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-3rd 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 12th 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 1st draft of Guidelines
- November 2011 - January 2012: 1st draft reviewed by Advisory and national experts; input incorporated into 2nd draft
- February 2012: Webinars for Colorado stakeholder to review 2nd draft
- March 2012: Final Guidelines document developed; recommendations submitted for dissemination and roll-out