



CAREER NAVIGATION TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN TALENT IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION WORKFORCE

THE PROBLEM TO IMPROVE:

There are not enough qualified professionals in the early care and education field. Compensation is lower than other sectors and the demands of the job can be high. This lack of workforce is causing programs to close classrooms, shift staff between rooms, and placing overall stress on the field. Colorado already faces a dramatic shortage of at least thirty-nine thousand spots for infants and toddlers and will be further challenged by Universal Pre-K available in Fall 2023. Unfortunately, there are complex systems to navigate for professionals who seek to become qualified as an early childhood teacher.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:

Qualified professionals are critical for supporting children's overall physical and cognitive growth, as 90% of the brain development happens in the first five years of life. Infants and toddlers rely upon healthy relationships with caregivers. Through the provision of Universal Pre-K, equitable access will support more children to be ready for kindergarten. Furthermore, without early childhood educators, there is a shortage of available child care, which in turn challenges our economy because parents cannot rejoin the workforce. Further undue stress is placed upon working families.

THE STRATEGIES EMPLOYED:

Three Early Childhood Councils (Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County, Denver's Early Childhood Council, and Alliance for Kids, El Paso County's Early Childhood Council housed under the Foundations program of Joint Initiatives) came together to develop a best practices career navigation model to both recruit new professionals to the field and to support those in the field to advance towards a higher level of qualification. **Over a 12-month period, this collaborative:**

- Developed a relationship-based career navigation model in collaboration with community partners, with guiding principles that can be replicated in different communities and respond to cultural differences.
- Provided career navigation support to professionals entering or growing in the field of early childhood education.
- Demonstrated a proof of concept aligned with state priorities with data highlighting community needs, greatest barriers, effective supports, and promising practices.
- Identified and helped to address system complexities and policy barriers.



IMPACT ACROSS THREE COUNTIES

- A best practices model was developed and refined for replication in other communities.
- **237 professionals** supported in meeting career goals
- **93.5 % of professionals** reported greater confidence in achieving career goals
- **89 local and state partners** engaged to support improved systems/policies

CALL to ACTION

- Support conversations aimed at streamlining complex systems supporting early childhood educators.
- Elevate the value of career navigation to attract and retain talent in the early childhood education workforce to decision makers and funders.
- Continue investment in career navigation through CIRCLE grant or other opportunities.

To get involved or learn more , please contact:

ECPAC | DECC | JI/AFK

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CAREER NAVIGATION STORIES OF IMPACT



"The partnership that I have formed with ECPAC this past school year has been invaluable to my Early Childhood Education course. My students have had the opportunities to meet professionals within the early childhood industry and make connections with individuals who are excited and passionate about working with young children. Through this process, my students have been encouraged to ask questions, think about future career opportunities, and many have even obtained their first job in local childcare facilities. I am so incredibly grateful for the work that ECPAC does to advocate for Early Childhood Education in our community and support those entering the profession." - High School Teacher for Adams 12



During the 8-month pilot period, 60 individual providers received support from the Career Navigator - exceeding the expectation to support 25 providers. The top three areas of needed support included Scholarships, Career Pathways, and the Child Development Associate (CDA).

Towards breaking down barriers, ECPAC was able to develop a relationship with the Adams County Workforce & Business Center (WBC) and Division of Early Learning Licensing & Administration to promote alignment that allows childcare employers to participate with confidence in the WBC's Adult Internship Program. ECPAC also worked closely with Front Range Community College to support improved communication regarding offerings at the college to increase students' access to collaborative scholarships, college credit for the Child Development Associate (CDA), and new student enrollment processes.

ECPAC also hosted a Career Fair for Youth to increase recruitment into the Early Care and Education field that included 19 child care employers/resource agencies, 33 high school students from 3 local high schools, and 7 additional job seekers.

One Center Director who attended noted: "We hired three from the job fair and have since hired two more that attended. It was a lifesaver for the current staffing crunch."

Adams County Data

- A best practices model was developed and refined for replication in other communities.
- **44 professionals** supported in meeting career goals
- **100% of professionals** reported greater confidence in achieving career goals
- **26 local partners and 9 state/shared partners** engaged to support improved systems/policies