

Colorado Early Childhood Councils Quarterly Report: FY2008-2009—Third Quarter

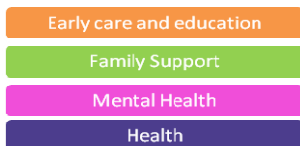


FY2008-2009, Third Quarter (January 1-March 31, 2009)

August 2009

The Role of Early Childhood Councils

According to authorizing legislation (HB07-1062), it is the role of Early Childhood Councils to “improve and sustain the availability, accessibility, capacity and quality of early childhood services for children and families throughout the state.” Early childhood services are defined by the legislation as including:



The Office of the Lt. Governor’s early childhood staff have developed an overview for understanding how these four service areas can work together to best serve Colorado’s young children and their families (*Early Childhood Colorado Framework*). The State’s Early Childhood Councils are an important part of this Framework, effectively building the foundations of the early childhood system at the local level so that more high quality services are available to more people.

The Colorado Department of Human Services and the Colorado Department of Education created a graphic (see next page) to describe the specific role Early Childhood Councils play within the overall Framework in developing a comprehensive system of early childhood services.

CREATING INTERNAL CAPACITY

An Early Childhood Council’s work begins by **creating internal capacity**. Here, the Early Childhood Council brings together local partners from each of the four service areas (domains) to make decisions about how to improve the availability, accessibility, capacity and quality of services locally (referred to as quality, access and equity in the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework*). The partners that comprise up the Early Childhood Council develop a structure for self-governance, collaborative communication, strategic planning, evaluation and resource development.

BUILDING FOUNDATIONS

The Early Childhood Council’s role continues as the partners **build the local foundations** for improving services for children and families. This work includes nurturing partnerships within and across the domains, making funding and investment decisions, improving policies that impact the creation of an early childhood system, engaging the public and stakeholders in collaborative efforts to improve local early childhood services, sharing responsibility for the effectiveness of Council decisions, and developing local leadership within the system.

IMPACTING SERVICES

Finally, the Early Childhood Councils **impact services**. Effective Early Childhood Councils have all community stakeholders working together to improve the availability, accessibility, capacity and quality of services. Early Childhood Councils may not actually delivering direct services to children and families (although they may, depending on the com-

(Continued on page 2)

Special points of interest:

As of the third quarter:

- 110 PEOPLE COMPLETED TOUCHPOINTS TRAINING THROUGH 9 CLASSES DELIVERED BY 5 COUNCILS .
- 132 INDIVIDUALS HAVE COMPLETED OUNCE SCALE TRAINING, REFLECTING THE DELIVERY OF 13 OUT OF 21 FUNDED CLASSES.
- 1,420 HOURS OF ENHANCING QUALITY FOR INFANTS & TODDLERS COACHING HAS BEEN CONDUCTED ACROSS 22 COUNCILS.

Inside this issue:

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Colorado Early Childhood Councils

EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCILS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN IMPLEMENTING THE COLORADO EARLY CHILDHOOD FRAMEWORK AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.

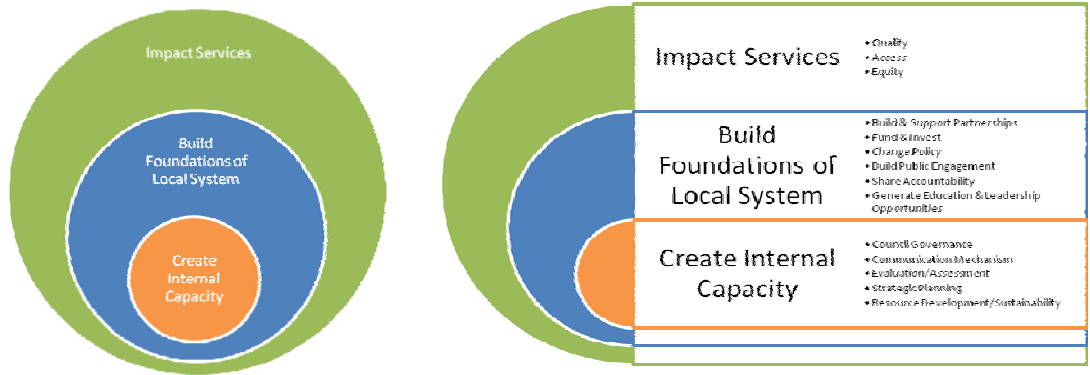
Council Role (continued from page 1)

munity and any gaps that need to be filled). Rather, the Early Childhood Council partners

work to insure that local services to young children and their families are plentiful, of

high quality, and easily available to anyone who needs them.

ROLE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCILS



This graphic representation of the role Early Childhood Councils play in building early childhood systems is a classic theory of change model: Creating internal capacity leads to the ability to build the foundations of a local system, which in turn leads to improved services for families and children.

Fiscal Agents — Councils' Financial Guardians

Colorado's Early Childhood Councils have quite a bit of flexibility — and variation — in terms of how they are fiscally structured.

Authorizing legislation only requires that each Early Childhood Council "select a fiscal agent to disburse funds and serve as the employer of the Council Director." In some cases, Councils have chosen to utilize local government agencies as their fiscal agent. Typically, these are county or city agencies that have other responsibilities for children in the community.

In the majority of cases (18),

Councils have elected to have some form of non-profit agency act as fiscal agent for the Council. Of these, six Councils have formed their own non-profit organization so that they are acting as their own fiscal agent. In the remaining cases, non-profit fiscal agents include United Way, Family Resource Centers, and Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.

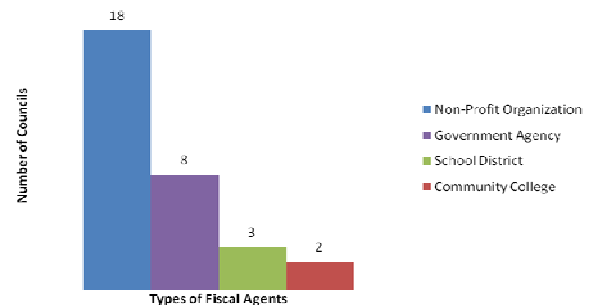
School districts act as fiscal agents for Early Childhood Councils in

three instances, while community colleges are fiscal agents for two other Councils.

There is not an identifiable pattern related to what kind of fiscal agent a Council selects. Instead, the decision is usually based on local factors and partnerships that are unique to each community.

SIX OF COLORADO'S EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCILS ARE THEIR OWN 501(C)(3) NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

Fiscal Agency Types



Non-profit organizations are the most common type of fiscal agent for an Early Childhood Council in Colorado.

Creating Internal Capacity

As described on the front page of this quarterly report, *Creating Internal Capacity* is the basis of all Early Childhood Council work. Without a core structure from which to work, Councils cannot effectively build the foundation for a local system of early childhood services, nor can they impact the quality, equity and availability of services.

Councils with strong internal have the governance, communication, strategic planning, evaluation and resource development tools necessary to build an effective early childhood system. As of the third quarter, all Councils report that they have recruited at least 10 partners as required by HB07-1062 from :

- Local Government
- Early Care and Education
- Health Care
- Parents
- Mental Health Care
- Resource and Referral Agencies
- Family Support and Parent Education

Additional partners participate in Councils across the state, including school districts, Chambers of Commerce, higher education, and libraries, among others.

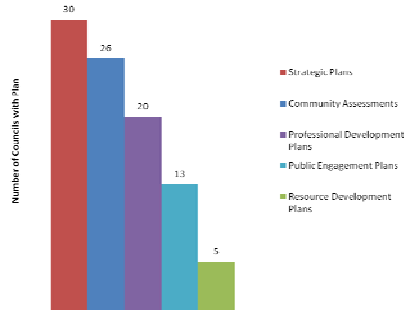
Another indicator of internal

capacity is whether a Council has a Steering Committee. Steering Committees (sometimes referred to as Executive Committees or Boards) are smaller than the full Council membership and typically play a leadership role in directing the work of the Council. The existence of a Steering Committee as part of a Council governance structure suggests that the Council can manage issues between regular meetings. It also implies an active leadership that works with Council Coordinators and other staff to implement goals and objectives.

As of the third quarter, 26 Councils had formed Steering Committees — up from 20 in the first quarter. Similarly, as of the third quarter 23 had bylaws to govern the internal

operations of the Council, and 25 had operating principles (essentially, codes of conduct). Like the existence of a Steering Committee, the existence of bylaws and operating principles reflect a level of self-governance that allows the Council partners to effectively build foundations for a cohesive local early childhood system that will impact services for children and families.

Council Planning



Most Councils now have Strategic Plans and Community Assessments. Only five Councils currently have plans that guide their resource development or sustainability.

With membership and governance in place, 30 Councils had created strategic plans as of the end of the third quarter. Strategic plans are the maps that community partners use to show exactly how they will build

partnerships, change policies, make investments, engage the public and improve the availability and quality of services. Typically, these plans are based on community assessments that tell partners where the existing system is working and where it needs help. This is true of the 26 Councils in Colorado that had completed a community assessment as of the third quarter.

Some Councils have created additional plans to specifically address some part of their operation. This is reflected in the graph above titled "Council Planning."

ON AVERAGE, 75% OF THE MEMBERS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCILS PARTICIPATED IN THEIR COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS.

Case Study — Collaboration in Action in Larimer County

“BECAUSE OF THE
RELATIONSHIP

THAT WAS
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THE SCHOOL
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COMING SCHOOL
YEAR.”

LORNA GREENE,
EARLY CHILDHOOD
COUNCIL OF LARIMER
COUNTY

Thompson School District has been an active partner with the Early Childhood Council of Larimer County for some time, and their involvement in the Council has supported efforts that did not always directly benefit them.

At the same time, the school district’s goal was to get all of its early childhood paraprofessionals group leader qualified. When the Early Childhood Council of Larimer County (ECCLC) was awarded a grant from the Loveland-based Erion Foundation to provide scholarship assistance specifically to Thompson School District early childhood paraprofessionals, the district was thrilled.

Working closely with the School District, the ECCLC brought Front Range Community College into discussions to provide ECE101 for interested

paraprofessionals on-site at the district administration building in Loveland. The district, for its part, gave participating staff paid leave time to attend classes and provided meeting space. They also arranged for their paraprofessionals to be able to register on-site, so they didn’t need to travel to the Community College.

Following that success, this Spring, with funding from the Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation, both Thompson School District and Front Range Community College worked hard to offer a late starting ECE 103 class on-site at the school district.

According to Lorna Greene, Professional Development Coordinator at the ECCLC, “None of this would have worked had the three entities not gotten together.”

All of the partners at the table have benefited from the partnership:

- The Erion Foundation got to support its education mission in Loveland, CO;
- Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation continued to support increased education for early care and education providers;
- The Thompson School District has a staff of paraprofessionals who are working toward becoming group-leader qualified, raising the quality of learning for the children it serves;
- Front Range Community College got an opportunity to work directly in the community — a key part of its own mission; and
- The ECCLC was able to build new partnerships, increase investments in early childhood, and positively impact the quality of early childhood services in the County.

**Learn more about Colorado’s Early
Childhood Councils at:
www.cde.state.co.us/early/ECC.htm**

Colorado’s Early Childhood Councils integrate services delivered through a comprehensive early childhood system that includes quality care and education, family support, health and mental health programs. Authorizing legislation calls on the Councils “To develop and ultimately implement a comprehensive system of early childhood services to ensure the school readiness of children five years of age or younger.” (HB 07-1062)

The Early Childhood Councils program is funded by Child Care Development Block Grant/Child Care Development Funds and is administered at the state level by a partnership between the Colorado Department of Human Services and the Colorado Department of Education.