	4,649 (44%)	2,469 (23%)	1,366 (13%)	1,966 (18%)	238 (2%)	10,688 (100%)

** Note as of the writing of this report, Mapleton, Westminster, Commerce City, and Five Star Schools are all working on achieving a higher quality level.*

All of Adams County				
Type of Setting	Level 1	Level 2	Levels 3 - 5	All Levels
Center/Preschool	<u>55</u> (40%)	<u>34</u> (24%)	<u>50</u> (36%)	<u>139</u>
Family Childcare Home	<u>103</u> (74%)	<u>30</u> (21%)	<u>7</u> (5%)	<u>140</u>

As of April 2019

Approximately 238 community programs serve young children, providing a total of 8,226 slots. The most common quality rating for these slots is Level 1 (42 percent), followed by Level 2 (21 percent), Level 4 (18 percent), Level 3 (16 percent) and Level 5 (three percent). Among school districts, the distribution of quality ratings is similar: almost half of school districts are rated at Level 1 (49 percent) followed by Level 2 (30 percent), Level 4 (19 percent), Level 3 (one percent) and Level 5 (less than one percent).

Quality of ECE Programs

Research shows that high-quality programs positively influence child outcomes and include comprehensive early learning standards and curricula, appropriate child assessments, professional knowledge and skill, and meaningful family engagement.²⁵ Across the county's diverse continuum of settings, however, is a wide variation in quality.

Research shows that high-quality programs positively influence child outcomes

In Colorado, all licensed ECE settings are quality rated through Colorado Shines, which launched in early 2015. Colorado Shines is a system that assigns a quality level between 1 and 5 based on scores in five domains, and is valid for three years. In 2017, there were 2,050 programs rated between Levels 2 and 5. Across the state, about 23 percent of rated programs had high-quality ratings at Levels 3, 4, or 5 in 2018.

As of Fall 2018, Adams County has 300 licensed providers serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, including 82 center-based providers, 156 family child care homes and 62 school district preschools. The majority of slots are in quality Level 1 settings at 42 percent, while 37 percent of slots have high-quality ratings (3 or higher).²⁶ While some of these sites offer high-quality services but have decided not to participate, others are providing lower quality services.

37 percent of Adams County childcare slots have high-quality ratings (2018)

The Colorado Shines Rating Process

Program leaders interested in participating at a higher rating level (3-5) schedule a full Colorado Shines rating. Certain programs can apply for an alternative pathway rating, including programs affiliated with a school district or accredited by an approved accrediting body, or Head Start programs in good standing.



Prior to Colorado Shines, programs wanting to evaluate the quality of their services could privately pay a non-profit organization to assess and evaluate quality. About 20 percent of all licensed programs participated in this private market.²⁷ Today, with Colorado Shines administered by the Office of Early Childhood, all licensed programs are automatically rated at Level 1. Programs at Level 2 have actively participated in the process, including registering with the state-operated Professional Development Information System (PDIS), having

a quality improvement plan in place, completing the Quality Indicator Program Assessment, and completing several e-learning courses. Activity to increase scores on the rating scale is voluntary.

Colorado Shines, which launched in early 2015, is still new and each year more and more programs decide to participate and apply for quality ratings beyond Levels 1 and 2. In Adams County, most school districts are either participating directly in the quality ratings process or become rated through an alternative pathway, although several have decided to not participate in the quality rating process. The Office of Early Childhood requires programs to be rated at Level 2 and have an open fiscal Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) agreement in order to receive support and resources from any Early Childhood Council including ECPAC.

In a recent Colorado Shines validation study, ECE program staff cited several reasons why they were reluctant to seek higher ratings. The most frequent response was among providers who felt they did not need Colorado Shines to attract families to their programs. This is largely due to families having to wait for a slot to open due to extensive waiting lists. Providers also felt that the application and rating process was

difficult, or they did not trust that the rating they receive would accurately reflect their program quality. Other less frequently selected reasons included not needing to improve the quality of their program, not wanting their environment observed, and not believing that programs should be rated at all.²⁸

Cost of Quality

Maintaining financial sustainability while providing high-quality care is an ongoing challenge for ECE programs. Higher quality care is more costly to provide for a number of reasons, including additional staff needed due to lower adult-child ratios; more extensive professional development opportunities; and higher wages for more qualified teachers.

We used the Provider Cost of Quality model to estimate the true costs of quality in Adams County. This model has been used to estimate the true costs of care throughout the state of Colorado and in several other states. The estimates in Table 12 below show average full-time costs for a center serving infants through four-year olds. The table demonstrates that providers at higher quality levels are likely losing several thousand dollars per tuition-paying child.

Table 12: True Costs of Quality for Tuition-Paying Families

Colorado Shines Level	Annual Expenses Per Child	Estimated Market Rate	Profit/Loss Per Tuition-Paying Child
Level 1	\$8,329	\$9,245	\$916
Level 2	\$9,173	\$9,245	\$72
Level 3	\$10,585	\$10,876	\$291
Level 4	\$12,803	\$10,427	-\$2,376
Level 5	\$13,294	\$10,427	-\$2,867

Note: Cost estimates assume 100% full day slots, average cost per child of center serving a mix of infants through four-year-olds.

Public Funding Sources for ECE Programs

Several public funding sources are available to help defray the costs of ECE programs, including the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), which includes the funds for the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP), and the Denver Preschool Program (DPP). Other federal and state funding sources include Early Head Start, Head Start, Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement or ECARE slots, Special Education and school district funding.

While Colorado ranks near the middle of the states in terms of access for three- and four-year-olds, the state ranks only 39th in state spending for ECE programs.²⁹ In Adams County, public sources, including CPP and CCCAP, cover only about 28 percent of the total current cost of child care, with the remaining 72 percent covered by individual families.³⁰

Child Care and Development Block Grant

The Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) allocation allows States to serve families through a single, integrated subsidy program under the rules of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act. States determine how to allocate the Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) as well as coordinate CCDF with Head Start, pre-K, and other ECE programs. States can also transfer a portion of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) dollars to CCDF or spend TANF directly for ECE services. Local county Human Services Departments administer TANF funds.

The CCDF is administered within the U.S. Office of Child Care and was recently reauthorized for up to \$5.2 billion. The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014 reauthorized the CCDF for the first time since 1996, shifting to support a deeper focus on two-generation approaches that support both families and children. In 2018-2019, Colorado received \$102,563,145 in federal CCDF funding, of which \$68,931,366 is allocated to CCCAP. Additionally, the State allocates \$112,569,426 to CCCAP, including \$29,039,745 from the General Fund, \$11,498,315 in county funds, and \$3,000,000 of TANF. The Adams County Department of Human Services received a CCCAP allocation of \$13,201,537.22.

There have been significant changes to CCCAP in a very short time. The \$46 million Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant infused the state's early childhood

system with much-needed funding and focus and the grant was intended to improve statewide supports including CCCAP administration. In addition, the General Assembly has taken several additional steps to strengthen the system. In 2014, the General Assembly passed three bipartisan bills to reform CCCAP. The bills aimed to increase affordability, ease burdens for working families, and reduce barriers for small business providers.

Specific changes to CCCAP included the following:

- reducing co-payment requirements for the most impoverished families
- increasing access by allowing contracting for subsidy slots
- expanding eligibility during 60-day job searches and to those participating in postsecondary education and workforce training
- increasing provider reimbursement rates
- instituting statewide tiered reimbursement; and
- restructuring income eligibility so that working families can afford care despite minor increases in wages, thus easing the cliff effect that discourages families from earning a higher salary.

State legislation was also passed to extend the reimbursable child care expenses tax credit to families making less than \$25,000 and increase funds for quality improvement grants for ECE programs. In 2015, the General Assembly increased investment in CCCAP. This allowed Colorado to continue implementation of reforms passed in 2014, and provided an additional \$1.3 million for a 1.7 percent CCCAP rate increase. In 2016, legislators continued their investment by allocating \$2 million to support access for working families. This funding prioritized high-quality care, as ECE programs at the highest quality ratings received a larger reimbursement. Two other budgetary measures sustained recent investments in Colorado Shines and the Professional Development Information System

(PDIS), which supports the workforce. The Office of Early Childhood also increased the number of licensing specialists to ensure that all ECE programs receive an annual visit.³¹



In 2017, CCCAP experienced an increase of \$2.5 million to continue expanding access to quality care. However, even with continued increases and investments, many families and children are

not being served, even though they are eligible for services. One study estimated that only 13 percent of all eligible families in the state complete enrollment and receive services, leaving the remaining 87 percent eligible, but without services.³²

CCCAP Programs in Adams County

Approximately 65 programs (21 percent) in the county, including six school districts, are prepared to provide or do provide services to families who receive CCCAP assistance. Although a fiscal agreement is required to receive CCCAP payment, not all programs with executed fiscal agreements enroll children who received CCCAP assistance. In total, about 1,356 children are served with CCCAP funding, of which 850 (63 percent) are in programs with high-quality ratings, a higher percentage than the ECE population at large. Funding from CCCAP funds about 13 percent of the county's licensed ECE slots. This can be partially explained by a recent change in the way in which programs that accept CCCAP payments are reimbursed for their services. The Adams County Human Services Department adopted the state recommended tiered levels.

While CCCAP reimbursement rates within Adams County vary by quality level, they fall short of the market tuition rate and the true costs to provide care. For example, in 2018 a family child care home at the highest quality level is reimbursed \$37.29 per day for an infant or one-year-old. However, the market rate for that age group is more than \$45 per day, meaning the provider would have a shortfall of about \$8 per day for this child.

reimbursement rates  market rates

Figure 11 displays the distribution of CCCAP slots in the county. Larger circles indicate providers with more CCCAP slots. The map shows that CCCAP slots are not necessarily located in the areas of greatest need. For example, the high-poverty region on the southern border of the county, between Commerce City and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, has no large child care programs accepting CCCAP.

Figure 11: Distribution of CCCAP Slots by Program Quality Level

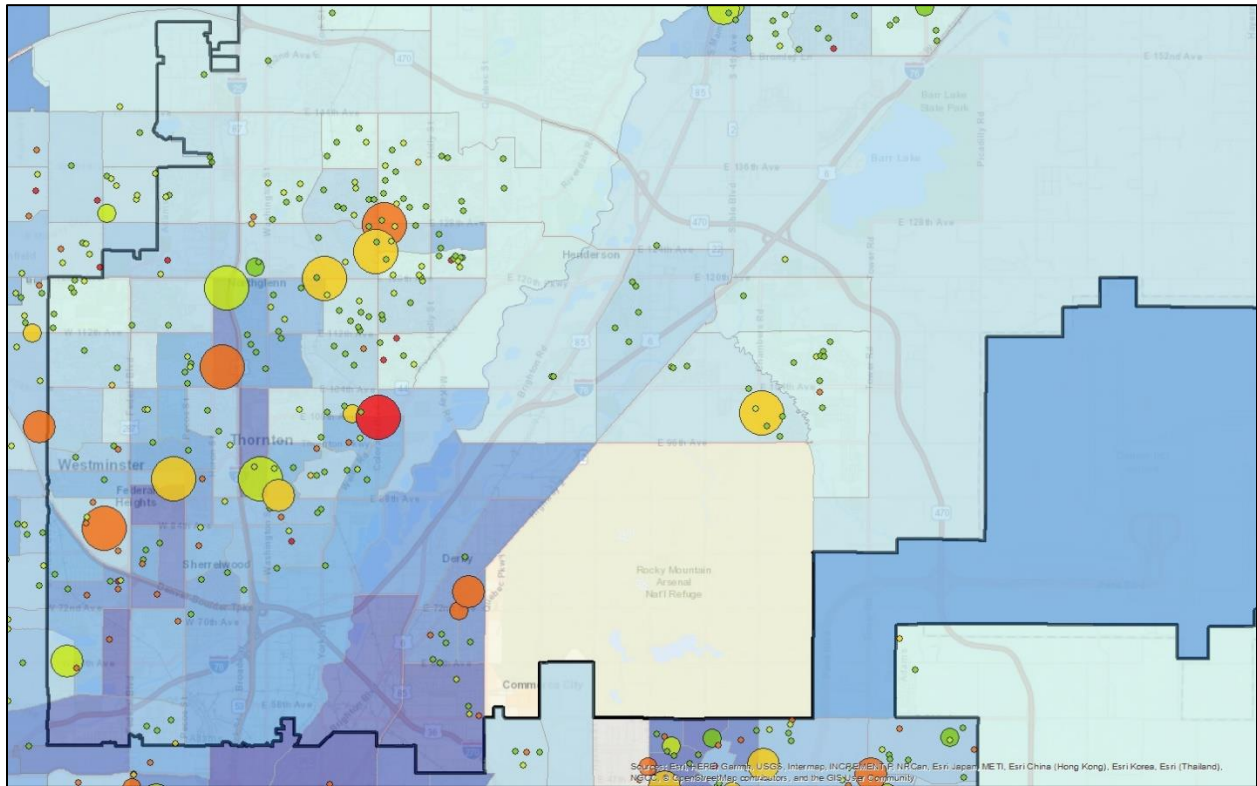


Table 13 presents all CCCAP slots in the county by school district area. This table includes both slots operated by school districts, as well as slots in each school district’s geographical area which are independently operated.

Table 13: CCCAP Child Count by School District Catchment Area

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Grand Total
District 14 Commerce City Area	2	13		53	94	162
District 28J Aurora Area	17	43		21		81
District 29J Bennett Area						
District 27J Brighton Area	14	96	87	4		201
District 1 Mapleton Area	14	4	10	6		34
District 12 Five Star Schools Area	40	200	302	193	6	741
District 31J Strasburg Area	2	1	9			12
District 50 Westminister Area	2	58		65		125
TOTALS	91	415	408	342	100	1,356

Table 14 presents the total amount paid by CCCAP, disaggregated by school district area. In total, children in the county received \$688,000 in the most recent reporting month, which would indicate about \$8.3 million per year. Of this funding, about 72 percent was distributed to children in quality Level 3, 4 or 5 programs. Each city has been defined by school district catchment areas.

Table 14: CCCAP Estimated Annual Amount Paid by School District Catchment Area³³

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Grand Total
District 28J Aurora Area (in county)	\$66,624	\$276,780	\$0	\$52,416	\$0	\$395,820
District 29J Bennett Area	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
District 27J Brighton Area	\$72,492	\$536,256	\$508,380	\$31,056	\$0	\$1,148,184
District 14 Commerce City Area	\$7,728	\$39,756	\$0	\$387,432	\$622,908	\$1,057,824
District 1 Mapleton Area	\$58,176	\$1,608	\$25,584	\$38,340	\$0	\$123,708
District 12 Five Star Schools Area	\$179,184	\$820,884	\$1,895,604	\$1,763,532	\$50,928	\$4,710,132
District 31J Strasburg Area	\$192	\$0	\$31,080	\$0	\$0	\$31,272
District 50 Westminster Area	\$732	\$289,920	\$0	\$501,048	\$0	\$791,700
TOTALS	\$385,128	\$1,965,204	\$2,460,648	\$2,773,824	\$673,836	\$8,258,640

Head Start

Adams County Head Start (ACHS) is a federally funded comprehensive program serving children three to five years old in families earning less than the Federal Poverty Level, which is equal to \$20,780 for a family of three or \$29,420 for a family of five in 2018. ACHS is a division under the Adams County Human Services Department.

In the 2017-2018 school year, 295 children were served through 256 slots. Revenue of \$4,522,677 served five center-based programs across seven cities and one area of unincorporated Adams County in full-day sessions (6.5 hours per day, four and five days per week). Nearly 60 percent of families were single parent and 70 percent of families had at least one employed parent/guardian.

The federal Early Head Start (EHS) program serves children younger than age three. However, to date no Early Head Start services are available in Adams County. In order

for services to be available, a community organization would need to meet federal requirements for a grant and to have ECE programs with available infant and toddler slots.³⁴ As of the writing of this report, Early Learning Ventures has partnered with ECPAC to submit a grant proposal to bring EHS to Adams County. An award notice will be made in January 2019.

Table 15: Adams County Head Start Programs

Center	# of Slots	Program Options	Communities Served
Brighton Head Start	48	Full Day and 1020	Brighton
Creekside Head Start	32	Full Day and 1020	Thornton, Northglenn, Federal Heights
Little Star Head Start	48	Full Day	Federal Heights, Westminster
Rainbow Head Start	64	Full Day and 1020	Westminster, Federal Heights, Unincorporated Adams County
Sunshine Head Start	64	Full Day and 1020	Commerce City
Total	256		

Note: Full Day= Monday through Thursday and 1020 = Monday through Friday

Colorado Preschool Program

The Colorado Preschool Program, or CPP, has been operating in the state since 1988, when it was authorized to serve 2,000 four-and five-year-old children in need of language development. Four years later, the General Assembly passed a bill that created CPP as a permanent program and expanded the target population to include children who lacked overall learning readiness due to risk factors. Children who are four-years-old must have at least one risk factor to qualify and children who are three-years-old must have two risk factors. Priority is given to four-year-olds and therefore not all school districts are able to serve three-year-olds depending on capacity.

In 2013, the General Assembly approved an additional 3,200 new slots called Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement, or ECARE slots. These slots allowed districts flexibility to use ECARE funding to pay for half-day preschool, full-day preschool or full-day kindergarten. In 2014, an additional 5,000 ECARE slots were approved, bringing the total number of children across the state that could be served up to 28,360.³⁵ Across the county, school districts use ECARE funds in a variety of ways and most dedicate funds to pay for full-day kindergarten. The way districts use their ECARE slots can change from year to year.

Adams County has a total of 4,112 CPP slots, located in eight of the county’s 12 school districts.³⁶ While all of the state’s CPP funding flows through school districts, in 2017, two districts held contracts with local ECE programs to offer CPP at community sites: District 14 Commerce City has 33 slots in the community and District 27J Deer Trail has six community slots.³⁷ Districts may face challenges in contracting with community providers if the providers do not have availability or do not meet CPP’s quality requirements. Districts cannot contract with family child care homes.

We estimate that about 37 percent of all CPP slots are in sites with high-quality ratings.³⁸ About 97 percent of slots are in half-day programs (four days per week for two and one-half hours per day), even though access to full-time slots is essential for families working full-time or pursuing higher education.

Classrooms funded by CPP have maximum capacity of 16, which is lower than the maximum licensing requirement of 20. Thus, licensed capacity does not exactly equal the number of children served in CPP slots. Licensed capacity represents the total amount of full-day care that programs can fill, so it may be a better measure of the total potential capacity for care.

Table 16: Children Enrolled in CPP and/or ECARE in Adams County School Districts

School District Name	Colorado Preschool Program		
	Half-Time	Full-Time	Total Slots
District 1 Mapleton	307	21	328
District 12 Five Star Schools	703	0	703
District 14 Commerce City	851	42	893
District 26J Deer Trail	750	0	750
District 27J Brighton	415	0	415
District 28J Aurora	0	0	0
District 29J Bennett	20	0	20
District 31J Strasburg	19	0	19
District 32J Byers	0	0	0
District 50 Westminster	1,047	75	1,122
District RE3J Keenesburg	0	0	0
District RE 50J Wiggins	0	0	0
Totals	4,112	138	4,250

Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2017-2018 School Year Enrollment

Denver Preschool Program

As of December 2018, five preschools in Adams County served a total of 77 DPP children, children who are residents of Denver County, but attend ECE in Adams County.³⁹ The Denver Preschool Program (DPP) is a taxpayer-funded initiative launched in 2006 and reauthorized by voters in 2014 and its mission is to create an opportunity for all four-year-old children to have access to high-quality care. Early care and education programs not located in Denver can still accept DPP tuition support, but are not eligible to receive DPP quality improvement funding. Currently, DPP invests more than \$12 million in tuition support for nearly 4,800 children each year, but has served more than 50,000 children since 2007. In addition to tuition support, DPP invests nearly \$3 million in quality supports to about 250 providers across the metro area.⁴⁰ Tuition support is allocated according to a five-tier system based on family income, provider's quality rating and the number of hours a child attends per day.

Special Education Funding

Most school districts pay for their preschool programs through two main sources: CPP funding and Preschool Special Education funding (SPED). The SPED program is federally and state mandated for three- and four-year-old children who are experiencing challenges in their learning and development and meet state eligibility criteria. Less than 10 percent of SPED dollars come from federal funding, less than 20 percent is state funded and the remaining 70 percent is funded by each district's general fund.

Eligible children are entitled to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment at no cost to the family. Every school district provides special education services to young children, and more than 8,000 children benefit across the state. Some provide this service through a local Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).⁴¹

Summary of Public Funding Sources

Table 17 presents the total number of slots and estimated annual funding for the county's four major public funding sources for ECE. Note that other, smaller funding sources may also exist, but are not included here.

Table 17: Slots and Funding For Major Public Funding Sources of ECE

Funding Source	Number of Slots ⁴²	Estimated Annual Funding
CCCAP	1,356	\$8,258,640
Head Start	256	\$4,522,677
CPP	4,250	\$13,226,875 ⁴³
DPP	77	\$570,108 ⁴⁴
Total	5,939	\$26,578,300

Unmet Need for ECE Programs in Adams County

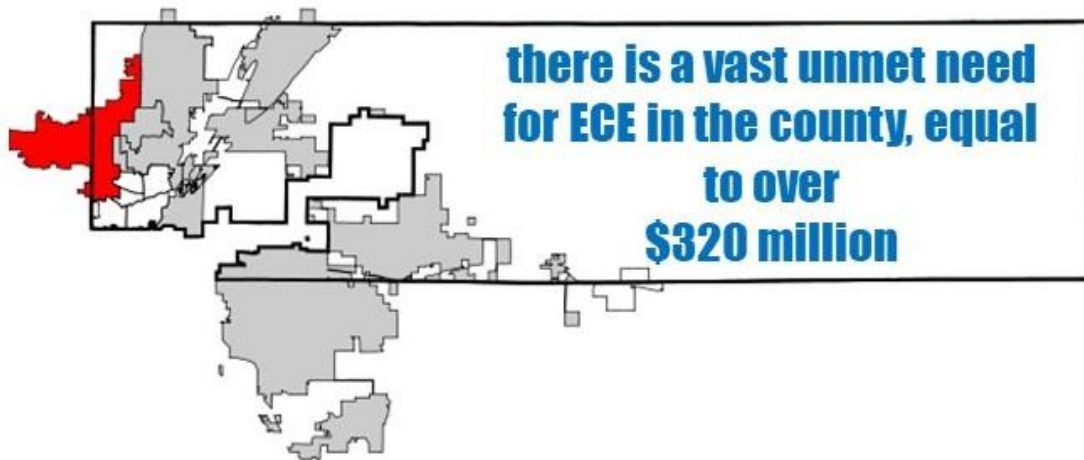
Unmet need can be quantified in several ways. Families classified as having need may lack access because care is not accessible or available near them, because it is too expensive, because no high-quality options are available near them, or because they require need outside of standard weekday hours.

We calculated unmet need using a three-step process:

1. Calculate total need (how many children need ECE) in the county, based on assumptions of full time or part time attendance and overall participation rates
2. Calculate current met need, defined in terms of the number of full-time slots that could be provided using current funding levels and market rates.
3. The amount of unmet need is equal to the total need minus the met need. This number can be expressed in terms of the number of children to be served, or the cost to meet that need.

The county contains approximately 44,156 children ages birth to five. Based on typical participation rates for public preschool programs, we estimate that a maximum of 75 percent would participate in such a program, or 33,110 children.

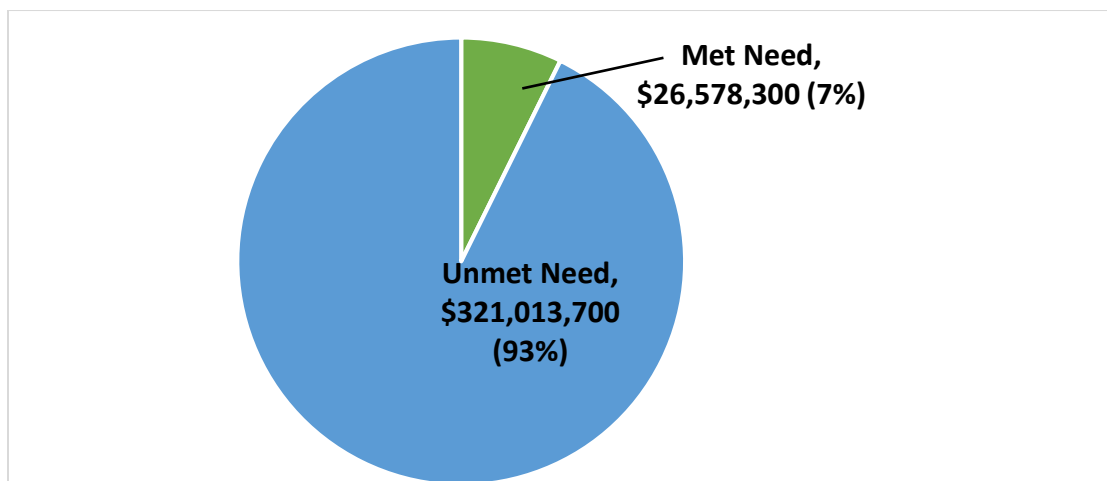
We assumed that 50 percent of these children would attend full-time, similar to the national average, at an average cost of \$11,884, the average cost for full-time care at a Level 3 center. The remaining 50 percent of children would cost \$9,032 each, the average cost for part-time care at a similar center. The total need for ECE in the county, therefore, totals about \$346,338,000.



Current public funding through the four major public funding streams for ECE in the county (CCCAP, CPP, Head Start, DPP) total only about \$25 million. Thus, there is a vast unmet need for ECE in the county, equal to over \$320 million.

Figure 12: Current Public Funding and Unmet Need for ECE

The pie chart shows the total amount of unmet need, assuming 75% of children attend ECE programs. 28 percent of the total cost of care for children currently enrolled is being met, but only 7% of the need for current and potential participants is being met.



Where the Need Is

Five cities, one town, and two unincorporated communities are wholly within the borders of Adams County. (Note that one of the unincorporated communities, Henderson, is not included because population data are not available). Table 18 shows the population, the current provision of licensed slots, the likely participants per slot. Bennet contains the lowest ratio of participants per slot (1.59). Of the communities in the metro area, Federal Heights has the worst ratio of children per slot, with only one slot per almost 10 likely participants. Across the entire county, the rural community of Strasburg has the greatest challenge of access, with over 12 likely participants per slot.

Table 18: Young Child Population and Available Slots in Adams County Communities

City	Number of Slots	Percent High Quality Rated	0-5 Population ^[i]	Likely Participants ^[ii]	Likely Participants Per Slot
Bennett	51	0.0%	108	81	1.59
Brighton	1,116	14.1%	2,836	2,127	1.91
Commerce City	1,343	39.7%	6,322	4,741	3.53
Federal Heights	103	85.4%	1,361	1,021	9.91
Northglenn	818	21.5%	3,488	2,616	3.20
Strasburg	175	30.3%	2,936	2,202	12.58
Thornton	3,486	36.6%	12,673	9,505	2.73
Westminster (Adams only)*	1,738	37.4%	4,819	3,614	2.08
Total	8,830	33.4%	34,543	25,907	2.93

* The 0-5 population for the portion of Westminster in Adams County was estimated by using population data for individual census tracts. The number of slots in the Westminster portion of Adams County was estimated based on providers' street addresses from the CDHS licensing database.

Note: This table shows the number of quality slots disaggregated by the 'city' field in the CDHS licensing database, while the table on page 23 shows the same data disaggregated by the 'district' field. Therefore, the difference between the two tables is that they are looking at the geography slightly differently.

Conclusion & Recommendations

High-quality ECE programs have lifelong benefits for children, families, and communities. Programs offer learning-rich environments for children during a time of rapid cognitive and social-emotional development. Moreover, they are critical for allowing parents to work, especially in single parent households. Greater workforce engagement, in turn, raises incomes for working families and helps drive the economy.

Unfortunately, quality ECE programs are out of reach for far too many Adams County families. The lack of viable options for families makes it more difficult to attain self-sufficiency, and allows too many children to enter kindergarten unprepared.

Although families face many challenges in accessing care, high costs are a central concern. Across Colorado, only about 28 percent of the current costs of care are covered by publicly supported programs such as CCCAP and CPP, and only 13 percent of income-eligible families (those with incomes up to 185 percent FPL) receive tuition subsidies. The vast majority of families are paying for ECE, with some paying more than 40 percent of their family income.

Access to ECE in the county is also hindered by a lack of available programs. While not all families need or want ECE for their young children, for those who do the choices are very limited. The 300 licensed ECE programs located in Adams County are licensed to provide about 10,688 slots, less than a third of the county's 37,000 children age birth to five. In order to serve 75 percent of families with young children, a common estimate of the true need for ECE within a community, Adams County would need to more than double the number of current slots to nearly 30,000. Even if half of these children attended part-time, the county's current capacity could serve only about half of the total need. One challenge with building capacity through starting new programs is an understanding on where to get started in the licensing process. Although there is a wealth of information to be found on websites, individuals typically need assistance navigating a very complex system. Rules and regulations can be interpreted numerous ways and there are regulations on several components of operating a licensed program including the building and facilities, classroom group size, materials and furniture, playgrounds, staffing credentials and training, policies and families files.

Research indicates that practical considerations such as cost and location are main drivers of parental choice, especially for working parents.⁴⁵ However, finding a location

close to either home or work becomes even more challenging when a family has limited transportation options and must find programs near public transit stations or routes. This is a particular problem in Adams County, where populations with high concentrations of poverty, such as those in South Thornton and South Westminster, also are likely to lack access to nearby ECE programs.

In spite of these challenges, many bright spots exist within the county's ECE landscape. The county still has nearly 4,000 high quality slots, about 37 percent of the total.

The county is fortunate to have a committed group of stakeholders, including advocates, funders, providers, and families, who understand the value of high-quality care for all children and are committed to helping improve the county's system.

Policy Recommendations

The following are practical recommendations drawn from the study's findings to help improve access to affordable, high-quality ECE in the county.

Note: Following completion of this report, ECPAC conducted focus groups with Adams County Families, Businesses, and Family Child Care Homes. The results appear in Appendix A.

1. Add Capacity by Creating New Programs

The most immediate challenge in the county's ECE system is the lack of high-quality licensed slots. Creating new programs in underserved areas around the county is an important element in addressing this challenge.

Family, friends and neighbor providers can serve more families by entering the licensing process. Currently, there is a local effort in Aurora to create a family child care home co-op to encourage more caregivers to become licensed. A recent effort by several school districts will add additional ECE classrooms, including District 12 Five Star Schools, which plans to open 12 new classrooms in the 2019-2020 school year, serving 192 additional children. Over the past two years, District 12 Five Star Schools has already opened 28 new classrooms serving 128 children and District 1 Mapleton has opened 20 new classrooms serving nearly 500 children between the ages of 12 months to five years.

Another way to add capacity is for local municipalities and other entities, such as home owners' associations, to reduce barriers to starting licensed family child care homes. These barriers include zoning and land use regulations. New construction is also an option to build capacity, although more complex and expensive. New multi-use developments could include plans for ECE space serving the families living and working in the new building. For example, a group on the Fitzsimmons Medical campus plans to open a new school to provide year-round care from preschool through middle school, with year round and with extended hours for the medical staff who work non-traditional hours.

If businesses cannot finance new construction, employers can consider financial assistance to their workers to help pay for the high cost of care. Such benefits aid employers as well as workers, who incur billions of dollars per year in lost wages due to difficulties in finding ECE.⁴⁶

2. Add Capacity by Expanding Existing Programs

While creating new programs is essential to addressing the county's ECE access problem, some additional capacity could be created without licensing entirely new programs. Building capacity in existing programs can include ensuring full enrollment; expanding classrooms; or creating new classrooms. Full enrollment not only increases the number of existing slots, but it is one of the three essential factors in the "Iron Triangle" that ensures financial sustainability for providers.⁴⁷

There are other practical, financially sustainable ways programs can expand their licensed capacity. For example, a program could reopen a classroom currently being used for storage, creating a new space that can be licensed to serve additional children.

3. Strengthen the Professional Workforce Pipeline

As capacity increases, qualified teachers will be needed to fill the new positions that have been created. Over the next 10 years, Colorado is expected to face a shortage of ECE professionals. Policies to strengthen the pipeline include concurrent enrollment programs for high school students interested in pursuing a career in ECE; creating new pathways to help teachers become qualified sooner; and providing tax incentives for ECE professionals to help offset low wages. Currently the average wage for full-time lead teachers in the metro area is \$13.70 per hour, resulting in many professionals living in or near poverty.⁴⁸ These professionals undertake critical work supporting the healthy

development of young children, which is the foundation of long term school success. The important role of ECE professionals is not recognized by their low wages.

4. Maximize CCCAP Utilization

Expanding enrollment in existing federal and state programs, including CCCAP and CPP, can greatly help meet ECE needs for low-income families through existing funding sources. Adams County is one of the few counties in Colorado that does not use its full allotment of CCCAP dollars. Encouraging more programs to accept CCCAP can help the county draw down all potentially available funds through this program. County CCCAP administrators can also help ensure that all available CCCAP funds are utilized annually.

5. Increase CCCAP Reimbursement Rates

Adams County has adopted the minimum allowable CCCAP reimbursement rates, based on the state's formula. However, low reimbursement rates are one of the primary reasons some programs do not accept CCCAP funding, and rates for family child care homes are especially low. While reimbursement rates have increased, they still fall below a program's true cost to provide quality care. Higher rates can help more children participate in ECE, and also support the financial sustainability of the county's ECE programs.

6. Increase the Number of Community Partners Using CPP

Many children in Adams County are enrolled in the Colorado Preschool Program, but school districts do not have the capacity to serve all eligible children. Districts need more options to contract with community programs. These options are limited because districts cannot contract with family child care homes, and may only contract with programs that meet quality standards. As providers increase their quality, more will be eligible to enroll students funded through CPP.

7. Implement Early Head Start in Adams County

Early Head Start is an evidence-based program that serves at-risk birth through three-year-olds. However, this program has historically not been available in Adams County. Through a recent federal partnership effort, a single school in Aurora provides Early Head Start services to families with young children. A concerted effort should be launched to bring federal Early Head Start dollars into more areas within the county to help serve this vulnerable population.

8. Improve Quality of ECE Programming

While ECPAC has been actively involved in supporting quality improvement in Early Care and Education Programs for many years, the data in this report highlights areas of the county and types of settings which may be in need of particular focus. Improving the number of quality programs available provides more options for families, creates improved outcomes for children's readiness for school, and increases funding opportunities for programs (CCCAP and for Center-based – CPP). Recommendations for business and state or local municipality investment will be important to help cover the needed costs of achieving and maintaining quality.

9. Increase the Number of Local Businesses Utilizing the Child Care Contribution Tax Credit

The Child Care Contribution Tax Credit is a unique public-private partnership created in 1999 to provide financial support for ECE programs from taxpayers, both individuals and businesses. Contributions can also be made to intermediary organizations registered with the Colorado Department of Revenue. In Adams County, this intermediary organization is ECPAC.

Taxpayers are incentivized to use this credit because they can claim a Colorado income tax credit up to 50 percent of their contribution. If a business donates \$1,000 to an ECE program or to ECPAC, the business could claim a \$500 tax credit. Given the generous percentage, both individuals and businesses can leverage their investments for a great return. For those programs receiving donations, the funds can be spent on meaningful quality improvements that benefit children, families, and staff.

-END-

Appendix A: Results from the Adams County Provider Survey

Families

During February and March 2019, the Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County (ECPAC) planned a total of 6 “Community Cafes” – similar to a focus group, with

- families not utilizing formal child care,
- families using the Child Care Assistance Program in paying for formal child care,
- families who are paying tuition for formal child care.

Several Cafes became interviews due to low registration. Involved families were both English and Spanish-speaking. Total families engaged in each group is as follows:

Child/Family Care Type	# attended Café	# interviewed
No formal care	14	2
Utilize CCAP	0	1
Pay Tuition	0	0

For families whose children are not in any formal care, the following themes arose:

- Childcare is too expensive – one parent saying “If I worked, I would be working just to pay for childcare.”
- There are not enough programs and especially affordable programs. This included both child care and preschool as well as after school programming.
- Some families are choosing to stay home with their child because they can spend more time with their children, feel their children are safer, and do not trust others to care for their children – the quality is too low.
- Several mothers noted that when their children are in school, they do plan to go back to work.

For the family who utilized the Child Care Assistance Program it was noted:

- She did not feel she had a choice in programs because there are so many waitlists. She was not happy with her son’s program but could not find another place for him to go.
- “For working parents, the cost is high and the income you bring home is very little. You must weigh if you put your child in a center with all the incurring costs, plus gas, food, extra clothes and other things – those add up.”

Businesses

ECPAC conducted two focus groups with local Businesses about what they are seeing in terms of the needs of working parents and how do they see their role shifting to accommodate a workforce with children. A total of 15 business members participated and one interview was completed.

Top themes regarding the most pressing issues for working parents include:

- The cost of childcare is too expensive for employees.
- There is no availability of programs and especially for families with infants. The waiting lists are over 9 months long.
- Earning any extra (ie: raises/promotions) does not equal what would be lost in benefits and therefore career advancement can be a disincentive.
- Health insurance in terms of quality and affordability once you have children can be too high of an expense so families are not getting the care they need.
- Self-care is the first to go by the way side as priority for all else takes over and this can impact employee well-being.
- New parents use up all paid leave during maternity/family leave and therefore when returning to work these employees have no sick/vacation time remaining, so if they or their child gets sick, they have to take time off without pay.
- There is little child care available for those who work evenings and weekends.
- There is little after school care program availability and childcare during school breaks or no school days make it very challenging to work a more set schedule.
- There is a “motherhood penalty” where women are paid less.

Top themes regarding the role of businesses include employers making changes to best support employees and all recognize they can't afford to lose and re-train new employees if they can't offer some of the following:

- Adjusted job structure and flexibility in work schedules.
- Ability to work from home and virtual opportunities.
- Infant at Work policy where employees can bring infant until mobile.
- Breastfeeding policies that create spaces and fridges for breastfeeding.
- Benefits that attract and maintain employees.
- A culture of trust and adaptability.
- Workplace balance - recognizing some positions allow for working from home, having flexible hours, bringing an infant to work, while other positions do not.

Family Child Care Homes

As this Report was wrapping up, ECPAC was engaged with a different contractor, Joining Visioning and Actioning (JVA) to conduct focus groups with Family Home Providers (FHP) – both those who are engaged with ECPAC and those who are not working with ECPAC. The purpose was to determine how ECPAC can more effectively reach and serve licensed family home providers. This is critical as ECPAC partners consider increasing capacity, quality, and affordability/cost of quality.

- The full report can be requested from admin@ecpac.org.

Here are a few of the results:

- Running their own business and all that this entails, including independence, flexibility and work from home, is a key motivator as well as an important challenge that they have trouble addressing.
- Drivers for joining “quality improvement” programs appear to be mostly professional growth to provide better care verses more extrinsically motivated.
- One of the most important barriers to accessing resources and engaging in supports is lack of navigation, technology, and finding information that is relevant to them - addressing differences from larger centers.
- For some disengaged providers, ECPAC is an unknown or unclear name and brand that is lumped with other organizations, which negatively impacts perceptions and reputation.
- Perceptions regarding CO Shines and other “quality improvement” supports are mostly negative among providers because they perceive there is too much work associated with few tangible benefits.
- The most reliable and trusted sources of information among LFHPs are other providers, which isn’t necessarily ideal, because information that is miscommunicated and misinterpreted may prove risky for children and families.

Key areas of opportunity for ECPAC most related to the policy recommendations are:

- Position ECPAC as a navigator among LFHPs, as well as other organizations in Adams County and more effectively engage LFHPs through their ability to form strong, personable relationships.
- Invest in business support for LFHPs to first ensure they have the structure in place that allows them the time to venture into engaging in work to meet additional requirements.

In the News

Soon after this Report was completed two studies were released from Ready Nation – A Council for a Strong America: 1) **The Economic Impacts of Insufficient Child Care on Working Families**; and 2) **Want to Grow the Economy? Fix the Child Care Crisis**.

- For more information: www.strongnation.org

Here are a few of the highlights:

“The top-line findings of a new study examining the economic impacts of the nation’s child care crisis on working parents, employers, and taxpayers describe the consequences. The verdict: an annual economic cost of \$57 billion in lost earnings, productivity, and revenue.

Each year:

- Working parents lose on average \$3,350 in lost earnings, in reduced productivity at work, and in more time looking for work. Across the 11 million parents, this annual burden is \$37bn.
- Businesses lose on average \$1,150 per working parent in reduced revenue and in extra recruitment costs. In aggregate, the burden on business is \$13bn.
- Taxpayers lose on average \$630 per working parent in lower income tax and sales tax. In aggregate, this amounts to reduced tax revenues of \$7bn.

Over the long-term:

- Working parents lose on average \$8,940 in lost earnings, reduced participation in the labor market, and in lower returns to experience. Across the 11 million parents, this annual burden is \$98bn.
- Businesses lose on average \$1,490 per working parent in reduced revenue and in extra recruitment costs. In aggregate, the burden on business is \$16bn.
- Taxpayers lose on average \$2,270 per working parent in lower income tax and sales tax. In aggregate, this amounts to reduced tax revenues of \$25bn.

Work Productivity

Child care problems substantially impair workers’ ability to be productive at work; this undermines their job stability.

- One-quarter of working parents report problems participating in education and training that would improve their productivity at work.

- One-in-five working parents report being reprimanded by a supervisor.
- One-in-seven working parents report having their pay or hours reduced.
- Almost one-in-ten report working parents report either being demoted or transferred or being fired or let go; together, just over one-in-ten report a significant job disruption.

Career Prospects

Child care problems adversely affect workers' decisions about their careers; this results in diminished job prospects.

- One-quarter of working parents report having to reduce their regular work hours, turn down further education or training, and turn down job offers.
- One-in-six working parents report turning down a promotion or reassignment to a preferred job.
- One-in-seven working parents report having their pay or hours reduced and quitting a prior job."

Endnotes

- ¹ Colorado Department of Education (January 2018). Found at <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/pupilcurrent>
- ² Franko, M., Brodsky, A., Wacker, A., & Estrada, M. (2017). Bearing the cost of ECE in Colorado: An economic analysis. Denver: Butler Institute for Families, Graduate School of Social Work, University of Denver. Found at http://earlymilestones.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/full_report_bearing_the_cost_2017.pdf
- ³ https://child360.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/laup_brief_positive_effects_of_early_education.pdf
- ⁴ American Community Survey, 2013-2017 5-year estimates.
- ⁵ Governor's Office, ECLC, Colorado Early Childhood Needs Assessment (2011). Found at https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/PF_MCH_Colorado-Early-Childhood-Needs-Assessment.pdf
- ⁶ American Community Survey, 2017 estimates
- ⁷ American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2018
- ⁸ United States Census Bureau, 2017 estimates
- ⁹ American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2013-2017)
- ¹⁰ American Community Survey 5-year estimates/Community facts table, Kids Count (2012-2016) and the US HHS Poverty Guidelines, 2018
- ¹¹ Colorado Kids Count, Colorado Children's Campaign (2018)
- ¹² Colorado Department of Education (2017-2018). Found at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/pupilcurrent>
- ¹³ Schlee, B., Mullis, A., Shriner, M. (2008). Parents social and resource capital: Predictors of academic achievement during early childhood. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 31(2), 227-234.
- ¹⁴ Kids Count Data Center. Found at <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#CO/2/0/char/0>
- ¹⁵ ECPAC (2018)
- ¹⁶ Child Care Aware of America (2018). The US and the High Cost of Child Care: A Review of Prices and Proposed Solutions for a Broken System. Found at <http://usa.childcareaware.org/advocacy-public-policy/resources/research/costofcare/>
- ¹⁷ The Self Sufficiency Standard for Colorado (2018). Found at http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org/sites/default/files/selfsuff/docs/CO18_SSS_Web.pdf
- ¹⁸ Center for American Progress (2016). Calculating the Hidden Cost of Interrupting a Career for Child Care
- ¹⁹ Colorado Child Care Market Rate Study (2018)
- ²⁰ CDHS Licensed Facilities Report, August 2018
- ²¹ CDHS Licensed Facilities Report, August 2018
- ²² CDHS Licensed Facilities Report, August 2018
- ²³ Colorado Department of Education, 2017-2018. Found at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/pupilcurrent>
- ²⁴ CDHS Licensing Database, August 2018
- ²⁵ Learning Policy Institute (2016). The Building Blocks of High-Quality Early Childhood Education Programs. Found at <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/building-blocks-high-quality-early-childhood-education-programs>
- ²⁶ CDHS Licensed Facilities Report, August 2018

-
- ²⁷ OPRE, MRP, Child Trends (2010). The Child Care Quality Rating System Profile. Found at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/colorado.pdf>
- ²⁸ Child Trends (2017). Colorado Shines Validation Study 2015-2017. Found at <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/colorado-shines-validation-study-2015-2017>
- ²⁹ NIEER State Preschool Yearbook (2017). Found at <http://nieer.org/state-preschool-yearbooks/yearbook2017>
- ³⁰ Franko, Brodsky, Wacker, & Estrada (2017).
- ³¹ Zero to Three (2017). Colorado Strengthens Child Care System. Found at <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/2009-colorado-reforms-child-care-subsidy-program>
- ³² Civic Canopy (2017). The CCCAP Stakeholders Series Report. Found at <http://www.civicanopy.org/our-work/>
- ³³ CDHS Licensed Facilities Report, August 2018. Monthly financial data are multiplied by 12 to obtain estimated annual averages.
- ³⁴ Adams County Head Start Annual Report (2017-2018).
- ³⁵ Colorado Department of Education (2018)
- ³⁶ Colorado Department of Education Data Request (2017-2018)
- ³⁷ Numbers are based on a CDE Data Request (2017). Exact numbers are likely to vary from year to year.
- ³⁸ The distribution of quality within each district is based on the distribution of all providers within each district's geographical boundaries, not just those directly operated by the school district.
- ³⁹ DPP Data Request December (2018)
- ⁴⁰ DPP Annual Report (2016-2017)
- ⁴¹ Colorado Department of Education Website (2014)
- ⁴² Combines both half-day and full-day slots
- ⁴³ Total funding is based on a statewide average spending per authorized slot of \$3,122 (\$88,539,954 funding for preschool CPP and ECARE for 28,360 slots)
- ⁴⁴ Estimated annual funding for DPP is based on the average monthly tuition credit of \$617 during the 2017-2018 school year, which is equivalent to \$7,404 per month. This may be an overestimate, as not all children are in DPP for the full twelve months. Found at <https://dpp.org/about-us/faqs>
- ^[i] Population figures are based on adjusted estimates of population under 5 years. Source: American Community Survey 2013-2017 5-Year estimates.
- ^[ii] The number of likely participants assumes a 75% enrollment rate.
- ⁴⁵ Forry, N. D., Tout, K., Rothenberg, L., Sandstrom, H., Vesely, C. (2013). Child Care Decision Making Literature Review. OPRE Brief 2013-15. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- ⁴⁶ Center for American Progress (2016). The Cost of Work-Family Policy Inaction. Found at <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/22060013/CostOfWorkFamilyPolicyInaction-report.pdf>
- ⁴⁷ Alliance for Early Childhood Finance (2010). The Iron Triangle. Found at http://www.earlychildhoodfinance.org/downloads/2010/IronTriangle_10.2010.pdf
- ⁴⁸ Qualistar (2016). Leading Colorado's Early Care and Education Workforce. Found at <https://healthychildcareco.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/LeadingColoradosECEWorkforce.pdf>