

## Building Evidence for Colorado's Universal Preschool Program



### Background

Colorado voters passed [Proposition EE](#) in 2020 to improve access to high-quality preschool and to ensure all Colorado children are ready for kindergarten. [Colorado House Bill 22-1295](#) established the [Colorado Universal Preschool Program](#), providing all four-year-olds and qualifying three-year-olds in Colorado with access to preschool for at least 10 hours a week. Launched by the new Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC), the program welcomed its first cohort of children in the fall of 2023.

### Evidence Building for the Universal Preschool Program

In October 2024, CDEC partnered with the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab at the University of Denver (Colorado Lab) to serve as the [Universal Preschool Evidence-Building Hub](#). The Colorado Lab helps the CDEC meet [legislative requirements](#) for evaluation and continuous improvement and coordinates these evidence-building efforts on behalf of CDEC. In February 2025, CDEC contracted with [Child Trends](#) to serve as the Universal Preschool Program process evaluation vendor. Over the next few years, Child Trends will collect and analyze data from families, early care and education providers, Local Coordinating Organizations, state leaders, and other partners to determine whether the program is being implemented as intended.

Current process evaluation efforts focus on:

- **Program Foundation:** Governance, infrastructure, and funding.
- **Program Launch:** Communication, enrollment process, and provider-level program delivery.
- **Program Participation:** Enrollment among providers and families and how the program is meeting their needs.
- **Cross-cutting themes:** Implementation successes and challenges, sustainability, and equity.



#### Next Steps for Providers, Families, and LCO representatives

Be on the lookout for email messages and other notices from Child Trends with invitations to participate in the evaluation data collection activities.

Results from the Universal Preschool Program process evaluation will be used to continuously improve the program, inform policy changes, report to the legislature, and share out with community partners.

Child Trends will conduct a mixed-methods process evaluation through June 2027. Then, CDEC and the Hub will assess the appropriate focus areas for the next phase of the evaluation.

*This evaluation is being conducted by Child Trends on behalf of CDEC, under the coordination of the Colorado Lab's Universal Preschool Evidence-Building Hub. Child Trends is a nationally-recognized nonprofit, nonpartisan, research center focused on children, youth, and families' well-being.*

