



# UNIVERSITY *of* DENVER

## COLORADO EVALUATION AND ACTION LAB

### Colorado Lab Newsletter

March 2022

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- Job Opportunity: Postdoctoral Researcher to Support RISE
- Jeffco's Preventive Legal Services Pilot Program Launches
- Fostering Learning & Alignment Among DAs' Offices
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### Toward a Fair and Just Justice System

Our criminal justice system is meant to keep all communities safe, foster prevention and rehabilitation, and ensure fair and equal justice. Building evidence on what works—and having a data-informed understanding of inequities—are key elements to moving toward fair and just judicial policies, systems, and practices. In this month's newsletter, we feature a few of the justice system projects underway at the Colorado Lab. We applaud the state and local government agencies and other community stakeholders we partner with for their willingness to be vulnerable in exploring what the data show. Our goal is to build relationships and work collaboratively toward identifying pathways to serve people better and fairly. You can see descriptions of all Colorado Lab justice system projects [here](#).

### Tom Clements Award Winners to be Announced

#### *Watch for our blog post*

In our next blog post, out later this month, Colorado Lab Director Kristin Klopfenstein shares how her experience as a judge for this year's Tom Clements Award left her feeling incredibly hopeful. The award recognizes the work of individuals and teams who enhance the performance and outcomes of state government. It honors the life and service of Tom Clements who, after a 30 year career in the public sector, was tragically killed while serving as Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Corrections.

The award winners be revealed along with inspiring examples of state government working effectively. Be sure to check it out!



Tom Clements, former Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Corrections

## Job Opportunity: Postdoctoral Researcher to Support RISE

The Colorado Lab seeks to add a postdoctoral researcher to support evidence-building among recipients of [Response, Innovation, and Student Equity \(RISE\) Education Funds](#). To address the learning challenges related to the economic, social, and health impacts of COVID-19 and promote innovation, Colorado has awarded over \$40 million in RISE grants to educational institutions using federal Governors Emergency Education Relief Funds. The Colorado Lab is supporting 10 awardees in moving their programs along the [steps to building evidence](#) to support sites in successfully implementing and sustaining their projects, for example, by establishing implementation teams, clarifying intended outcomes and core components, and building a sustainable data infrastructure.

The position will support project leads in working deeply with RISE projects focused on K-12 career-connected learning, while building a portfolio of peer-reviewed publications under the mentorship of experienced Colorado Lab staff. The successful candidate will start as soon as possible with funding secured through June 2023 with the possibility of an extension based on funding.

For best consideration, application materials should be submitted by **12pm MST Monday, March 28, 2022**. Click on the Apply Here button to see the full position listing and additional details.

[Apply Here](#)

## Jeffco's Preventive Legal Services Pilot Program Launches

The Office of Respondent Parents' Counsel (ORPC) is accepting referrals for indigent parents in Jefferson County whose unmet legal needs may be affecting the safety of their children. The pilot program launches this month and aims to connect parents to preventive legal services and keep families together by addressing legal problems such as housing and eviction, custody and visitation, guardianship, parentage/paternity, and orders of protection. The goal is to safely reduce child welfare involvement and removals of children.

The Colorado Lab is working with ORPC to evaluate the pilot program in order to better understand its implementation and preliminary outcomes. Results and lessons learned will be used to inform program improvement in Jefferson County and potentially scale the program across the state.

To learn more about the Preventive Legal Service Program, contact ORPC at [intake@coloradoorpc.org](mailto:intake@coloradoorpc.org). To refer a parent, access the [application here](#). You can learn more about the Colorado Lab's evaluation of the Jefferson County pilot program by reaching out to [Dr. Lauren Gase](#).

## Fostering Learning & Alignment Among DAs' Offices

The Colorado Lab is working with eight District Attorneys' (DAs) Offices in Colorado to develop data dashboards to assist them with tracking progress toward greater efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness. Last month, we facilitated the second cross-jurisdiction learning meeting with elected DAs and implementation leads from each pilot site. The meeting provided an opportunity for offices to hear from, connect with, and learn from each other.

Meeting participants dug into data-related challenges and opportunities, for example, working together to develop a shared definition of violent crime, identify a common set of disposition reasons, and brainstorm strategies to partner with law enforcement to improve the collection of defendant race and ethnicity information.

Each site shared and received feedback on their plans for community engagement, including defining the groups they want to engage with, the types of input and feedback they hope to gain from each group, and the strategies they will use to engage them. Dr. Melba Pearson from the [Prosecutorial Performance](#)

Indicators Project, who facilitated the discussion, shared that...



“

Data and community engagement go hand in hand. By listening to the needs of the community, especially those who have been historically marginalized, prosecutors can learn what needs to be measured to fuel positive policy changes. By then returning to the community to keep them apprised of how their concerns were addressed, more trust and transparency is fostered, along with better outcomes for cases through increased witness/survivor participation.

”

- Dr. Melba Pearson, Prosecutorial Performance Indicators Project

The work of the pilot offices will lay the foundation to support statewide scale, with the aim of launching dashboards in all of Colorado’s judicial districts. To learn more about the Prosecutorial Dashboards project contact [Jo Beletic](#) or sign up for regular updates [here](#).

Sara Bayless Named External Research Partner

A warm welcome to [Sara Bayless](#) as she partners with the Colorado Lab in support of our work with the Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families (Partnership). Dr. Bayless, who serves as a Director at the [OMNI Institute](#), is skilled in conducting research and evaluation that helps organizations advance the evidence for their social programming.



Sara Bayless, Director, OMNI Institute

The [Partnership](#) is a cross-system collaborative of human services, health care, and public health partners working together to significantly reduce child fatalities and child maltreatment for all children ages 0 to 5 by supporting strong and healthy family formation. Recently, the Partnership was awarded a five-year *Family Support Through Primary Prevention* grant from the Children’s Bureau. Dr. Bayless will support the Colorado Lab in building evidence for new primary prevention strategies funded under the grant in five demonstration counties, with the shared goal of promoting family well-being and preventing child maltreatment.

“At OMNI, we use research and evaluation to advance our understanding of how programs and policies can support families in developing their strengths and increasing their health, well-being, and economic security,” Dr. Bayless said. “We are excited to partner with the Colorado Lab on this project to build evidence for how strengthening families can strengthen our communities.”

Sara applied via the Lab’s call for external research partners and was selected from among qualified candidates. If you are interested in being considered for future projects and have not done so already, please [learn more](#) and fill out the [brief questionnaire](#).

To learn more about the Colorado Lab’s work with the Partnership, please contact [Dr. Courtney Everson](#).

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