

Legislation



COLORADO LEAGUE *of*
CHARTER SCHOOLS

HB22-1295

HB22-1295: Department Early Childhood And Universal Preschool Program

- Sponsors: Rep. Emily Sirota (D), Rep. Alec Garnett (D), Sen. Janet Buckner (D), Sen. Stephen Fenberg (D)
- The bill takes effect January 9, 2023

Description: Concerning the department of early childhood, and establishing the duties of the department of early childhood and the executive director of the department, relocating early childhood programs from the departments of human services and education to the department of early childhood, creating the Colorado universal preschool program, and making and adjusting appropriations.

Overview:

This new law establishes duties for the Department of Early Childhood (DEC), moves programs to the new department, and creates the new universal preschool program. The law requires the DEC to develop and implement a single, online application for families to use for applying for all publicly funded early childhood programs and services offered by the department. The universal preschool program will be housed in the DEC beginning in FY 2023-24.

Rulemaking

The law authorizes the DEC Executive Director to promulgate rules, and creates a 15-member rules advisory council to make rulemaking recommendations, with a county subcommittee to advise on issues impacting county departments.

2022

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Local coordinating organizations

The DEC must select public or nonprofit entities to serve as local coordinating organizations (LCOs) throughout the state. LCOs will coordinate application and enrollment for early childhood programs, manage the mixed delivery system of preschool, distribute funding, increase capacity over time, and support providers and early childhood workforce.

Eligibility

Under the new law, children are eligible for 10 hours per week of free preschool in the year before kindergarten, and three and four year old children with a disability must be offered services in alignment with the child's individualized education plan.

Funding distribution

The DEC must establish formulas to annually set per-child rates for preschool services. The rates must take into account the cost of providing preschool, and variations in costs in different regions of the state and variations in the cost of providing preschool services that result from the characteristics of children, among other considerations. The per-child rates must be at least the constitutional compliance rate, defined as 40 percent of the statewide base per pupil funding in FY 2023-24, increased by inflation annually.

Distributions to school districts and charter schools

The law specifies that if a school district or charter school receives less preschool funding in FY 2023-24 (calculated as enrolled children multiplied by per-child rates), than they received in FY 2022-23 through the CPP (calculated as 50 percent of preliminary per pupil funding multiplied by the CPP enrollment), the district or charter school must receive the difference between the two amounts in FY 2023-24. A similar calculation is applied for community-based preschool providers that currently receive funding through a contract with a school district or charter school.

School Impact:

Beginning in FY 2023-24, this law will decrease the state share of school finance by \$136.8 million by removing preschool enrollment from the school finance formula; districts will instead receive state funding for preschool students through the universal preschool program. The exact amount of preschool funding that school districts will receive cannot be estimated until per-child rates are established, and will depend on preschool enrollment in district preschools and the ages of the children.