

## Colorado's Early Learning and Development Guidelines

### **What are Early Learning and Development Guidelines?**

Early Learning and Development Guidelines describe what children should know and be able to do along the birth to eight continuum of development. The guidelines assure a holistic approach to supporting children's learning and development including approaches to learning, physical and motor development, social-emotional development, and other cognitive skills such as language, literacy, and numerical knowledge.

### **What is the purpose of Early Learning and Development Guidelines?**

- Improve families and professional's knowledge of child development;
- Guide families and professionals working with children in planning developmental and learning activities;
- Inform or guide developmental support, instruction, assessment and intervention;
- Capture in one document the single, unifying set of early learning and development guidelines for professionals working with young children and;
- Provide unifying guidelines that are embraced by and embedded in programs and services across the comprehensive early childhood system.

### **What is the scope of Colorado's Early Learning and Development Guidelines?**

- Focus on children throughout the birth to age 8 continuum;
- Inclusive of all areas of development and learning;
- Inclusive of typically and non-typically developing children and;
- Applicable to early learning, family support, mental health and health- and relevant to a variety of settings including, but not limited to, child care, preschool, Head Start, K-3, health care, home and other community settings.

### **What are the criteria for Colorado's Early Learning and Development Guidelines?**

- Recognize and are responsive to variations in culture, language, and abilities;
- Recognize the unique aspects of infant and toddler development;
- Recognize and are responsive to variations in a child and family's developmental trajectories and environments;
- Based on research and best or promising practices;
- Align with relevant state and national professional and workforce standards, program quality standards (curricula, materials and settings) and assessments;
- Drive personnel training and development across the early childhood system sector and;
- Complement and align with the Preschool-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade portion of Colorado's P-12 academic standards, as well as build from other relevant state and national initiatives.

### **How is Colorado approaching the development of these Early Learning and Development Guidelines?**

Recent advancements in the early childhood field have created momentum to revise and reframe the existing *Colorado Building Blocks*, exemplars of high-quality, pre-kindergarten early learning and development standards for 3-5 year olds initially developed in the early 2000's and updated in 2007. At a national level, ongoing research in the field brought new understating of school readiness, reflected in the new *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework*. At the state level, adoption of the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* in 2008 underscored the commitment to a birth to age 8 approach that reaches across a comprehensive, cross-sector system. Finally, the 2009 passage of the

Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids resulted in the adoption of revised core academic standards that are aligned from pre-school through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

In response to these advancements, in May 2011, the Early Childhood Leadership Commission released an RFP for a contractor to manage the development of the Colorado Early learning and Development Guidelines. These guidelines will be anchored by the *Head Start Child and Development and Early Learning Framework* and the *Colorado Core State Academic Standards* described above.

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) was selected as the contractor. McRel will develop the Guidelines under the direction of an interagency advisory group that includes:

- Rosemarie Allen, Colorado Department of Human Services
- Barry Cartwright, Colorado Department of Education
- Lorie Goodwin-Bowers, Colorado Department of Education
- Heather Dubiel, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- Pamela Harris, Mile High Montessori
- Lenita Hartman, Colorado Department of Human Services
- Anna Jo Haynes, Early Childhood Leadership Commission
- Jo Koehn, Colorado Department of Education
- Fernando Pineda-Reyes, Early Childhood Leadership Commission
- Ayelet Talmi, University of Colorado Denver
- Nan Vendegna, Colorado Department of Education

### **What is the timeline and process for the development of the Early Learning and Development Guidelines?**

McRel and the Advisory Group have developed the following timeline for this project:

- August - December 2011: Conduct state and national research, develop 1<sup>st</sup> draft of Guidelines
- November 2011 - January 2012: 1<sup>st</sup> draft reviewed by Advisory and national experts; input incorporated into 2<sup>nd</sup> draft
- February 2012: Webinars for Colorado stakeholder to review 2<sup>nd</sup> draft
- March 2012: Final Guidelines document developed; recommendations submitted for dissemination and roll-out