

## Project Abstract

**Project Title:** Colorado Shines Brighter

**Applicant Name:** Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Early Childhood

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The State of Colorado is applying for \$8,171,540 through the Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five funding opportunity and will provide a nonfederal contribution of \$2,468,395 to implement *Colorado Shines Brighter*. The project will lead to the achievement of Colorado's vision for young children aged birth-to-five and project outcomes which focus on the following areas: *Meaningful and Equitable Access to High Quality Formal Care* - Colorado families have access to quality formal early childhood care and education settings of their choosing which best meet the needs of their child and family, especially those who are vulnerable and infants and toddlers; *Informal Care Supports for Enriching Environments* - Informal early childhood care and education environments (family friend, and neighbor (FFN) and parental care) are enhanced to enrich and support children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development; and, *Coordinated and Aligned Systems* - Colorado's B-5 early childhood state system is coordinated and aligned to enhance the resources available to families and to improve the quality of relationships among families, caregivers, and children.

The project will consist of a needs assessment and strategic planning that will coordinate and align programs and systems to reduce gaps in services for vulnerable children and families. Other activities will improve the quality of early care and learning settings, maximize parental choice and knowledge, share best practices, and improve the transition experiences for children and their families beginning at birth through entry into elementary school.

To maximize parental choice and knowledge the project will build upon Colorado's consumer education and engagement efforts and will develop a "no wrong door" entry point to high-quality early childhood care and learning programs and services that support children B-5 and their families. Other initiatives implemented through the project will share best practices. These activities include strategies focusing on financing child care slots, professional development and early childhood professional competencies and credentials, revisions to the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), and expansion of evidence-based and promising programs. The strategies support improved interactions and relationships between caregivers/teachers and children, families, and partners by integrating supports across early childhood system components. Lastly, the project will improve the overall quality of the early care and learning and family support systems in Colorado by increasing family and engagement in their child's early learning using activities that take place in community-based settings, and through enhancement of the state's information technology system. Each *Colorado Shines Brighter* strategy supports implementation of the CCDBG Act and builds upon work already underway within the state's slate of early childhood initiatives.