

# Clayton's 2021 Early Childhood Policy Priorities



Nurturing families. Discovering solutions. Advancing change.

## Expanding Access to High-Quality Early Care and Learning Opportunities

An abundance of research shows that high-quality early learning results in tangible learning benefits for our youngest students, leading to long-term educational success. Likewise, self-sufficient, thriving families are economically sustained by parents' ability to work and earn a living, free from worry about safe and nurturing care for their young children. Yet here in Colorado, the past decade has seen a steady decline in the availability of affordable, quality childcare. And amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the problem has only been exacerbated. The problem is particularly acute for parents experiencing poverty, whose ability to support their families is hindered not only by extremely limited childcare options but also costs far beyond their financial reach. We believe that equitable access to early learning and development opportunities is integral to the futures of all families in Colorado, as well as the economic vitality of the entire state. We join with educators and

concerned citizens throughout the state in supporting efforts to expand preschool to all four-year-olds in Colorado who want it and increase access to culturally and linguistically proficient licensed child care to infants, toddlers, and three-year-olds. To achieve these goals, policymakers must focus on increasing the supply of licensed family child care homes by continuing to implement the recommendations in the Senate Bill 063 Infant and Family Child Care Strategic Action Plan.



## Promoting Positive Maternal and Infant Health Outcomes

Colorado currently lacks the infrastructure needed for all families to thrive during the perinatal, birthing, and postpartum periods. This is especially true for families of color, Indigenous families, undocumented families, and people who are low-income. The solution to these issues necessitates a multi-pronged approach. Much like the Momnibus federal bill package, Colorado will see its first package of bills necessary to make perinatal care more effective and equitable. This package of maternity care bills will address perinatal disparities and will create a multi-year state policy platform supporting birth justice with a human rights framework. This will create a long-term legislative opportunity to implement a statewide birth equity agenda. This will include a Human Rights component, and a Data, Equity component, as well as the Direct Entry Midwifery Sunset.

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*With more than 30 years of front-line expertise, Clayton is uniquely positioned to become Colorado's hub for innovative work in early childhood development. Investing in young children is one of the most powerful levers to create justice, opportunity, and equity. To realize that future, we must work to transform the systems and beliefs that perpetuate racism and inequity. Clayton's policy and advocacy team influences systems leaders through policy and advocacy informed by our work with children and families, and the research and innovation generated from that work. We work to advance the field by sharing knowledge and tools to enhance the quality of early childhood development across the country. Finally, we partner with parents, educators, and the community to amplify their voices to advocate for local, state, and federal policy change.*

*Learn more about Clayton's Policy and Advocacy work at [ClaytonEarlyLearning.org/advocacy](https://claytonearlylearning.org/advocacy)*

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## 2021 Early Childhood Policy Priorities for Colorado



*Continued from previous page.* Midwives are medical providers with expertise in the perinatal period and childbirth. In Colorado, they currently assist with childbirth in the home and are the preferred choice of care for many families. Midwives have specific cultural ties to communities like Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color. The midwifery model of care provides optimal birth outcomes for low-risk families. In Colorado, professional credentials are “sunsetting” every three years, rendering them invalid without reauthorization

from the legislature. The direct entry model of midwifery requires a national credential through the North American Registry of Midwives, certifying them as a professional midwife and allowing them to obtain licensure with the state. This credential is set to sunset in 2021, and therefore must be reauthorized.

### Strengthening Colorado Families Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

At Clayton, we know that when parents are healthy financially, emotionally, mentally, and physically, their children thrive. Too many Colorado families face food insecurity, unstable or unsafe housing, barriers to basic healthcare, and racism – exposing parents and children to toxic levels of stress. Those issues have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Coping with such critical survival issues repeatedly, over long periods of time causes profound and lasting implications for even the youngest children, stalling healthy development and their capacity to learn and succeed. We recognize the inherent societal value of healthy families as both a moral and an economic imperative for a sustainable and prosperous future for Colorado. This is why, alongside our partners and families, we are excited to implement an accessible and affordable paid family and medical leave program, expand the Earned Income Tax Credit for families, increase access to health insurance and support housing assistance relief for families.

### About Clayton Early Learning

- Clayton Early Learning is an innovation hub that fosters thriving, equitable communities by partnering with families to **nurture** a whole child, whole family approach to the early years, **discover** what works, and **advance** systems change.
- Home to Colorado’s only Educare school, a nationally recognized model supporting children from birth to age five, and their families, Clayton provides direct early education to 200 children on campus and hundreds more through our network of home-based and community-based programs.
- Clayton provides high-quality early care and education to children of limited opportunity. More than half of our school-based children live in single-parent households, 35% identify Spanish as their primary language, and 99% of Clayton’s school children live at or below the federal poverty line.
- An integrated team of teachers, child family educators, and health professionals ensures children enrolled in Clayton programs receive ongoing, comprehensive physical and mental health care screenings and first-line interventions.
- Clayton is a leader for professional development in the field of early childhood education, offering a wide range of services including coaching and continuing education opportunities for Colorado’s early childhood workforce.
- With a robust focus on identifying and duplicating best practices in the field of early childhood, Clayton offers an extensive array of research and evaluation services to providers throughout the state, creating benchmarks for excellence.



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Learn more at  
[ClaytonEarlyLearning.org](https://ClaytonEarlyLearning.org)