



Colorado Lab Newsletter

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Featured in this newsletter:

- Scrivner Policy Roundtable Presentation: Bridging the Research to Policy Divide
- Child Abuse Prevention Investment Strategy
- Early Childhood Stimulus Evaluation Hub:
 - Colorado Child Care Assistance for Families and Providers
 - Spotlight on External Research Partner Dr. Andrew Brodsky

Scrivner Policy Roundtable Presentation: Bridging the Research to Policy Divide



We were happy to present to local public policy and research leaders at last month's Scrivner Policy Roundtable ([see presentation video](#)). The event series is hosted by the [Scrivner Institute of Public Policy](#) at the University of Denver to foster collaboration and learning among Metro Denver policy organizations.

To support Colorado leaders in making data actionable to inform and sustain policy solutions, our own Drs. Courtney Everson and Lauren Gase presented *Bridging the Research to Policy Divide: New Ways to Think About Old Problems*.

"Despite a common value of using data to drive policy change, there is a known gap in making research evidence timely, relevant, and useful for decision-makers," said Dr. Kristin Klopfenstein, Director of the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab. "Traditional ways of approaching rigor and research translation are falling short. With this understanding, we highlighted lessons learned from health, early childhood, and justice to illustrate actionable ways that researchers and evaluators can better align their evidence-building approaches with the needs and goals of policy decision-makers."

Learn more about the Colorado Lab's [Essential Elements](#), including our prioritization of data that moves results into opportunities for sustained change.

Child Abuse Prevention Investment Strategy

To reduce child maltreatment, numerous community- and system-level programs, policies, and practices have been put in place in Colorado. An important next step is identifying how best to coordinate, align, and maximize resources for these investments. The Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund Board has partnered with the Colorado Lab to develop a data-informed prevention investment strategy. The aim is to guide funding priorities of the Trust Fund and accelerate smart state investments in child, family, and community well-being that strengthen families.

The Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund Board is the statewide entity providing leadership, collaborative support, and advising to the Governor, state agencies, and other stakeholders on child maltreatment prevention investments for Colorado families. HB21-1248 expanded the powers, duties, and members of the Board. In addition to advising on pressing needs and opportunities in the state, the Board



is now also responsible for allocating a number of funding streams, including federal dollars drawn down through Colorado's Family First Prevention Services Plan. Family First is federal legislation that aims to reallocate resources toward preventing out-of-home placement and reinvolverment for families in child welfare. The prevention investment strategy will help the Board proactively grow funding streams and strategically re-invest these dollars in upstream opportunities that strengthen families, before their involvement in child welfare.

Strategy development began with priority setting on gaps and opportunities in the prevention landscape, leveraging the diverse insights of the Trust Fund Board. "Aligning and prioritizing prevention investments means making connections across systems and communities. Having state, county, community, and family representatives on the Trust Fund Board helps to connect the dots and surface actionable opportunities," said Dr. Courtney Everson, Sr. Researcher/Project Director with the Colorado Lab. "The Board truly is the expert on what aligned prevention can look like in the state, so priority setting started with them."

In the next phase of the project, the Colorado Lab will analyze data on child well-being, caregiver well-being, high-quality caregiving, safe and supportive neighborhoods, and child maltreatment and fatality to get at a 360° view that matches the needs of Colorado children and families to Board-identified investment priorities. The end goal is to develop a set of policy and practice recommendations to guide Board investment and their strategic leadership in the child maltreatment prevention landscape of Colorado.

To learn more, please contact [Dr. Courtney Everson](#).

Early Childhood Evaluation Hub

Between 2021 and 2022, the Colorado Department of Early Childhood received over \$700 million in stimulus funding to strengthen Colorado's early childhood sector. The Colorado Lab is coordinating the Early Childhood Evaluation Hub, contracting with multiple evaluation teams to conduct high-quality evaluations of more than a dozen prioritized stimulus-funded activities to ensure the goals of the activities are being met. Over the next several newsletters, we're highlighting these stimulus activities and the selected evaluation teams.

Colorado Child Care Assistance for Families and Providers

Significant stimulus funding is directed to the [Colorado Child Care Assistance](#)

Program (CCCAP). Increased funding for the long-standing program is intended to grow the ability of early childhood education programs for underserved families to address revenue gaps and remain open. Assistance is also provided to CCCAP-eligible families, with the aim of reducing financial hardship for more families so that they can better afford quality child care.

Spotlight on External Research Partner Dr. Andrew Brodsky

The Colorado Lab selected **Brodsky Research and Consulting** (BRC) to conduct this evaluation. Dr. Andrew Brodsky, who leads the BRC evaluation team, is a nationally-recognized expert in analyzing the costs and benefits of early childhood systems and child care quality initiatives.

The BRC evaluation team will access family participation data from CCCAP through the **LINC** system and conduct a sophisticated quantitative analysis to understand changes in family and provider CCCAP participation from before the pandemic to after stimulus funding became available. BRC will also conduct qualitative research, interviewing families, early childhood education providers, and county officials who administer CCCAP to gain a deeper understanding of approaches that are most effective in sustaining quality early childhood education programs and providing equitable access to families, particularly in under-resourced communities.



Andrew Brodsky

“We know there is huge value when young children participate in high-quality learning programs,” Brodsky said. “It is critical for parents who simply cannot be in the workforce without child care. It also benefits the early childhood sector, providing jobs that pay a living wage and boosting the economy. Most importantly, it provides lifelong benefits for children. We’re excited to learn more about the specific approaches that help to make CCCAP work most effectively for Colorado families, the early childhood workforce, and the state’s economy.”

To learn more about the Early Childhood Stimulus Evaluation Hub, visit our **website** or contact **Ellen Witt**.

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