



## Colorado Lab Newsletter

April 2023

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### Contract Opportunity: Universal Preschool Program Discovery

Join us in strengthening and growing Colorado's early childhood sector! The Colorado Lab seeks an interested, highly qualified research team to conduct program discovery activities, develop a theory of change, and capture the implementation model for Colorado's new Universal Preschool Program (UPK) for the Early Childhood Evaluation Hub (see the article below for more information about the Hub).

To learn more, please review the [Call for Letters of Interest for UPK Program](#). If interested, complete the [Call for External Research Partners questionnaire](#) and submit a letter of interest by Tuesday, April 25th, to Val Henderson at [val@coloradolab.org](mailto:val@coloradolab.org).

### Contract Opportunity: Early Childhood Dashboard Development

The Colorado Lab seeks a developer to build an external-facing data dashboard that demonstrates the reach of stimulus funds and changes in key early childhood metrics for the Early Childhood Evaluation Hub (see the article below for more information about the Hub).

To learn more, please review the [Call for Letters of Interest for Data Dashboard Development](#). If interested, complete the [Call for External Research Partners questionnaire](#) and submit a letter of interest by Tuesday, April 25th, to Val Henderson at [val@coloradolab.org](mailto:val@coloradolab.org)

## Colorado Lab Training: Effective Leadership through Data



A new Colorado Lab training supports government and community-serving professionals to grow their understanding in the use of data for decision-making. The training, created by Drs. Courtney Everson and Lauren Gase, Senior Researchers/Project Directors with the Colorado Lab, was delivered most recently to the Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference and to the Whole Child Consultative Roles Conference.

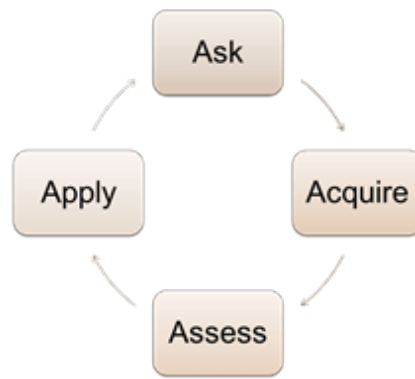
"Our partners show deep commitment to using data to drive outcomes. They also have expressed barriers to making this commitment a reality, such as not having tools to be efficient in data use or not knowing how to blend evidence with other real-world factors," Dr. Everson said. "We created this training to support professionals in moving their commitment to data into effective action."

The training supports decision-makers in understanding Evidence-Based Decision-Making (EBDM) - the sweet spot between the best available research evidence, decision-makers' expertise, and community needs and context. This framework recognizes that research evidence is not the only contributing factor to decisions professionals make. Other equally important context factors should be considered, such as available funds, the needs of the people being served, timeline, cultural values, community priorities, and the feasibility of implementation. EBDM applies to both big strategic decisions and day-to-day operational decisions.



In the training, Drs. Everson and Gase walked participants through the Ask-Acquire-Apply-Assess approach to help them integrate research evidence in efficient and effective ways. Using this cycle can strengthen a data-informed approach for effective leadership.

- **Ask:** Define what you are looking for and why. *What are my goals and how can data help?*
- **Acquire:** Find and gather research evidence. *Where should I look to find research evidence and how credible is the source? How can I gather new evidence?*
- **Assess:** Assess the quality of the evidence. *Are the findings based on quality research?*
- **Apply:** Consider the research evidence in context. *How do I pair evidence with other factors like funding and family voice to make decisions?*



To learn more about this approach or to explore training opportunities, please contact [Dr. Lauren Gase](#).

## New Projects

### Analysis Plan for the Study of Fentanyl Accountability and Prevention

The Fentanyl Accountability and Prevention bill, HB 22-1326 contains a number of measures ranging from changing the criminal penalties associated with synthetic opiates to using a substance abuse assessment to direct appropriate treatment at sentencing, developing a fentanyl prevention and education campaign, and more. The law also calls for an independent study to examine the implementation and impact of the bill. The Colorado Lab is developing an analysis plan based on background research and discussions with stakeholders to lay the foundation for a rigorous and meaningful independent study.

Learn more [here](#) or contact [Dr. Lauren Gase](#).

### The Community Aging in Place Advancing Better Living for Elders (CAPABLE) Pilot Program

The Community Aging in Place Advancing Better Living for Elders (CAPABLE) pilot program aims to support [Health First Colorado](#) members to remain living at home. Developed by Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, CAPABLE is a person-directed, home-based program that addresses both function and health care expenses, and is approved by the National Council on Aging as an evidence-based fall prevention program. The Colorado Lab will evaluate this pilot program through the lens of informing the decision to make CAPABLE a long-term Medicaid benefit. In other states, CAPABLE has been delivered primarily to older adults, and Colorado is interested in learning about its potential to serve individuals across the lifespan, particularly those with disabilities.

Learn more [here](#) or contact [Dr. Elysia Clemens](#).

### LINC: The Impact of Pay Transparency in Job Postings on the Labor Market

The goal of this new LINC project is to evaluate the labor market impact of Colorado's Equal Pay for Equal Work Act. The research study will examine how wages and employment responded to the requirement that all online job postings must include salary information starting January 2021. There will be a particular focus on recent graduates and enrollees at Colorado-based higher education institutions.

The results of this project are intended to help policymakers in Colorado and elsewhere forecast the effects of increasing pay transparency, improve enforcement of pay transparency laws, and provide empirical evidence on the benefits of giving college graduates clear information on the expected salaries in different careers.

[LINC](#), The Linked Information Network of Colorado, was formed by the State of Colorado and the Colorado Lab to integrate data across state and local agencies. Contact [Dr. Whitney LeBoeuf](#) for more information on this evaluation.

## 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.

### Stabilization and Sustainability Activities

One set of activities supported by stimulus funding aims to sustain and stabilize the early childhood sector. This includes grants that support:

- **Sustainability:** Supplementing compensation for early childhood professionals at licensed and qualified child care centers, and strengthening supportive work environments with the goal of reducing turnover.
- **Stabilization:** Addressing revenue gaps so child care providers remain open and maintain the availability of licensed care.
- **Family Financial Relief:** Reducing the cost of child care for families in participating child care programs.

### Spotlight on External Research Partner Dr. Ann Wacker

The Colorado Lab selected the [Butler Institute for Families at the University of Denver](#), under the direction of [Ann Wacker](#), PhD, to evaluate these activities. Dr. Wacker has extensive experience leading studies in early care and education with a focus on equitable access to quality child care.

“In this study, we will look at the application process, how grant funds are being used, and short-term outcomes. The outcomes might include things like whether child care centers were able to remain open throughout the pandemic, the ability to retain staff, and the affordability of early child care and learning for families,” Dr. Wacker said. “Because we know that federal stimulus funds are limited, we are particularly interested in learning more about what makes the biggest difference so that we can pinpoint what is needed to sustain and grow these supports.”



Dr. Ann Wacker

Dr. Wacker emphasizes her passion for this study, both professionally and personally. “My PhD dissertation focused on the experiences of the early childhood education (ECE) workforce, so I am very aware of the many challenges the ECE system faces in terms of supporting the workforce. And, as the parent of a three year old, I know that child care is expensive. Learning how to make care more affordable for families is so important.”

To learn more about the Early Childhood Stimulus Evaluation Hub, visit our [website](#) or contact [Dr. Whitney LeBoeuf](#).

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