Colorado Evaluation & Action Lab
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

5 YEARS

Colorado Lab Newsletter
February 2023

Featured in this newsletter:
- Early Childhood Evaluation Hub: Contract Opportunity
- Estimating Youth and Young Adult Homelessness Statewide
- External Research Partner Spotlight: Lanae Davis
- New Project: Reverse Transfer College Credit

Early Childhood Evaluation Hub: Contract Opportunity

The Early Childhood Evaluation Hub is looking for a research partner to conduct an analysis of child care licensing and quality costs in Colorado and explore the economic benefit of an early child care slot. Please review this **Call for Letters of Interest** for more information. If interested, please complete the **Call for External Research Partners questionnaire** and submit your Letter of Interest to Ellen Witt at **ellen@coloradolab.org** by Tuesday, March 7.

Estimating Homelessness Among Young People

The lack of reliable data on the prevalence of young people experiencing homelessness makes it difficult to provide responsive services or develop prevention strategies. To bridge this critical knowledge gap, the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funded the Center for Policy Research and the Colorado Lab to generate a more complete estimate of homelessness among youth and young adults (ages 14-24) through the use of administrative data linkages. A new **research brief** details the initial phase of the Colorado study, focused solely on Denver. Learnings are now being applied to support the identification of young people experiencing homelessness statewide.

Utilizing the Governor's Office of Information Technology's **Linked Information Network of Colorado** (LINC), which is supported by the Colorado Lab, data on youth and young adult homelessness were examined across the Child Welfare, Denver Public Schools, and Metro Denver Homeless Initiative systems. These linkages are critical as no single system identifies all young people who experience homelessness.

The voices of young people with personal experience of homelessness were also included in the study. "As researchers, it is important to prioritize incorporating the voices of young people with real life experience to paint a full picture of the stories behind the data," said Lanae Davis, Senior Research Associate for the Center for Policy Research. Based on her many years of experience working in the field of youth homelessness, Davis says this set of focus groups was especially sobering. "The level of crisis these young people are experiencing, and the difficulty they're having in simply getting their basic needs met was surprising. What we heard was so much worse than before the pandemic."

> *"They referred me to a counselor for mental health therapy. But you can't counsel a roof over my head, you know?"*
>
> - Unhoused youth speaking about services provided in school setting

As the study expands statewide, the heartening news, Davis says, is the extraordinary engagement of differing sectors coming together to address the crises of young people experiencing homelessness. "We are building a sustainable and replicable approach to be used across rural communities and urban settings alike, in Colorado and across the country, to identify young people at risk of and experiencing homelessness. Once this system is in place, we will be much better equipped to identify where young people are located, how they are attached to systems, and intervene at earlier stages of housing instability to better target where supports and resources can be deployed."

To learn more, contact **Dr. Elysia Clemens**, Colorado Lab Deputy Director and COO.

External Research Partner Spotlight: Lanae Davis

Lanae Davis has spent her career as a researcher at the Center for Policy Research, joining the team in 1997. Her research focuses broadly on addressing barriers to economic stability, including intensive studies of youth and young adult homelessness. Lanae's familiarity of LINC and her understanding of the critical role data plays in identifying solutions to homelessness led to her partnership with the Lab and the HUD award.

"Harnessing the power of administrative data shouldn't be a novel approach to addressing significant social issues," Davis said. "Simply knowing more—how many young people are at risk of homelessness, where young people experiencing homelessness are located, and how they're accessing services—will give us a much improved ability to prevent this in the future."

New Project: Reverse Transfer College Credit

More than 19,000 Coloradans may be eligible for an associate degree under the **Colorado Re-Engaged Initiative** (CORE), according to the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE). Researchers at the Massachusetts Institute for

Technology (MIT) have undertaken a study of CORE's reverse transfer program, which allows students who transferred from a Colorado 2-year institution to a 4-year institution to combine credits and apply them toward an associate degree. HB21-1330 expands the program, making it possible for any 4-year student (even those who did not begin at a 2-year institution) to apply for an associate's degree after accumulating enough credit hours. Utilizing the Linked Information Network of Colorado (LINC), the study will draw data from CDHE and Colorado Department of Labor and Employment systems, with results informing policymakers and higher education officials on what's needed to support students in maximizing CORE benefits.

For more information, visit the LINC website or contact Dr. Whitney LeBoeuf.