

INVESTING AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT FUNDS TO PREVENT CHILD MALTREATMENT AND PROMOTE FAMILY WELL-BEING

As Coloradans, we share the collective responsibility of ensuring children in our communities are able to reach their human potential. **Every child has the right to grow up in an environment that is safe and nurturing, and we must strive, together, to give families the tools and opportunities to succeed and grow.**

Communities prosper when our youngest children thrive because they are our future workers, leaders and community members. No matter where they live – the plains, mountains, rural areas or urban centers – children need high-quality experiences and loving relationships to support healthy development.

During early childhood, the basic architecture of the brain is being built, which brings both risk and opportunity. In fact, **more than one million new brain connections form every second from belly to age eight** and this continues into adulthood. This architecture is best supported when children have regular and healthy interactions with caring adults, both inside and outside of the home.

On the other hand, **economic and social adversity can create a toxic stress response in families, leading to greater risk of child harm and impacting brain development.** Due to the pandemic, parents and caregivers are confronting extraordinary challenges, including decreased wages or loss of work, lack of child care and housing instability, among other hardships that can compound the day-to-day stress of raising children.



PROVEN STRATEGIES TO PREVENT CHILD MALTREATMENT AND PROMOTE FAMILY WELL-BEING MAKES GOOD SENSE.

Wise investment of American Rescue Plan Act funds will go a long way to **address pronounced need and opportunities during pregnancy through the first five years of life.**

- Three of the diseases associated with adverse childhood experiences, Cardiovascular disease, diabetes and depression, together consume **\$630 Billion dollars of healthcare costs a year.**¹
- Nobel-prize economist, James Heckman, shows that **every dollar spent on high quality, birth-to-five programs for disadvantaged children delivers a 13% per annum return on investment.**²
- A study of the Economic Burden of Child Maltreatment in the United States and Implications for Prevention, attributed a **\$124 billion total lifetime estimated financial costs** associated with just one year of confirmed cases of child maltreatment.³
- Family Resource Centers have a demonstrated ability to **strengthen families and prevent entry into care,**⁴ including statistically significant gains in family self-sufficiency in Colorado.⁵
- Research from Colorado Results First found that **Colorado's home visiting programs return between \$1.50 and \$6.10 in benefits for each dollar spent.**⁶
- Participation in Food Stamp Programs and WIC is associated with **higher birth weight, likelihood of immunization and academic achievement** for children among other benefits.⁷
- In Colorado, **Head Start is anticipated to have a positive return on investment** of \$4.34 avoided in future costs for every dollar invested in the program.⁸
- Colorado has **one of the highest rates of low birth weight births** in the country at about 9%, but as high as 26% in some counties.
- 27.3% of women **felt down, depressed, or hopeless since their baby was born** sometimes, often, or frequently.
- An estimated **54,000 parents in Colorado reported that they felt aggravation** from parenting usually or always in the past month.
- On the 2017-2018 National Survey of Children's Health, over 10,000 Colorado parents admitted that they didn't think they were handling the day-to-day demands of raising children well, and **1 in 5 parents stated they did not have anyone to turn to for day to day emotional support** with raising children.
- Of Colorado child maltreatment fatalities in State Fiscal Year 2018-2019, 57.6% of children were **under the age of four.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

COLORADO PARTNERSHIP FOR THRIVING FAMILIES

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INVESTING AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT FUNDS TO PREVENT CHILD MALTREATMENT AND PROMOTE FAMILY WELL-BEING

The Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families (the Partnership) aims to create conditions where children and the adults in their lives – parents, family members, caregivers, and educators - can thrive.

Members of the Partnership, including **Colorado Counties Inc., state and local public health and human services departments, families with lived experiences and Illuminate Colorado**, have created the following recommendations for County Commissioners to aid investing American Rescue Plan Act funds in early childhood and reap long-term benefits of these investments to build stronger communities and families.

Child maltreatment is preventable. **When families have information and access to resources to meet basic needs, we strengthen the foundation for families and communities to thrive.**

Research has shown the five Protective Factors have the power to prevent and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. Focused attention on **building protective factors in all families before toxic stress occurs**—including addressing systemic barriers to building protective factors across the population, will help buffer from the negative consequences of exposure to risks by either reducing the impact of the risk or changing the way a person responds to the risk.

INVESTMENTS DESIGNED TO CREATE CONDITIONS WHERE CHILDREN AND THE ADULTS IN THEIR LIVES CAN THRIVE.

- VOLUNTARY EVIDENCE-BASED HOME VISITING SERVICES
- COMMUNITY-BASED PARENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS
- EARLY CHILDHOOD AND CHILD CARE PROGRAMS
- FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS
- HOUSING STABILITY AND RENTAL SUPPORT
- FOOD ACCESS RESOURCES, AND COORDINATION AND CONNECTION WITH MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE USE, AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES
- POSITIVE YOUTH PROGRAMMING
- INTEGRATED PHYSICAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES FOR ALL FAMILY MEMBERS INCLUDING FAMILY PLANNING, PRENATAL AND POSTPARTUM CARE, AND PEDIATRIC CARE
- TAILORED SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER TREATMENT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES FOR FAMILIES IMPACTED BY SUBSTANCE USE
- COMMUNITY AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AROUND HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

A key component of impactful programming is ensuring it is community-driven by **engaging family voice.**

We encourage you to partner with families in planning, implementation, oversight and evaluation of local programs and investments to ensure funding is effectively designed to meet the needs of families in your community.



Contact Illuminate Colorado to Learn More About How to Make the Most of ARPA Funds at IlluminateColorado.org

¹ How Early Childhood Experiences Affect Lifelong Health and Learning." YouTube, uploaded by Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 1 June 2021, www.youtube.com/watch?v=lipVaPKrjRk&feature=youtu.be.

² The Heckman Equation. "13% ROI Research Toolkit." The Heckman Equation, 10 May 2019, heckmanequation.org/resource/13-roi-toolbox.

³ Fang X, Brown DS, Florence CS, & Mercy JA (2012). The economic burden of child maltreatment in the United States and implications for prevention. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 36(2), 156–165.

⁴ Casey Family Programs. "Appendix: Snapshot of Research on Family Resource Centers." Casey Family Programs, 20 June 2019, casey.org/family-resource-centers-appendix.

⁵ Colorado Family Resource Center Association. (2017). Family Pathways & CFSA 2.0 Evaluation Report. Retrieved from <http://www.cofamilycenters.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2017-FRCA-Family-Development-Report-Executive-Summary.pdf>

⁶ Colorado Home Visiting Coalition. "About Home Visiting." Colorado Home Visiting Coalition, 23 Nov. 2020, cohomevisiting.org/about-home-visiting.

⁷ Carlson, Steven, and Zoë Neuberger. "WIC Works: Addressing the Nutrition and Health Needs of Low-Income Families for More Than Four Decades." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 27 Jan. 2021, www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/wic-works-addressing-the-nutrition-and-health-needs-of-low-income-families.

⁸ "HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START." Colorado Office of Early Childhood, www.coloradoofficeofearlychildhood.com/OEC_Families?p=Family&s=Head-Start-Early-Head-Start&lang=en.