



Prevention Investment Strategy: Policy and Practice Recommendations for the Colorado Child Abuse Prevention Trust Fund

Strong Families, Thriving Communities

The [Colorado Child Abuse Prevention \(COCAP\) Trust Fund](#) provides leadership and advising to prevent child maltreatment and align investments. The Trust Fund focuses on preventing maltreatment before it occurs by building protective factors and reducing risk. The Board is a [Type II Advisory Board](#) within the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC), made up of cross-system county and state representatives and family leadership.

A data-informed Prevention Investment Strategy was developed to guide the Trust Fund in aligning and accelerating child maltreatment prevention and family strengthening in Colorado.

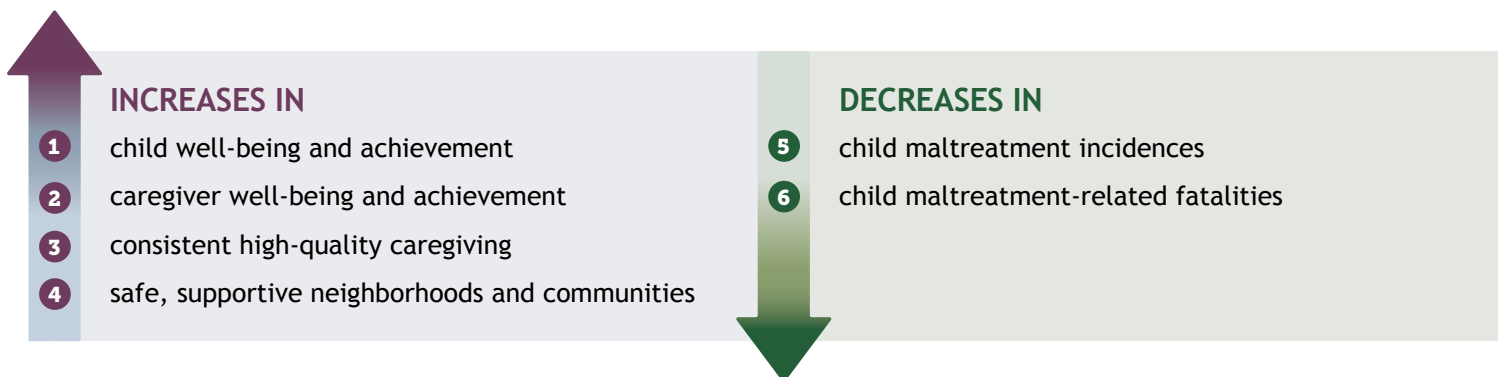
Why a Prevention Investment Strategy?

Colorado policymakers, state agencies, and local communities have made significant investments in preventing child maltreatment. To accelerate progress and avoid duplication, alignment and collaboration are crucial. As the named child maltreatment prevention board in [statute](#), the COCAP Board is uniquely positioned to help Colorado move forward cohesively.

The CDEC partnered with the [Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab](#) at the University of Denver to develop the Prevention Investment Strategy. A mixed methods approach was used, including subject matter expert interviews, a landscape analysis on [risk and protective factors](#), and a review of top prevention recommendations and evidence-based strategies.

Driving Toward Shared Outcomes

The recommendations focus on key outcomes from the [Child Maltreatment Prevention Framework for Action](#) and outlined in Trust Fund [legislation](#). Together, recommendations will promote evidence-based decision making and smart state investments.



Successful implementation of the Prevention Investment Strategy will contribute to improved:



Family economic security



Substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery



Caregiver mental and behavioral health



Child/youth mental and behavioral health



Family Functioning

Advancing Equity

To advance equity and address social determinants of health, priority populations and geographic areas are identified. Data show these populations are at disproportionate risk for child maltreatment, experience greater disparities, and are underserved.



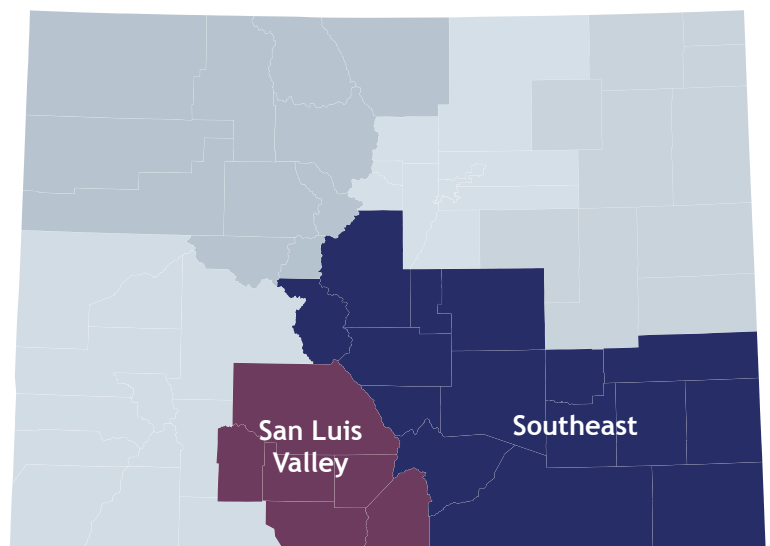
Priority Populations

- Native American/Alaska Native communities
- Hispanic/Latinx communities
- Postpartum families, especially postpartum families of color
- Mental health among children under age 8
- Positive youth development for ages 15 to 19
- Families with a primary language other than English
- Caregivers and children eligible for services, but not yet enrolled
- Families experiencing poverty
- Caregivers with substance use and behavioral health disorders



Priority Geographic Areas

- Rural and frontier communities
- San Luis Valley
- Southeast Region



Key Data Points



Substance use and mental health

- [72.8%](#) of adults who need substance use services are not comfortable talking about it
- Rural and frontier communities have [higher rates](#) of poor mental health
- [23%](#) of children ages 0 to 8 who need mental health support are not receiving it
- [Nearly 75%](#) of postpartum people experience at least one stressor in the 12-months before birth

52.1%

[of insured](#) Coloradans did not seek treatment for substance use because they believed their insurance would not cover it



Economic and resource security

- [32%](#) of birthing individuals are at or below 185% of the federal poverty line
- 1 in 4 postpartum people experience [resource insecurity](#)
- Native American/Alaska Native and Hispanic/Latinx families [experience](#) lower economic self-sufficiency and concrete supports
- [17.2%](#) of households with infants or toddlers experience food insecurity

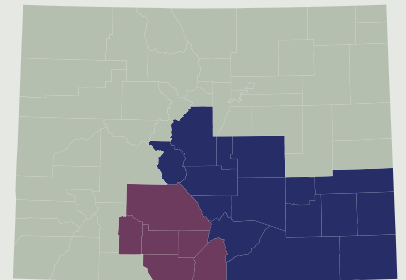
1 in 8

[One in eight](#) Colorado children under five live in poverty



Community disadvantage

- Colorado counties with the [highest child poverty](#) are in the Southeast region
- The San Luis Valley and the Southeast region experience the most [concentrated disadvantage](#) in the social determinants of health
- Only [57% of Colorado children](#) live in supportive neighborhoods

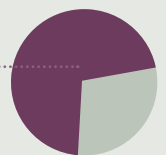


Child maltreatment

- [13.1%](#) of child maltreatment deaths involve substance use impairment for individuals responsible
- Black and Hispanic/Latinx children are [overrepresented](#) in child welfare

73%

[of child maltreatment allegations](#) are due to neglect



Policy and Practice Recommendations Essential to Strengthening Families and Communities in Colorado

The Prevention Investment Strategy includes 9 recommendations aimed at three drivers of change. Recommendations move beyond direct service to also inform data, policy, and funding priorities.

Driver of Change: Direct Investments

The **Direct Investment** recommendations guide the Board in advising on the effective use of Trust Fund resources, as well as investments by public, private, and philanthropic partners in prevention.



Recommendation 1: Invest in Family Resource Centers

[Family Resource Centers](#) (FRCs) offer community-based services to build protective factors and connect families to resources. To increase their impact, funding should be used to raise awareness about FRCs, strengthen service and support access, leverage peer support and community health workers, set FRC quality standards, and grow the available network of FRCs.



Recommendation 2: Invest in Evidence-Based Practices and their State Intermediaries

Evidence-based practices (EBPs) have strong evidence that demonstrates their positive impact for children and families. State intermediaries help ensure EBPs are implemented to fidelity. To ensure effective services matched to needs, funding should be used to expand [Colorado's Family First Service Array](#), cover start-up costs to scale EBPs to underserved areas, and build evidence for community-grounded practices.



Recommendation 3: Invest in Strategies to Match Families to Appropriate Services and Decrease Barriers to Access

Having services available doesn't mean everyone can access them, and some groups face higher barriers that lead to inequities. To better connect families to services, funding should be used to expand the workforce of trusted outreach coordinators, lift [social health information exchanges](#) for care coordination, and promote language justice practices to ensure everyone is included.



Recommendation 4: Invest in Strategies Identified in Child Maltreatment Prevention Plans

The [Child Maltreatment Prevention Framework for Action](#) is a statewide roadmap for preventing child abuse and strengthening families. It has guided local prevention planning across Colorado. To help turn local plans into action, funding should be used to implement identified strategies, strengthen collaborations established during planning, and elevate family voice and leadership.

Driver of Change: Raise Capital

The **Raise Capital** recommendations are about designing for sustainability. Increasing funding for the Trust Fund is important for a multi-year strategy to be responsive and prevent the loss of critical infrastructure built by investments.



Recommendation 5: Position the Trust Fund to be a Depositing Ground for Unspent Prevention Funds

The Trust fund is not swept annually. Making the Trust Fund a depositing ground for unspent child maltreatment prevention funds will give state agencies the opportunity to ensure all dollars they steward go toward the original intent of the state allocation. Unspent funds can occur for a variety of reasons that are not a reflection of mismanagement of public dollars.



Recommendation 6: Increase Endowments and Other Gifts to the Trust Fund

By law, the Trust Fund can accept gifts and contributions. Philanthropy plays a critical role in preventing maltreatment and can fund innovations that, if proven favorable, can be sustained by private and public investments. Adding the Trust Fund to workplace giving campaigns and advising on how to include the Trust Fund in estate planning are prime ways to increase contributions.



Recommendation 7: Promote Strategies to Maximize Federal Drawdown in Family First and Expand Allowable Claiming

The [Family First Prevention Services Act](#) allows a 50% reimbursement of federal funds for approved evidence-based practices that keep kids safely with their families. The Colorado Department of Human Services claims this money annually and transfers it to the Trust Fund for reinvestment. The Family First dollars can be maximized by increasing use of current Family First services, building the service array, and expanding populations eligible for drawdown.

Driver of Change: Align and Accelerate

The **Align and Accelerate** recommendations leverage the COCAP Board's expertise to boost collaboration between different systems. The aim is to speed up high-investment solutions and align progress when tackling major issues like child care, housing, and behavioral health.



Recommendation 8: Endorse and Advise on Recommendations by Aligned Prevention Partners

No one system is responsible for [preventing child maltreatment](#). That's why many groups have put forward recommendations to strengthen families. The wide system and community representation of the COCAP Board is an opportunity to advise on the development of new recommendations and align existing ones toward shared outcomes.



Recommendation 9: Support Policies and Practices that Expand Economic and Concrete Support for Families

Connecting families to [economic and concrete supports](#) reduces child maltreatment. To increase financial well-being for families with young children, Colorado needs policies and practices that address affordable housing, food security, health care coverage, workforce development and economic mobility, affordable child care, and tax credits.

Activating and Sustaining Investments

Achieving this multi-year strategy will require co-ownership and collaboration across the COCAP Board, CDEC staff, and cross-system partners and contractors. Key partnerships in activation include:



State Government



Collaboratives and Initiatives

[Health Care Policy and Financing](#)

[Department of Early Childhood](#)

[Department of Public Health and Environment](#)

[Department of Local Affairs](#)

[Office of Respondent Parents' Counsel](#)

[Behavioral Health Administration](#)

[Governor's Office of eHealth Innovation](#)

[Colorado Department of Human Services](#)

[Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families](#)

[Illuminate Colorado](#)

[Home Visiting Investment Task Force](#)

[SuPPoRT Colorado](#)

[Colorado Equitable Economic Mobility Initiative \(CEEMI\)](#)

[Colorado Lab's Family First Evidence Building Hub](#)



The Prevention Investment Strategy acts as a capacity building tool for the Trust Fund to meet their vision of *Strong Families, Thriving Communities*. [Click here](#) or scan the QR code for the full report with concrete guidance for activation.



For more information, contact Dr. Courtney Everson at Courtney@coloradolab.org

