

Working together so all children are valued, healthy and thriving



Early Connections Learning Centers

Early Learning & Development

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Home Network of the Pikes Peak Region

Description:

Early Connections is known for developing and implementing innovative approaches to quality programs and is a recognized leader in the field of early education. Early Connections was one of the first programs in Colorado to implement child outcome assessment, increase the level of formal education for teachers, and blend federal support from Head Start and Early Head Start in center and/or family child care classrooms and state funding through the Colorado Preschool Program in center classrooms.

Early Connections has a well-established infrastructure which supports the Home Network of the Pikes Peak Region (Home Network). The Home Network was formed in 2000 to increase capacity and quality services offered to low-income families in family child care homes. The Home Network is currently working with thirty five family child care homes in a shared services model.

There are thousands of home-based early childhood education (ECE) businesses in this country. Unlike other areas of early childhood education; for-profit, not-for-profit and church-based programs, family child care homes are an isolated component of ECE services. Not only is the fragmented system of family child care homes difficult for the providers (the business owners), the lack of coordination in the sector results in fragmented services that are difficult for parents to navigate. Parents can spend hours identifying quality providers and getting good information that provides opportunity for quality choice settings.

Low profitability and weak business platforms have an impact on ECE quality. Poor to mediocre programs do not help children get ready for school. This quality gap presents an additional issue: high quality ECE is costly and unaffordable to most parents. Family child care homes function on very weak business platforms with cumbersome and limited funding streams, resulting in few economies of scale. Many parents seeking child care often develop the opinion that family child care home providers automatically mean low quality care.

In an effort to address business practices and quality in family child care homes, the Home Network works with providers that are committed to delivering high quality services. Through surveys gathered from focus groups in Colorado, family child care home providers expressed an interest in assistance with administration, enrollment, curriculum, assessment and overall quality building. These groups stated that business operations responsibilities take them away from their primary job of providing care and education.

Community stakeholders have identified several areas of concern related to early childhood education and child care. There is a deficit of quality providers and facilities for infant and toddler care, and those that are available are frequently not located in areas where families need them. The Home Network model of shared services allows for quality capacity building in targeted areas of need.

In El Paso County, approximately 4 potential home providers take part in pre-licensing training each quarter. There are approximately 215 licensed home-based child care businesses in El Paso County at any given time. This number of 215 remains constant even with the quarterly pre-licensing training. In short, growth in the industry appears to be a “revolving door” — new providers open and existing providers close at a similar rate. As a result, efforts to improve the quality of home based child care businesses do not have a lasting impact; without strong, sustainable businesses, the return on quality investments is minimal and short-term. The Home Network addresses this issue by providing the support needed to help providers stay in business and, over time, improve the quality and scope of services that children need to succeed in school and in life.

The Home Network improves business stability in family child care homes through a shared-services model with the goal of increasing quality early care and education practices.

Our goals are to: 1) build quality along a continuum that meets the needs of providers with varying levels of experience, 2) provide continuous quality improvement and professional development 3) support providers with a lending library of ECE materials 4) offer access to an industry leading child management system and 5) market the Home Network as well as specific FCCH’s through a Home Network website.

Primary Role of Program in Early Childhood Systems:

Membership/Training

Service Area(s):

El Paso, Teller

Population(s) Served:

Newborn, Infants, Toddlers, Preschoolers, Kindergartners, 1st Graders, 2nd Graders, 3rd Graders, Families, Teachers

Services This Program Provides that Advance the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework*:



Learning & Development

Education, coaching and ongoing training exist for caregivers, teachers and other professionals



Learning & Development

Learning experiences and environments are high quality, developmentally appropriate and affordable



Learning & Development

Formal and informal care environments and education practices reach the highest levels of quality



Learning & Development

Adults understand and support children's learning and development, including social and emotional



Learning & Development

All settings provide effective transitions across and within programs, schools and systems

Program data can be found here:

https://www.earlyconnections.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/home-network-year-1-report_final.pdf