

Risk, Reach, and Resources

An Analysis of Adams' County Early Childhood Mental Health Investments

JULY 2019

About one in seven Colorado children needed mental health care or counseling in the past 12 months, according to their parents, and nearly a quarter of those didn't receive those services.

Which parts of the state need more early childhood mental health (ECMH) services? What services are already being provided? And who is funding these services?

This analysis from the Colorado Health Institute (CHI), produced in partnership with the Colorado Office of Early Childhood with support from The Piton Foundation, dives into these questions. The research reveals that **Adams County** may require additional investment in early childhood mental health.

Major Findings

- **Adams County** children face greater early childhood mental health risks on average than children in other parts of the state, but they benefit from many programs working to address those risks.

- The county scored poorly on seven of the nine risk indicators analyzed. For example, the county has some of the highest rates of births to teen mothers and women with limited education.
- Due in part to its large population of children, **Adams County's** per capita funding for programs for children ages zero to eight is just \$110, among the lowest in the state.

The Risks

CHI analyzed nine data indicators to understand and identify the needs of Colorado's families and children. **Adams County** children experience higher risks for early childhood mental health challenges compared to other counties because of several factors, including a high poverty rate and a significant number of young children who were suspended or expelled from school (see Table 1).

Table 1. Family Background and Mental Health Risk Indicators for Adams County and Colorado.

	Adams County	Colorado
Rate of live births to women ages 19 and younger per 1,000, 2013-2017	139.3	93.9
Percentage of live births to women with less than a high school diploma or GED, 2013-2017	19.30%	12.30%
Percentage of adults with four or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), 2014	12.00%	14.80%
Percentage of children living at or below 200% FPL, 2017	43.40%	34.40%
Percentage of new mothers who report feeling down, depressed, or hopeless often or always since new baby was born	12.20%	10.40%
Difficulties with emotions, concentration, behavior or being able to get along with other people, 2013-2017	19.10%	18.00%
Rate of students in grades K-3 who received in-school, out-of-school suspension, or expulsion per 1,000 children	46.9	35.6
Rate of substantiated abuse or neglect claims per 1,000 children	17.4	13.5
Percentage of parents who said there was a time in the past 12 months where the child needed mental health care or counseling, 2013-2017	10.60%	14.20%

Table 2. Programs Included in This Analysis.

Adams County children benefit from 11 of the 12 services and programs analyzed.

	Program	Current Presence in Adams County
Intervention and Treatment	Core Services	Offered by Adams County Human Services Department
	Preschool Special Education, Part B, Section 619	Offered by school districts in partnership with North Metro Community Services
	Early Intervention Colorado Part C	Social-emotional services offered by North Metro Community Services
Targeted Supports and Services	Expanding Quality in Toddler and Infant Care (EQIT)	Training/coaching for early care and education providers, offered by ECPAC
	HealthySteps	Offered by pediatric clinics in Adams County – Kaiser and Every Child Pediatrics
	Incredible Years	Offered as a classroom-based intervention in four school districts and as a parenting class in two school districts
	Nurse Family Partnership	Home visitation program offered by both Tri-County Health Department and Centura Health
	Parents as Teachers	Home visitation program offered by Growing Home
	SafeCare	Home visitation program offered by Family Tree
Systems Approaches	Project LAUNCH	Offered by the Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County – though funding ends September 2019
	LAUNCH Together	Not offered in Adams County

*See additional considerations below

Early Childhood Mental Health Program Reach

CHI examined the density of available early childhood mental health programs in a county as a proxy for service access. **Adams County** children benefit from a robust number of local early childhood mental health services for children and families.

CHI analyzed a dozen selected initiatives and programs based on a set of eligibility criteria, including their statewide focus and data availability. Of those programs, **Adams County** offers 11.

* Additional social-emotional promotion supports are available through parent education materials and parenting classes provided by community organizations. These supports are often available through grants, and only as funding is available.

* Additional intervention and treatment services are provided by Community Reach Center’s Early Childhood Services Program. The program is one of the largest early childhood programs provided by a community mental health center in Colorado. It’s funded primarily by Medicaid and some private insurers.

Early Childhood Mental Health Resources

Unlike some high-risk regions like the Southeast and San Luis Valley, **Adams County** has a among the lowest per capita spending on programs for children ages zero to eight in the state.

Adams County invests \$110 per capita. That is the total spending on the programs above (about \$7.2 million) spread across the more than 65,000 children ages zero to eight in the county.

The map below displays each county’s risk score overlaid with its concentration of investments. While **Adams County** has a similar per capita funding rate to other counties along the Front Range, its level of risk is much higher.

What’s driving the relatively low ECMH investment in Adams County? Questions remain:

- Is a growing population leading to a decreasing per capita investment?
- Are **Adams County** children receiving services outside of the county?
- Are these program budgets not wholly representative of the county’s ECMH spending?
- Is available funding insufficient to sustain current services?

These questions require a deeper dive at the community level to better understand the relationship between risk, reach, and resources.

