

Role of Early Childhood Councils

According to authorizing legislation (HB07-1062), it is the role of Early Childhood Councils to “improve and sustain the availability, accessibility, capacity and quality of early childhood services for children and families throughout the state.” Early childhood services are defined by the legislation as including:



The Office of the Lt. Governor’s early childhood staff have developed an overview for understanding how these four service areas can work together to best serve Colorado’s young children and their families (*Early Childhood Colorado Framework*). The State’s Early Childhood Councils are an important part of this Framework, effectively building the foundations of the early childhood system at the local level so that more high quality services are available to more people.

The Colorado Department of Human Services and the Colorado Department of Education created a graphic (see next page) to describe the specific role Early Childhood Councils play within the overall Framework in developing a comprehensive system of early childhood services.

An Early Childhood Council’s work begins by **creating internal capacity**. Here, the Early Childhood Council brings together local partners from each of the four service areas (domains) to make decisions about how to improve the availability, accessibility, capacity and quality of services locally (referred to as quality, access and equity in the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework*). The collaborative partners that make up the Early Childhood Council develop a structure for self-governance, collaborative communication, strategic planning, evaluation, resource development, and fiscal management.

The Early Childhood Council’s role continues as the community partners **build the local foundations** for collaboratively improving services for children and families. This work includes building and supporting partnerships within and across the domains, making joint funding and investment decisions, improving policies that affect all four domains of the system, engaging the public and stakeholders in collaborative efforts to improve local early childhood services, sharing responsibility for the effectiveness of joint decisions, and building local leadership within the system (across domains).

Finally, the Early Childhood Councils **impact services**. The collaborative efforts of local partners participating in the Early Childhood Councils mean that all stakeholders in the community are working together to improve the availability, accessibility, capacity and quality of services. Frequently, Early Childhood Councils are not actually delivering direct services to children and families (although they may, depending on the community and any gaps that need to be filled). Rather, the Early Childhood Councils are working with community partners to make sure that local services to young children are plentiful, of high quality, and easily available to anyone who needs them.