

EARLY CHILDHOOD



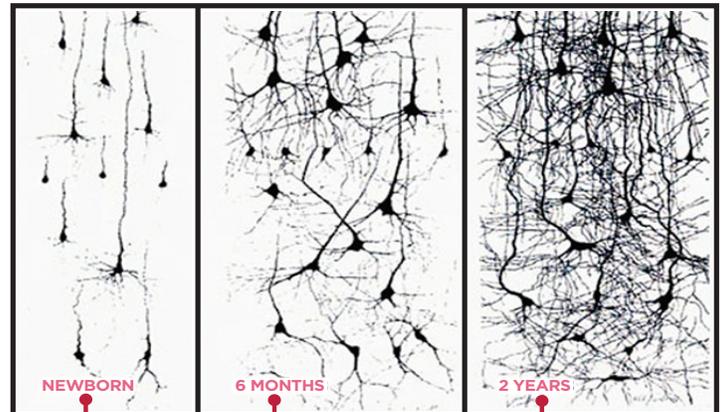
ACCESS TO CHILD CARE, PRESCHOOL, AND FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS HELP COLORADO'S CHILDREN AND FAMILIES THRIVE.

CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION ACCESS

In the first years of life, more than one million new neural connections are formed every second, setting the stage for children to acquire skills like working memory, language development, and self-control. The early years are the most effective time to invest in nurturing, high-quality care and learning experiences and in the early identification of young children's developmental delays or mental health challenges. These investments support educators and families in laying a strong foundation for later learning and life success.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated strain on the child care system, licensed child care capacity in Colorado was significantly limited. **Between 2016 and 2020, Colorado's licensed child care centers, family child care homes, and preschools only had enough capacity to serve 60% of the kids under 6 who likely needed care.** During the height of the Omicron variant surge in January and February 2022, nearly half of Colorado households with children under 5 reported that their child care arrangements had been disrupted for at least one child in the household at some time in the previous four weeks.

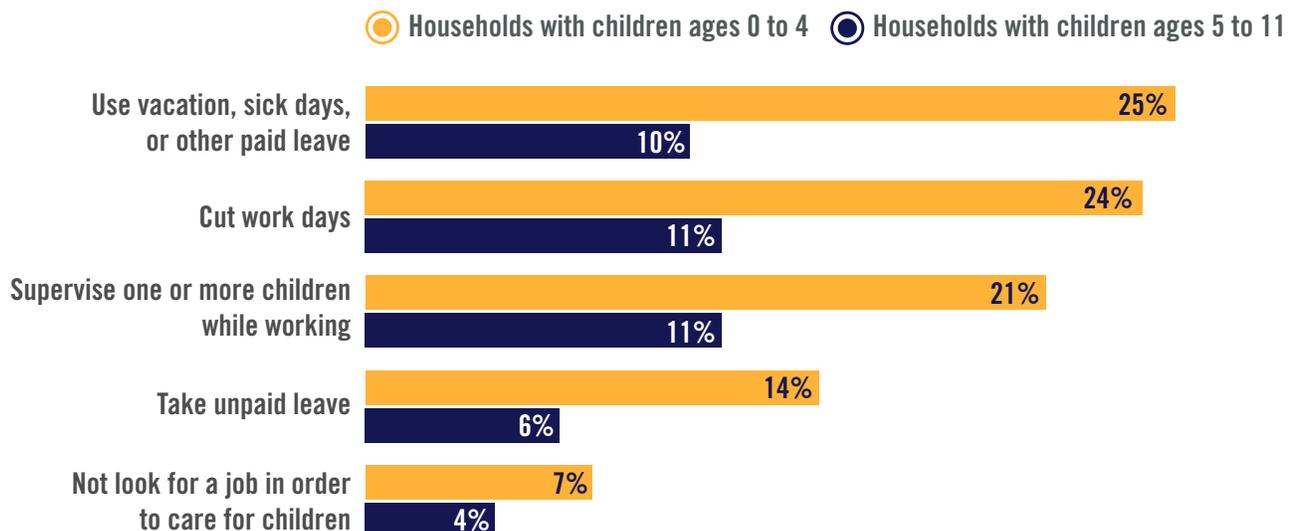
+1,000,000 MORE THAN 1 MILLION NEW NEURAL CONNECTIONS ARE CREATED IN YOUNG BRAINS PER SECOND



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

NEARLY TWO YEARS INTO THE PANDEMIC, PARENTS OF COLORADO'S YOUNGEST CHILDREN WERE STILL DEALING WITH FREQUENT EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES RELATED TO CHILD CARE DISRUPTIONS CAUSED BY COVID-19.

PERCENT OF COLORADO HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN UNDER 5 WHO REPORTED VARIOUS EMPLOYMENT IMPACTS RELATED TO CHILD CARE DISRUPTIONS, JANUARY–FEBRUARY 2022



Source: Population Reference Bureau analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, 2022.

EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE

Colorado's early childhood workforce is vital to our state's economy, families, and communities. However, inadequate compensation and low levels of support for recruiting and retaining educators continue to hold back the profession. Failure to invest in this profession undermines our economic recovery and the economic opportunity of early educators and the families they serve. Because of this lack of investment, early childhood educators leave their jobs four times more frequently than other educators.

The use of paid early care and education is highly correlated with women's labor force participation. The child care workforce is comprised of 96% women (who are primarily women of color), and more than half of young children whose mothers work full-time and rely on paid child care. Investments in providers are investments in women's economic self-sufficiency. **Supporting policies that help recruit, retain, and fairly compensate educators across all care settings will improve the availability, affordability, and quality of child care and preschool and ensure that our state's economy can continue to recover from the pandemic.** Additionally, the early childhood educator workforce provides a great return on investment – for every job created in this sector, 1.5 jobs are created in Colorado's economy.

The state's new Department of Early Childhood is poised to transform our state's early childhood system so that all Colorado families can have access to high-quality early care and learning opportunities in the setting of their choice. **To ensure this transformative vision is realized, especially for families in Colorado who have historically faced barriers to accessing care and support, state and local leaders must provide sustained investment and support for the new department.**

COMPENSATION OF COLORADO'S EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE DOES NOT REFLECT THE VITALLY IMPORTANT ROLE THEY PLAY FOR OUR STATE'S CHILDREN, COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMY.

MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGES FOR SELECT EDUCATION OCCUPATIONS IN COLORADO, 2020

Child Care Teacher	\$29,795
Preschool Teacher	\$33,570
Kindergarten Teacher	\$49,057
Elementary Teacher	\$53,253

Source: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment. Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics Program, 2020.



For more information, go to www.cokidsvote.org. Follow our KidsFlash blog for more weekly updates on issues relating to kids and families across Colorado at bit.ly/joinkidsflash. Contact info@coloradokids.org with any questions.



1580 Lincoln Street, Suite 420
Denver, Colorado 80203

303.839.1580
www.coloradokids.org