October 2025

Compensation Capacity-Building Community of Practice

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EARLY EDUCATOR INVESTMENT COLLABORATIVE
Professional Educators. Professional Compensation. Prepared Children.

CSCCE
Center for the Study of Child Care Employment
25 years

Overview

The Early Educator Investment Collaborative (EEIC) is supporting the capacity of governments to implement systemic, innovative, and equitable solutions to increase wages and access to benefits in the early care and education (ECE) field. Teams from states and localities across the country convene quarterly in the Compensation Capacity-Building Community of Practice (CoP).

Supported by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE), this CoP is a space for peer learning, where teams engage in collective problem-solving and coaching to support implementation of their projects. Each quarter, this newsletter will summarize the CoP convening and share emerging themes and takeaways from office hours and other technical assistance (TA) offerings.

This quarter, the CoP met to discuss messaging and building political will for investments in the ECE workforce. Teams heard from Community Change about their *In Our Hands* campaign, which aims to shift public perception and drive greater investment in the ECE workforce. Teams also attended an orientation with the Children's Funding Project, a new TA provider.

Learnings from the August 21 Convening

The ‘In Our Hands’ Project

- Community Change presented their *In Our Hands* project, a campaign focused on changing the public’s perception of the ECE workforce’s value in order to increase early educator compensation.
- The campaign is currently in its first phase focused on messaging for parents and providers about why increased compensation is important.
- The campaign is testing five key messages:
  - Early educators support brain development;
  - Early educators perform a variety of critical roles;
  - Skilled professionals require professional wages;
  - Low compensation impacts children and families; and
  - We should all advocate for increased public investment in compensation.
- The campaign is using a narrative strategy, engaging educators and parents in public awareness and storytelling to build momentum and support for increased funding to compensate the workforce. These efforts will lay the framework for a national campaign.

Child Care Narrative Change Cohort

- Community Change has trained a cohort of changemakers and grassroots partners on ad campaigns, narrative work, and storytelling to workshop the campaign’s five key messages.
- Using digital ads, Community Change is testing messages while strengthening organizing efforts. By partnering with Online to Offline Strategies, they are using ads to generate leads for grassroots partners.
- Using cohort feedback, Community Change also ran A/B testing with different messages to parent and provider audiences. The top performing ads highlighted the effects of low pay on the workforce as well as the fact that early educators are professionals and deserve to be paid as such.
- The campaign will continue to test peer-to-peer outreach scripts, engage in partner-specific campaigns, and respond to the current political narrative.

New TA Provider: Children's Funding Project

We are pleased to partner with the Children's Funding Project (CFP), an organization dedicated to helping communities and states expand equitable opportunities for children and youth through strategic public financing. CFP will be a resource for teams on:

- Exploring strategies for generating new funds or revenue to support child care;
- Conducting cost modeling and examining alternative rate methodologies; and
- Looking for new ways to creatively leverage existing and new funds to support the ECE workforce.

To learn more, see the **slide deck** from the orientation.

Meet the Team

Bruno Showers, State Policy Manager
Bruno joined the Children's Funding Project in 2023 as state policy manager to support the organization's capacity to analyze state-level revenue options to fund children's programs. Prior to joining CFP, Bruno spent five years as senior policy analyst at Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, where he led the organization's advocacy efforts related to state tax and budget policies and programs that support family economic security. Bruno has more than a decade of experience in the nonprofit and public sector, including time at the Arkansas Department of Human Services, the Arkansas Public Policy Panel, and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Kate Ritter, Senior Manager, Cost Modeling
Kate joined CFP in 2021 and specializes in ECE finance, policy, and cost modeling. Since 2001, Kate has been working with state and local governments, foundations, national policy organizations, ECE providers, and child advocacy groups to provide strategic early childhood policy and finance recommendations. Prior to joining the Children's Funding Project, Kate worked in the Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, where she created a cost model for the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System and led the process to develop a QRIS for family child care.

Ashley Richardson, Senior Manager, Emerging Funding Strategies
Ashley leads CFP's work to identify and grow local economic development opportunities and other innovative strategies to finance early childhood and youth programs and services. Ashley previously worked for the City of Austin, where she advised elected officials on projects such as property tax exemptions for child care providers that serve low-income families and a Voter Approved Children's Fund to expand access to child care and after-school programs and increase wages for early educators.

New Resource on Healthcare Access

Washington, D.C., is well-known for its Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund, a first-in-the-nation program that aligns early educators' salaries with those of public school teachers. In 2023, the District expanded on this investment and launched the HealthCare4ChildCare (HC4CC) program to tackle the high rates of uninsurance among early educators and further strengthen workforce stability. Early research has found that these investments have at least a **23 percent return on investment**. Our new blog post, **Covering Caregivers: What D.C.'s HealthCare4ChildCare Can Teach States**, describes this innovative approach and poses questions for states interested in implementing a similar strategy.

"The financial assistance provided by HealthCare4ChildCare has allowed us to offer comprehensive health coverage to our teachers without compromising the quality of care we provide our children. By alleviating the financial burden of healthcare costs, HealthCare4ChildCare has empowered our teachers to prioritize their health and well-being, resulting in a happier and more productive workforce."

- Director, Preschool in Washington, D.C.

Coming Soon:

The next newsletter will feature learnings from the October convening, which will focus on strategies to increase early educators' access to benefits and feature speakers from Colorado, Maine, Michigan, and Washington, D.C.

Spotlight: Threats to Higher Education in H.R. 1

What changed?

A provision in the reconciliation bill, H.R. 1, prohibits students from using federal student loans to pay for undergraduate degree programs with “low-earning outcomes”: programs where the majority of students earn less than the median high school graduate. Data shows that child care workers earn less than the median high school graduate in every state except New Mexico and Washington, D.C. Higher education programs must comply with the provision by July 1, 2026.

Why does it matter?

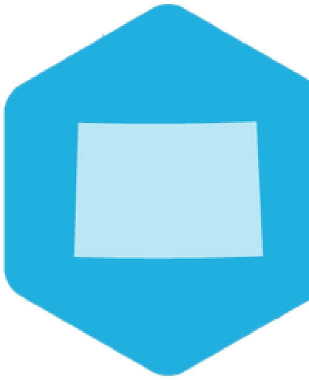
Nearly all states offer at least one scholarship program for early educators. This change could undermine states’ investments to mitigate the costs of higher education and disincentivize institutes of higher education from offering early childhood education programs.

How are states responding?

Colorado’s Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC), a state advisory council that includes both the Department of Early Childhood and the Department of Higher Education, recently met and discussed potential implications of the policy change. ECLC has begun brainstorming questions to ask and data to collect to understand the impacts of this change:

- When will institutes of higher education (IHEs) identify which programs aren’t eligible for federal student loans?
- How will students find out?
- How do IHEs think the new policy will affect the early childhood coursework offered?
- Can the Colorado Department of Higher Education create a list of programs that would fall in this category across the state? What programs beyond early childhood education might be impacted?
- How many students use student loans in early childhood programs currently?

To learn more, watch the meeting recording or view the slide deck.



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