



Colorado Lab Newsletter

October 2023

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New! Evidence-Based Decision-Making Glossary



The Colorado Lab has developed a new [Evidence-Based Decision-Making \(EBDM\) Glossary of Terms](#) to support decision-makers, agency leadership, and staff in gaining a common understanding of EBDM in policymaking. EBDM is recognized as an important means to align roles and responsibilities across branches of government and drive smart state investments and meaningful outcomes.

“This tool promotes a shared understanding of key concepts. Our aim is to decrease disconnects, helping people to get on the same page so that they can work together more efficiently and effectively,” said Dr. Kristin Klopfenstein, director of the Colorado Lab.

Each definition is developed based on a literature review together with input from subject matter experts and practitioners. Collaborators in glossary development include staff from the Governor’s Office, Joint Budget Committee staff, agency leadership, and members of the Colorado Evidence-Based Policy Collaborative. The living document is updated quarterly and key stakeholders are notified of new terms and definitions. The goal is to have a one-stop-shop that can promote adoption and alignment of terms across current statutorily-defined, rule-defined, and commonly-used definitions in Colorado and across the nation.

Learn more about the Colorado Lab’s facilitation of [EBDM in state government](#), and check out our [EBDM blog series](#). For additional information or to schedule a Colorado Lab-hosted EBDM 101 Learning & Dialogue Session, contact [Dr. Courtney Everson](#).

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Videos

The Colorado Lab provided guidance and support to the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) in creating two new videos about Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Consultation. The videos aim to grow understanding about how ECMH Consultation helps early childhood professionals and families across the state promote the mental health and healthy social-emotional development of young children.

These brief videos feature the voices of families as well as early childhood directors, teachers, and ECMH consultants sharing their personal and professional experiences with consultation, including the insights they have gained and their recommendation for this no-cost service.

Hear what early childhood professionals say.



- Director- and teacher-focused video ([English](#); [Español](#); [Arabic](#)) - In their own words, early childhood professionals share about the benefits of ECMH Consultation, how they make time for these services, and how consultation services increase their team’s capacity to care for their own well-being and promote the healthy social-emotional development of all the infants and young children in their care.

- Family-focused video ([English](#); [Español](#); [Arabic](#)) - Families hear from consultants and other parents about ECMH Consultation services, what to expect when working with a consultant, and how consultation services have helped many families just like theirs to build important early childhood skills such as managing big emotions, resolving conflict, making friends and more.

Hear what parents say.



“Hearing directly from those who have received ECMH Consultation helps to paint a clear picture about the services, eases potential concerns, and helps other families and early childhood professionals to better understand that everyone has mental health, even babies,” said Dr. Lisa Schlueter, Early Childhood Mental Health Unit Manager. “In the same way that we nurture children’s physical health—with healthy food, plenty of rest, and exercise—it is also important to take care of their mental health. These services strengthen the ability of caregivers of young children (birth to six) to support their healthy social-emotional development, identify and address mental health and developmental issues early, and decrease child behaviors they find challenging.”

For more information, visit MentalHealthStartsEarly.com or contact the Early Childhood Mental Health Support Line at (833)-ECMH411, or reach out to [Dr. Kristin Klopfenstein](#) to learn more about Colorado Lab supports for CDEC and the Early Childhood Mental Health unit.

Early Childhood Stimulus 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. We're highlighting these great partners over the next several newsletters.

Early Childhood Evaluation Hub: CCCAP Teacher Wage Increase Pilot

The [Colorado Child Care Assistance Program](#) (CCCAP) helps families who are working in low-wage jobs, searching for work, in school, or experiencing homelessness to find child care assistance. The aim of the stimulus-funded CCCAP Teacher Wage Increase Pilot is to provide a livable wage to early childhood teachers in CCCAP-participating programs.

The Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) reached out broadly to early childhood centers across the state that were eligible for the wage increases. Twenty-two centers were randomly selected to receive available stimulus funds for wage increases. The remaining 52 eligible centers that did not receive funding are participating as the control group in the Randomized Control Trial (RCT) of this two-year pilot.

Findings from the RCT will help to determine the impact of wage increases on workforce retention, including any reductions to teacher turnover and the ability to attract qualified teachers to fill open positions.

Spotlight on External Research Partner: MDRC

The evaluation of the CCCAP Teacher Wage Increase Pilot is led by external research partner, Dr. [Cynthia Miller](#). As Senior Fellow for Economic Mobility, Housing, and Communities for the national research firm MDRC, Dr. Miller is an economist whose work focuses on policies and programs to increase the employment and earnings of low-wage workers and disadvantaged young adults.

Dr. Miller notes that early childhood teachers and assistant teachers in the 22 centers are eligible to receive an increase in pay of \$3 to \$7.50 per hour, depending on their level of experience and geographic location. To help ensure the teachers understood the potential impacts a wage increase might have on their existing benefits and economic stability, Dr. Miller and her team provided information through videos and handouts, presenting differing scenarios and answering questions. At this point, over 90% of eligible teachers and assistant teachers have accepted wage increases.

“To my knowledge, this type of time-limited infusion of funding to early childhood teacher salaries—at this high level of funding—is unique. I believe it’s also the first time a randomized controlled trial will measure the impacts of this type of approach,” Dr. Miller said. “Understanding the effects of increased wages for early childhood professionals has the potential to inform important policy decisions for this workforce, which is critical to the well-being of children, families, and the economy.”



Dr. Cynthia Miller

Colorado Lab Welcomes New Staff

Dr. Ernest Boffy-Ramirez

Dr. Ernest Boffy-Ramirez has joined the Colorado Lab as a senior researcher / project director. Dr. Boffy-Ramirez is a labor economist with a strong focus on understanding labor market dynamics and competition.

Ernest is enthusiastic about the Lab's interdisciplinary approach and focus on rigorous research design as a way to broaden support for data-driven policy. He will apply his expertise in quantitative analysis and knowledge of applied econometrics to advance the Lab's policy mission. Previously, Dr. Boffy-Ramirez served as a professor of economics for more than a decade at the University of Colorado Denver. He holds a PhD in economics from the University of California, Santa Barbara and is a research fellow at the IZA Institute of Labor Economics.



Dr. Ernest Boffy-Ramirez

Dr. Chelsie Hess

Dr. Chelsie Hess has also joined the Colorado Lab as a senior researcher / project director. Dr. Hess has a commitment to data integrity, multidisciplinary and applied research, in order to produce meaningful and actionable change for the community. She will apply her knowledge of child development, expertise in community partnerships, and training in higher education and community evaluation to support the Lab.



Dr. Chelsie Hess

Prior to joining the Lab, Dr. Hess served as an Associate Professor of Psychology at Colorado Mesa University, where she taught research methods and child development courses and served as Chair of the Institutional Review Board. She earned her doctorate from the University of Northern Colorado in educational psychology with a doctoral minor in applied statistics and research methods and has a master's degree in school counseling.

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