

# EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING AND HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

**Child Care and Preschool:** Everyone benefits when Colorado families have access to affordable, high-quality child care and preschool.



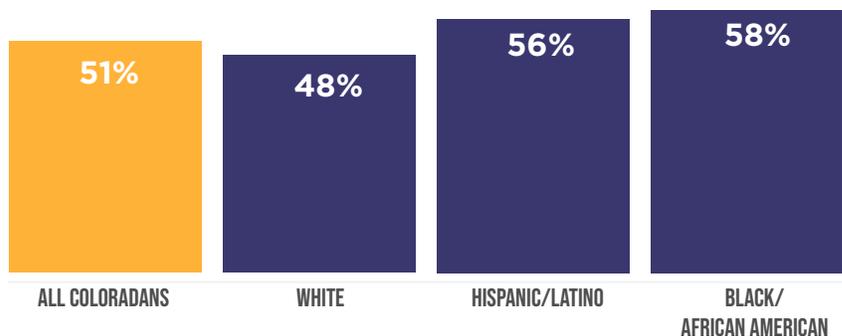
Child care and preschool allow parents to work and ensures kids are in stimulating, safe environments during the day. However, too many Colorado families can't find affordable, quality early care and education close to where they live or work and the COVID crisis has disrupted the already fragile early childhood sector.

By supporting access to quality child care and preschool, with a particular focus on families with very young children, we can help families succeed economically and support young children's healthy development.



## HALF OF COLORADANS LIVE IN CHILD CARE DESERTS, AND BLACK AND HISPANIC/LATINO COLORADANS ARE MORE IMPACTED THAN OTHERS.

PERCENT OF COLORADANS LIVING IN CHILD CARE DESERTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2018



Source: Center for American Progress.

- Due to systematic barriers to equal opportunity, lack of child care and preschool has a disproportionate impact on the economic opportunities of families of color. Black parents who have problems finding early care and education quit their jobs, do not take employment or change their work at a rate double that of White parents facing a lack of care.<sup>1</sup>
- Instability in child care and preschool arrangements has only exacerbated the challenges families already face in accessing early care and education opportunities for their children so that they can work, with more than half of ECE programs contemplating closing and uncertainty over how many will survive the pandemic.<sup>2</sup>

ECE provides a great return on investment during the economic recovery. For every job created in the Colorado early care and education sector, 1.5 jobs are created in the state's economy.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/news/2020/06/29/486977/child-care-disruptions-hurt-parents-color/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/nationwide-survey-child-care-in-the-time-of-coronavirus/>

<sup>3</sup> [http://earlymilestones.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/full\\_report\\_bearing\\_the\\_cost\\_2017.pdf](http://earlymilestones.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/full_report_bearing_the_cost_2017.pdf)

## Early Childhood Educators: Our early childhood educators provide the stimulating experiences children need to thrive and that parents rely on so they can work, but are facing unprecedented challenges.

Despite early childhood experiences laying the foundation for children's school readiness, inadequate compensation and low levels of support for recruiting and retaining educators undermine the profession.

Investments in early care and education and policies that help recruit, retain, and adequately compensate educators can improve the availability, affordability, and quality of child care and preschool.

- Demand for early childhood educators and directors is expected to increase by nearly 20% over the next 10 years. That is faster anticipated growth than for K-12 educators.<sup>4</sup>
- The early care and education sector is comprised almost exclusively of women, 40 percent of whom are people of color. Failure to invest in this profession undermines the economic opportunity of early educators and their ability to support the education of the children in their classroom.

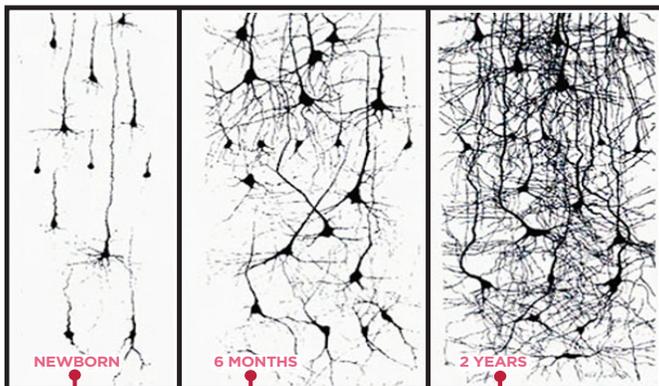
These educators represent the most racially diverse sector of the teaching workforce, compared to K-12 and postsecondary education, but early educators are among the lowest-paid professionals in every state, including Colorado.

Quality learning early on in life sets children up to do better in school and beyond. Parents will not return to work without access to quality educators that they trust to support their children's healthy development. These early childhood educators are the backbone of our economy.

## Supporting Families with Young Children: Every parent strives to support their child as best as they can, but children don't come with operators' manuals. Parents rely on family members, colleagues, health and early childhood professionals to help them develop skills and make decisions to best meet their children's needs.

Access to early screening and referral services, voluntary, evidence-based home visiting programs, early intervention, and early childhood mental health services provide families with supports and services to help foster healthy child development. Early identification of child needs and connections to services encourage bonding between parents and a new baby, promote positive parenting practices, support parental health and well-being, and prevent child maltreatment.

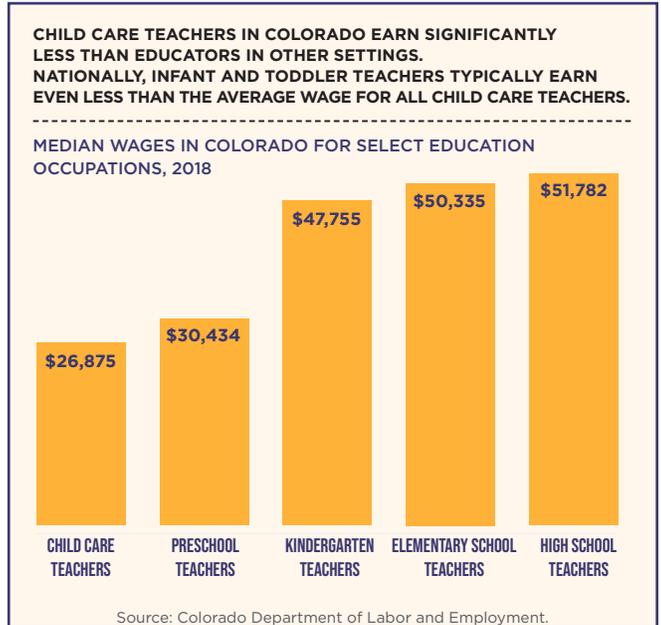
**+1,000,000** MORE THAN 1 MILLION NEW NEURAL CONNECTIONS ARE CREATED IN YOUNG BRAINS PER SECOND



Source: Harvard Center on the Developing Child, <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/five-numbers-to-remember-about-early-childhood-development/>

- Evidence-based home visiting services and early intervention programs have a track record of success in improving outcomes for children and families, but are unfortunately limited in their reach in Colorado. Colorado served only an estimated 8,810 of the 316,900 families who could benefit from access to home visiting services.

Early identification of developmental delays or mental health challenges in young children helps put children on a path to future success. Unfortunately, our system has gaps in screening, referral, and care coordination services that can interfere with parents' efforts to support their children's healthy development.



<sup>4</sup> <https://www.colmigateway.com/vosnet/analyzer/results.aspx?session=occpj>