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COLORADO EVALUATION
AND ACTION LAB

Colorado Lab Newsletter

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Featured in this newsletter

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Center for Policy Research Selected as TF-CBT Evaluation Team



The Colorado Lab is guiding and coordinating the ongoing rigorous evaluation of evidence-based services that are part of Colorado's Family First Prevention Services Plan, in partnership with the Colorado Department of Human Services. In our [October newsletter](#), the Colorado Lab released a call for external research partners to support us in executing our evidence-building work with state and local partners, including opportunities with Family First. We are delighted to announce that the [Center for Policy Research](#) (CPR) has been selected as the

research team to design and conduct the evaluation of Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT). TF-CBT is a named service in Colorado’s Prevention Services Plan and has been prioritized for evidence-building as part of expanding the mental health service array. CPR holds nearly four decades of experience in rigorous evaluation, primarily in child welfare and child support.

“CPR is an ideal partner to help build evidence for TF-CBT. They have strong relationships with Colorado providers, see the promise of TF-CBT for Colorado’s children, youth, and families, and have the expertise needed to ensure a successful evaluation that meets state and federal needs,” says Dr. Courtney Everson, Senior Researcher and Project Director with the Colorado Lab. The TF-CBT evaluation will kick off this month with CPR leading out on design and capacity-building to prepare for full launch in later 2022. The Colorado Lab is grateful to the highly qualified teams that applied to this opportunity and we look forward to activating additional partner expertise in future efforts.

You can learn more by reading the Lab’s report, [Strategy for the Evidence-Based Aspects of the Family First Service Continuum](#), or reach out to [Dr. Courtney Everson](#).

RISE Funders Convening



The Colorado Lab was honored to host Governor Polis and philanthropists at a convening on January 6th to discuss progress on [Colorado’s RISE](#) project. RISE—the Response, Innovation, and Student Equity fund—has awarded over \$40 million to address the learning challenges in pre-K-12 through higher education related to the economic, social, and health impacts of COVID-19. The fund is sponsored through the

federal Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Funds. The Colorado Lab is supporting the change efforts of 10 RISE grantees with generous funding provided by the Anschutz Foundation, Gary Community Ventures, Gates Family Foundation, and Wend Collective.

RISE grantees include schools, school districts, and public institutions of higher education, each working to create sustainable innovations to improve student learning, close equity gaps, and enhance operational efficiencies. Projects range from providing extended learning opportunities –such as after school, summer school, and early childhood education—to social-emotional learning/mental health support and career pathway programs that prepare students to succeed during and after high school, no matter which path they choose.

“Low income, rural, English Language Learners, and other underserved students need us to think outside of the box—this is what gave birth to RISE,” Governor Polis said as he kicked off the convening. “This work to support schools and districts in doing something different, to break down silos between districts, higher education, and the workforce, will pay dividends for the long term.” The Governor underscored to funders the importance of philanthropy partnering with the public sector, noting that no one sector alone can achieve change of this scale. He also emphasized the critical role evaluation plays, remarking that

“learning from successes and failures is important to replicating what works.”

Dr. Kristin Klopfenstein, Director of the Colorado Lab, told funders that successfully launching and sustaining these types of innovations is a tall order for educators stretched to meet basic requirements amidst the continuing challenges of the pandemic, especially staff turnover and shortages. “The role of the Lab is to support and guide RISE grant partners in navigating these complex and often frustrating environments,” she said. “We begin by meeting partners where they are, helping teams to generate ideas, build evidence of what works, and share learnings. Throughout the journey, we have been serving as a thought partner and working closely with teams to troubleshoot and address barriers to implementation and build processes to ground the work in data.”

“The ultimate goal for each grantee is to build evidence to position their new approaches for effective implementation and long-term success and sustainability. As Governor Polis noted, we also are capturing data and lessons learned so that other schools and educational institutions might benefit from similar approaches.”

We are featuring efforts underway by each RISE grantee, including a focus on the Southwest Colorado Education Collaborative below. We encourage you to read these articles and learn along with us as the RISE grant projects continue to unfold. If you would like to learn more about the Lab’s RISE work, please contact [Dr. Kristin Klopfenstein](#).

The Colorado Lab supports these RISE grantees in the effective implementation and long-term success and sustainability of their projects.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A coalition of charter schools including AUL Denver, Colorado High School Charter Academy 360, Girls Athletic Leadership Schools, RiseUp Community School, Highline Academy• Adams 14 School District• Bennett 29J, Strasburg 39J, and Weld RE-3J School Districts• Centennial BOCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bayfield, Silverton, Ignacio, Durango and Archuleta School Districts, with Pueblo Community College and Fort Lewis College• Montezuma-Cortez High School• Montrose County School District• New Legacy Charter School• Ute Mountain Ute Tribe• West Grand School District
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RISE Partnership to Strengthen Career Pathways in Southwest Colorado

In Colorado, an estimated three out of four jobs require education or training beyond high school ([Colorado Department of Education](#)). Yet students in rural communities face an array of obstacles and disincentives to obtaining additional training, including:

- Their parents and other relatives didn’t go to college.
- They face barriers such as limited access to financial resources, broadband internet, and child care.
- They don’t live close to institutions of higher learning or diverse career opportunities.

The result? Only 19% of students who attended high school in a rural community in the United States hold a college degree, compared with an average of 33% nationwide ([Lumina Foundation](#)).

The [Southwest Colorado Education Collaborative](#) aims to change this equation. With a Colorado RISE grant providing support, this new nonprofit is working together with five school districts (Ignacio, Bayfield, Silverton, Archuleta, and Durango 9-R) and two higher education partners (Fort Lewis College and Pueblo Community College) to share a broader pool of resources, build partnerships with local industry leaders, and design easily accessible, interesting ways for rural students to engage in relevant career and college pathways.

The strength and promise of these communities banding together is significant. Nearly half (46%) of the 9,000 K-12 students in the region live in families that experience a higher-than-average rate of poverty. As well, Fort Lewis College is the most diverse public liberal arts college in the nation, with its student body comprised of 53% students of color and over 40% Native American students (the largest percentage of Native American students served nationally by any non-tribal institution). Understanding the region’s demographic makeup and economic needs is essential to meeting communities where they are and to developing, expanding, and sustaining trusted partnerships to better serve young people.

The Lab is supporting the Collaborative and its partners in building the infrastructure and capacity needed to monitor progress and generate creative solutions to sustain and scale the work. This includes building systems to gather evidence that the career pathways created for high school students are effective and responsive to local student and labor force needs. Indicators will include metrics like increasing enrollment and success in college or certificate programs and increasing the number of students who go on to earn a living wage. With a focus on engaging students in work-based learning and guiding them with specific academic advising toward higher education and career training opportunities, Collaborative partners are dedicated to building the skills that prepare young people to enter the workforce and providing rural students with equal access to opportunities to build their futures.

To learn more about RISE and the Lab’s support for the Southwest Colorado Education Collaborative, contact [Dr. Kristin Klopfenstein](#).



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University of Denver
Frank H. Ricketson Law Building
2255 E. Evans Ave
Denver, CO 80208

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