

Getting Started In the Colorado Preschool Program

A guide for early care and education programs who are interested in becoming community partners.

Revised April 2018



The purpose of this guide is to:

- Provide information and resources for current community partner programs and for early care and education who are interested in serving children funded through the Colorado Preschool Program
- Provide local school districts and district advisory councils with a tool to use in recruiting potential Colorado Preschool Program community partners

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What is the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP)?

The CPP was established to serve three and four year-old children who lack overall learning readiness due to significant family risk factors, who are in need of language development, or who are receiving services from the department of human services as neglected or dependent children and who would benefit from participation in the Colorado Preschool Program.

The Colorado Preschool Program provides funding to establish high quality early childhood education programs that serve children ages 3 and until the entry age for Kindergarten. A vital component of the Colorado Preschool Program is to strengthen families and support them as participants in their child’s education. The program currently serves 20,160 children and an additional 8,200 children through a flexible use arm of CPP called ECARE-Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement program. ECARE slots may be used for half-day preschool, full-day preschool and kindergarten. School districts may change how they use the positions from year to year.

In order to receive CPP funds, school districts are required to establish a district advisory council. The school district’s superintendent appoints the members of this council to two-year terms. For more information on district advisory councils, please visit the [District Advisory Council](#) section of the CPP Website.

Why do school districts collaborate with community preschool programs?

Collaborating with existing community early care and education programs allows families to choose program which best meet their needs. Families may need full day care for their children or may prefer to use a program, which also serves their younger infant and toddler children. Parents may prefer a program conveniently located in their neighborhood or closer to their place of employment.

It is the intent of the Colorado General Assembly and the Colorado State Board of Education to fund those districts that demonstrate collaboration within the community in order to assure effective use of the resources in the program. In fact, community partnerships are a cornerstone of CPP. About one third of the children funded through CPP receive services in community partner sites.

There is significant value in using existing and established Head Start and community early care and education programs, where available, and when deciding where to serve eligible children.

It is clear in CPP legislation that district advisory council decisions to contract with community partners are based on the program's ability to provide high quality services. Providers must be committed to using the [Colorado Quality Standards for Early Care and Education](#) as a program guide for ongoing quality improvement.

Districts may provide program services in three ways:

1. The district may provide all services in school district operated preschools (e.g. usually existing elementary schools). Special education, CPP, Title 1 funds, private tuition, etc., blend to operate these schools.
2. The district may contract out its entire program to community providers (e.g., Head Start or private childcare facilities) with proper support and monitoring.
3. The district may use a combination of district and community providers.

Colorado Preschool Program community partners include:

- Head Start Programs
- Early childhood programs including Head Start Programs that are located on Tribal Lands
- Non-profit child care programs
- For-profit child care programs
- Campus based child care programs and lab schools

Childcare programs or preschools in religious based facilities using religious curriculum are not eligible to become Colorado Preschool Program community partners.

Sections 7 and 8 of Article IX of the Constitution of the State of Colorado address this subject.

Section 7 provides as follows:

“Neither the general assembly, nor any county, city, town, township, school district or other public corporation, shall ever make any appropriation, or pay from any public fund or monies whatever, anything in aid of any church or sectarian society, or for any sectarian purpose, or to help support or sustain any school, academy, seminary, college, university or other literary or scientific institution, controlled by any church or sectarian denomination whatsoever; nor shall any grant or donation of land, money or other personal property ever be made by the state, or any such public corporation to any church, for any sectarian purpose.”

Section 8 of Article IX provides in part as follows:

“No sectarian tenets or doctrines shall ever be taught in the public school...”

School districts benefit from collaborating with community early care and education programs by:

- Working together to increase quality and coordination across the local early childhood system.
- Providing eligible families with access to full day/full year services that the local school district is unable to provide.
- Saving space and infrastructure costs over offering preschool programs on district campuses.
- Serving additional children in early childhood programs ensuring that a larger number of children are on track for success as they enter kindergarten.

How early care and education programs benefit from offering Colorado Preschool Program:

- Helping families who need full day/full year programs for their children.
- Limiting transitions for children who need full day/full year programs.
- Providing additional resources for quality that will benefit all children who attend the preschool program.
- Increased access to professional development opportunities offered by local district advisory councils/school districts for preschool program staff.
- Receiving a stable source of funding for preschool programs.
- Introducing new children/families to your preschool and child care program.

How are community partners compensated for offering Colorado Preschool Program to eligible children?

The amount of funding a community partner receives for providing services is determined by each local school district and varies substantially from one community to the next due to the funding (Per Pupil Revenue) in which school districts receive from the Colorado Department of Education varies depending on factors including:

- The cost to live in the district
- The number of students at-risk
- The total number of students in the school district

Although school districts are required to spend 95% of the Per Pupil Revenue (PPR) they receive for Colorado Preschool Program on direct services to children, the school district may provide services for its community partners including professional development, parent education,

supplies, curriculum materials and the support of a program coordinator. Thus, the amount per child paid to a community provider may be less than 95% of the school district's Per Pupil Revenue (PPR). Community partners who provide preschool services to children funded by CPP from more than one school district will likely find that each school district pays them a different rate for their services. For more information, see the section on [CPP Revenues and Expenditures](#) from the CPP website.

Whom do I contact if I am interested in becoming a Colorado Preschool Program Community Provider?

Local district advisory councils are responsible for choosing local preschool programs to become CPP community partners. This process varies from one school district to the next. Each district advisory council is required by statute to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) at least every two years inviting interested programs to apply to provide CPP services. It is up to each school district to decide whether it is most appropriate to contract all or some of its preschool slots to community partners and what criteria a community provider is required to meet in order to participate.

For more information, contact your school district's [CPP Coordinator](#).

Components of the Colorado Preschool Program

This is a brief outline of the major components and responsibilities for Colorado Preschool Program for more complete information please see the [CPP website](#).

Child Care Licensing

In order to provide CPP services, the Colorado Department of Human Services Division of Early Care and Learning must license a community partner. For information on becoming a licensed childcare provider, visit the [Division of Youth and Family website](#).

The requirement for childcare licensing by the Colorado Department of Human Services does not exclude early childhood programs located on tribal lands from participating in CPP. Tribal lands are sovereign nations and follow childcare licensing rules as determined by their local tribal government.

Group Size and Ratio

Legislation mandates that preschool classrooms with children funded by CPP have a maximum group size of 16 children with two teachers or one teacher per eight children. There are no waivers to override group size or ratio limits for CPP.

22-28-108. Criteria for district preschool programs

(II) The maximum number of pupils in a preschool class shall not exceed sixteen.

Service Hour Requirement

Legislation states that preschool classrooms serving children funded by CPP must receive 360 contact hours a year or approximately 10 hours per week (22-32-109 C.R.S). It is not appropriate to have children attend a single day per week for an extended-day schedule of 10 hours or more in order to meet the contact hour requirement for CPP. A more appropriate schedule would provide for 2 ½ to 3 hours of programming four days per week –Monday through Thursday or Tuesday through Friday. Offering a three ½-hour program on Monday, Wednesday and Friday would also offer young children consistency in their early learning program.

Quality of Program

The Colorado Department of Education’s [Quality Standards for Early Care and Education Programs](#) should be used as a guide by all programs offering Colorado Preschool Program services.

Local district advisory councils are responsible for monitoring the quality of services offered in Colorado Preschool Program classrooms. CPP statute requires district advisory councils to make a minimum of two onsite visits to each classroom-serving children funded by CPP each year. Additionally councils may use the one or more of the following in monitoring CPP classrooms:

- Colorado Shines
- Early Childhood Environmental Scale (ECERS) certified ratings which may be available through local Early Childhood Councils or Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
- Accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

School district classrooms and community partner preschool programs should use the same process for monitoring preschool program quality.

Results Matter

All CPP community partners must participate in Results Matter child assessment. The components of Results Matter include use of an on-line “authentic” child assessment and professional development. Programs interested in becoming CPP community partners should consult their school district’s CPP coordinator to find out which assessment their school district uses. For more information visit the [Results Matter website](#).

Staff Development

Local district advisory councils design a plan for the staff development of teachers in their school district classrooms and they should coordinate and offer professional development to staff in classrooms with children receiving CPP funds. Community partners with their own staff development plans should likewise coordinate and share opportunities. The Colorado Division of Child Care requires a minimum of fifteen hours of staff professional development yearly. Many district advisory councils provide opportunities in excess of the minimum required each year. For more information, see the [Staff Requirements section of the CPP website](#).

Family Involvement

In order to participate in Colorado Preschool Program, families must assume responsibilities in the education of their child. Local district advisory councils define the family's role in their district. CPP requires programs to have a written plan for family involvement. For more information, see the [Family Involvement section of the CPP website](#).

Family Support Services

Colorado Preschool Program community partners inform families of support services available in the community. The community partner, the local school district, and outside organizations and businesses may provide some of these services. Programs provide printed literature as well as referral to services when appropriate. For more information on Family Involvement/Support Services, visit the [Family Support section of the CPP website](#).

Family support services provided directly through school districts include special education services, on-site health clinics, food banks etc. Community based services include immunizations offered through public health, low-cost dental services, housing assistance programs etc.

Program Evaluation

How do children and families benefit from participation in your preschool program? District advisory councils are required to have a plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the preschool services they provide. Some school districts/district advisory councils accomplish this by:

- Documenting the development and learning of preschool children during the year using Results Matters assessments. For more information, see the [Results Matter website](#).
- Reviewing the assessment data of former Colorado Preschool Program participants such as nationally normed assessments.
- Collecting anecdotal information from kindergarten and other elementary teachers comparing children who participated in CPP versus those children who did not have this opportunity.
- Analyzing family satisfaction surveys.

Resources

In addition to the websites already mentioned, the following websites will provide useful information to current and prospective Colorado Preschool Program community partners:

[Colorado Preschool Program](#)

[Colorado Preschool Program Act](#)

[Colorado Quality Standards for Early Care and Education Programs](#)

[Colorado Early Learning and Developmental Guidelines for Birth-8](#)

[Colorado Department of Human Services: Division Early Care and Learning](#)



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