

# Colorado Case Study:

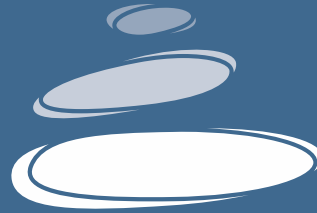
## How One State Is Revamping Its Early Childhood System

NCSL Early Childhood Fellows | September 13, 2022



# Guiding questions

- How does governance of early childhood systems and programs affect outcomes for young children and families?
- What should policymakers consider when examining their state's own early childhood governance structure?
- How do public and private partners play a role in strengthening governance and accelerating change?
- What lessons can be learned from Colorado's experience...
  - ...laying the groundwork for universal prekindergarten?
  - ...recruiting and retaining early childhood educators?
  - ...engaging philanthropy, parents, providers, schools and business leaders?



**EARLY MILESTONES**  
COLORADO

**Colorado Case Study**  
**NCSL Early Childhood Fellows Meeting**

SEPTEMBER 13, 2022

# COLORADO'S EARLY CHILDHOOD FRAMEWORK

## Strategies for Action

- Connect and Empower Families
- Build Community Capacity
- Implement Quality Standards
- Make Data Informed Decisions
- Develop and Retain the Workforce
- Support Consumer Affordability
- Advance Sustainable Business Practices
- Encourage Public Private Approaches
- Pursue Continuous Quality Improvement
- Ensure Coordinated Services
- Promote and Share Knowledge

## Fundamentals

- Strong Partnerships
- Sufficient Investments
- Sound Policy
- Robust Public Engagement
- Shared Accountability
- Effective Leadership
- Relevant Education Opportunities

## Outcomes ► access, quality and equity

- Family Support & Education
- Health & Well-Being
- Learning & Development

### ACCESS

- Family engagement and leadership opportunities exist within programs, schools and communities
- Services and supports promote the well-being and resiliency of parents and caregivers
- Family friendly policies and practices exist in the workplace
- Comprehensive health coverage and services are consistently utilized by pregnant women and children
- Integrated and preventive maternal and child physical, behavioral and oral health services are available
- All settings promote mental health and well-being through early identification, consultation and treatment
- Education, coaching and ongoing training exist for caregivers, teachers and other professionals
- Learning experiences and environments are high quality, developmentally appropriate and affordable

### QUALITY

- Family knowledge and capacity support children's healthy development and learning
- Families advocate for high quality comprehensive services and supports that lead to future success
- All health care providers, including mental health, deliver coordinated, family focused care
- Settings and practices promote strong relationships, social and emotional development, appropriate nutrition and physical activity
- Formal and informal care environments and education practices reach the highest levels of quality
- Adults understand and support children's learning and development, including social and emotional
- All settings provide effective transitions across and within programs, schools and systems

### EQUITY

- Education, employment, housing, financial and legal supports contribute to family economic security
- Families, including those with high needs, experience timely and coordinated services and supports
- Families have the ability to plan the number and timing of their children
- All environments are safe, free of toxins, have affordable foods and offer physical activity
- Children with special health, behavioral or developmental needs receive individualized services and supports
- All children are ready for school and achieving by 3rd grade regardless of ability, race, place, income, language and culture
- Children, including those with high needs, receive timely, comprehensive and affordable academic services and transition supports

## all children are valued, healthy and thriving



## Results

- CHILD**  
Young children reach their developmental potential and are ready to succeed in school and in life
- RELATIONSHIPS**  
Adults are knowledgeable, responsive and interact effectively with and on behalf of children
- ENVIRONMENTS**  
Environments that impact children are safe, stable and supportive
- COLORADO**  
Localities and the state attain economic and social benefits by prioritizing children and families

# MAJOR POLICY MILESTONES

---

## July 2020 – Present

Ongoing data collection on the impact of the pandemic on children & families, providers, and the workforce. Informs legislative & executive priorities, including stimulus funding

## November 2020

Prop EE. Tobacco and nicotine tax to fund universal, voluntary preschool (10hrs/week)

## April – June 2021

HB21-1304. Creates a new department and requires a transition plan from Gov. Mandates planning process for new state preschool program.

## Jan – May 2022

HB22-1295. Creates Colorado Universal Preschool Program And defines the CO Dept of EC  
HB22-1010. Invests in the Child Care & Early Learning Workforce

## August 2023

State preschool Launch!



**July 2020 – Winter 2021**  
**Future of PreK**  
Engagement, Research, and Synthesis

**June 2021 - December 2021**  
State engagement process on governance and Pre-K

**July 2022**  
Launch of new Colorado Department of Early Childhood



# Background

## Future of Preschool Engagement Process (Fall 2020)

Initiated by Governor Polis, led by the Colorado Children's Campaign, supported by Early Milestones Colorado

1. **Preschool Policy Leadership Committee.** Governor appointed, 31-members. 7 meetings in 2020. Additional work in Winter 2021.
2. **Preschool Policy Advisory.** Open to anyone. 246 participants attended at least 1 of 7 meetings.
3. **Community Engagement Toolkit.** Utilized by over 36 local groups to hold more than 50 meetings.

## Future of Pre-K: Cornerstones

- 1) Provide preschool for all with additional programming for those who need it
- 2) Promote equity
- 3) Ensure age-appropriate programming that addresses the whole child
- 4) Make things easy for families and preschool programs
- 5) Connect preschool with childcare options that families want and need
- 6) Support and raise up early childhood educators
- 7) Encourage promising and evidence-based practices
- 8) Collect and use data to get results for children
- 9) Create a better system of early care and education for children of all ages

# Background

## Proposition EE: Tobacco & Nicotine Tax for Health and ECE Initiatives

- Referred by the legislature via HB20-1427
- Created a preschool program cash fund
- Required enacting legislation in the 2021 session
- Funds to expand or enhance the Colorado Preschool Program or a *successor* program. Minimum 10 hrs/week
- Requires mixed delivery, high quality, and coordination with EC and K-12
- Funds can be used to recruit and train the workforce and increase provider capacity



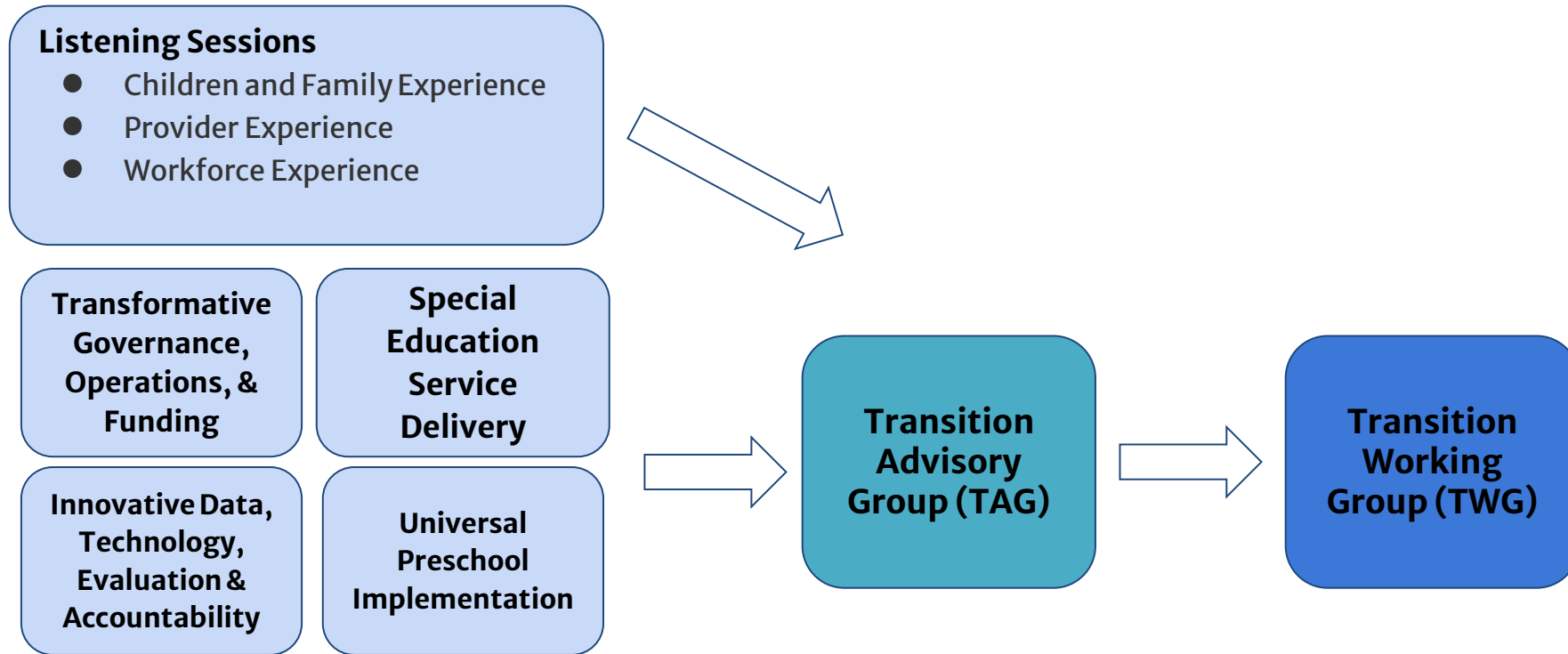
# Background

## HB21-1304: Early Childhood System in Colorado

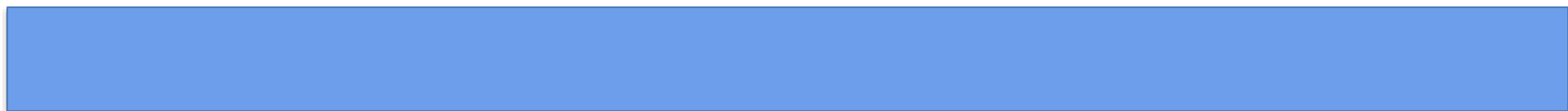
- Creates a new Colorado Department of Early Childhood on July 1, 2022.
  - *requires a transition plan from the Office of the Governor by Nov. 1, 2021.*
  - *ECLC to approve the transition plan within 14 days of receipt.*
- Mandates a planning process for Colorado's new universal, voluntary preschool program.
- The new Colorado Department of Early Childhood will implement the preschool program beginning July 2023.

# Subgroup Structure

## The Early Childhood Leadership Commission Transition Advisory Group, Subgroups, & Listening Sessions



## *Recommendations to TAG & TWG*



# Sample Recommendations

## Department of Early Childhood

- Establish a Rules and Regulations Advisory Council.
- Build an equity-focused leadership team.
- Address funding challenges identified by families and providers.
- Prioritize supporting the growth and development of its early childhood workforce.

## Universal Preschool

- Empower local leads to foster partnerships, create alignment, and plan for the allocation of funding.
- Develop a single, unified application for families to access all publicly-funded EC services.
- Create a base rate for preschool and additional adjustments that can ensure access for all children. Balance providing 10 hours/week and additional hours for children with greatest needs.



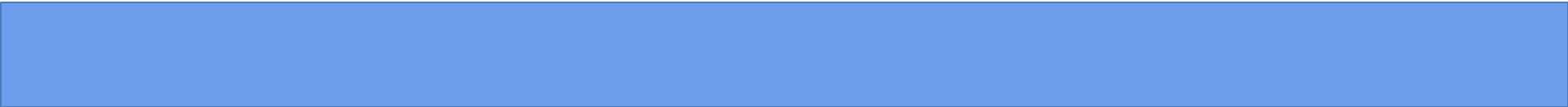
# Colorado's Department of Early Childhood

## **Vision**

All Colorado children, families and early childhood professionals are valued, healthy and thriving.

## **Mission**

The Colorado Department of Early Childhood champions a comprehensive, community-informed, effective, high quality and equitable early childhood system that supports the care, education and well-being of all Colorado's young children, their families and early childhood professionals in all settings.



# Colorado Case Study:

*A new early childhood system and governance structure*



# Colorado Experts

Rep. Emily Sirota



Colorado House District 9

Lisa Roy, Ed.D.



Executive Director  
Colorado Department of Early  
Childhood

Tom Massey



Co-Chair, Executive Subcommittee  
Early Childhood Leadership  
Commission



# Colorado Case Study:

*Child care, universal prekindergarten and the early childhood workforce*



# Colorado Experts

Jennifer Stedron, Ph.D.



Executive Director  
Early Milestones Colorado

Dawn Odean



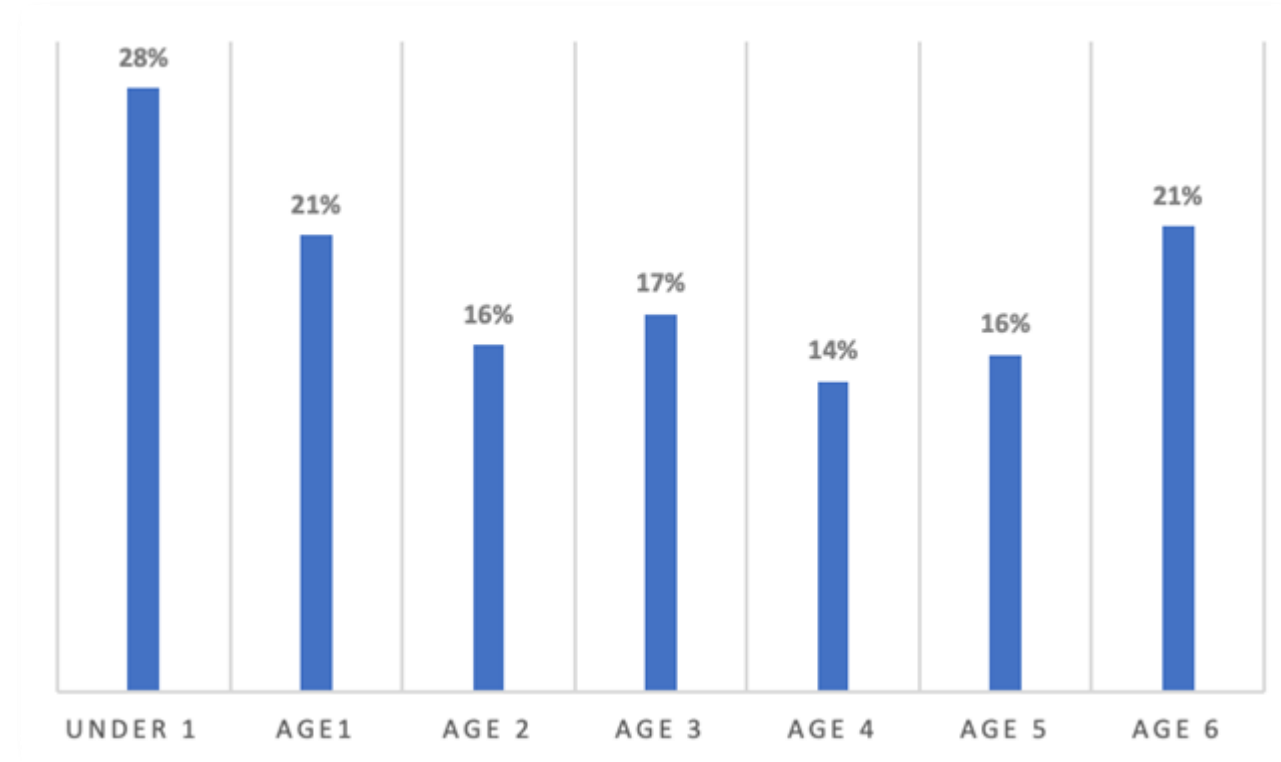
Director  
Colorado Universal Preschool  
Program

Alethia Gomez



Director of Programs & Initiatives  
Executives Partnering to Invest in  
Children

## UNMET CHILD CARE NEEDS BY CHILDREN'S AGES



---

## DIFFICULTY FINDING CHILD CARE

75%

Of families reported difficulty finding child care for kids age 6 and under.

Middle income families report the most difficulty finding care.

Hispanic families report less difficulty finding care than either white or African American families.

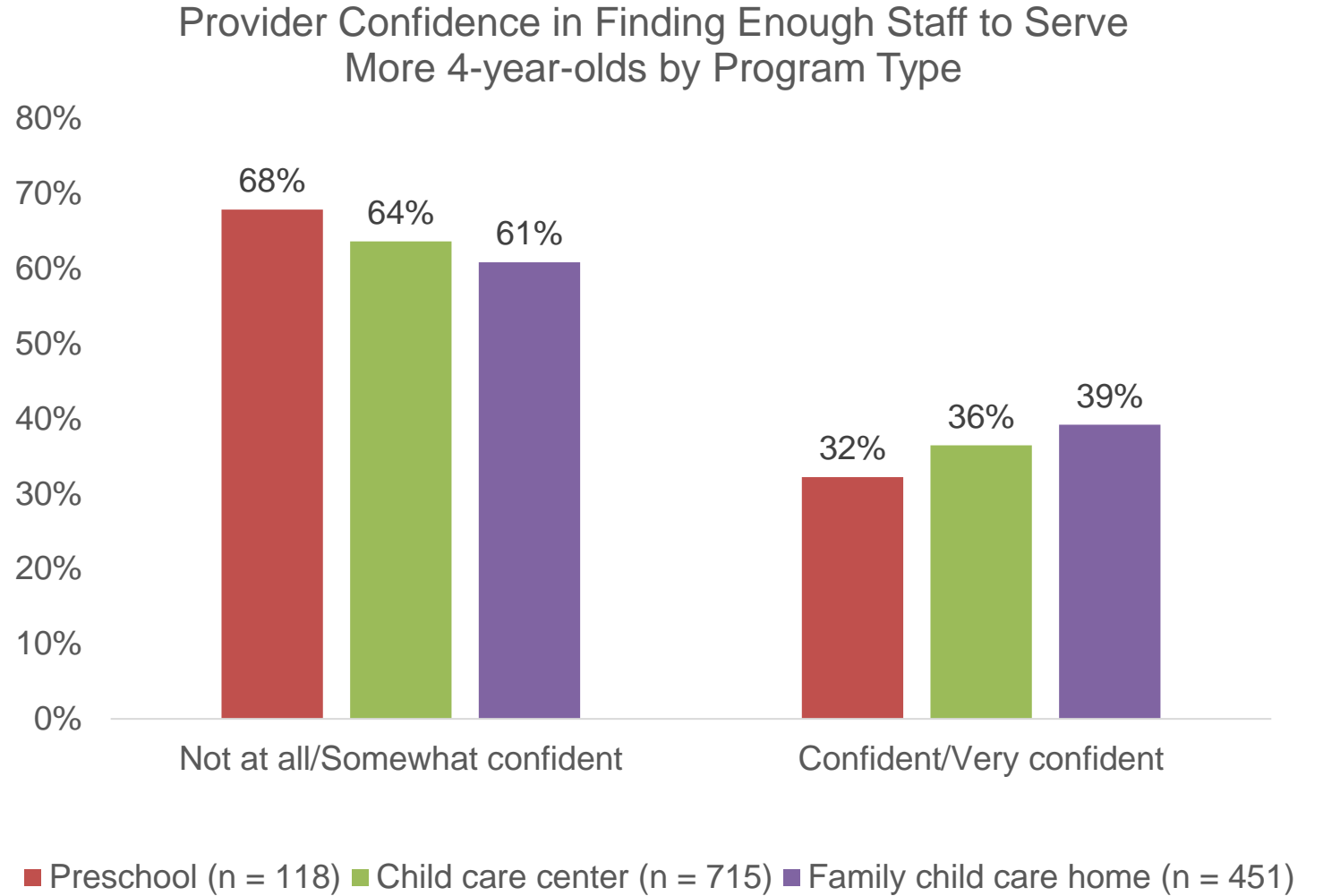
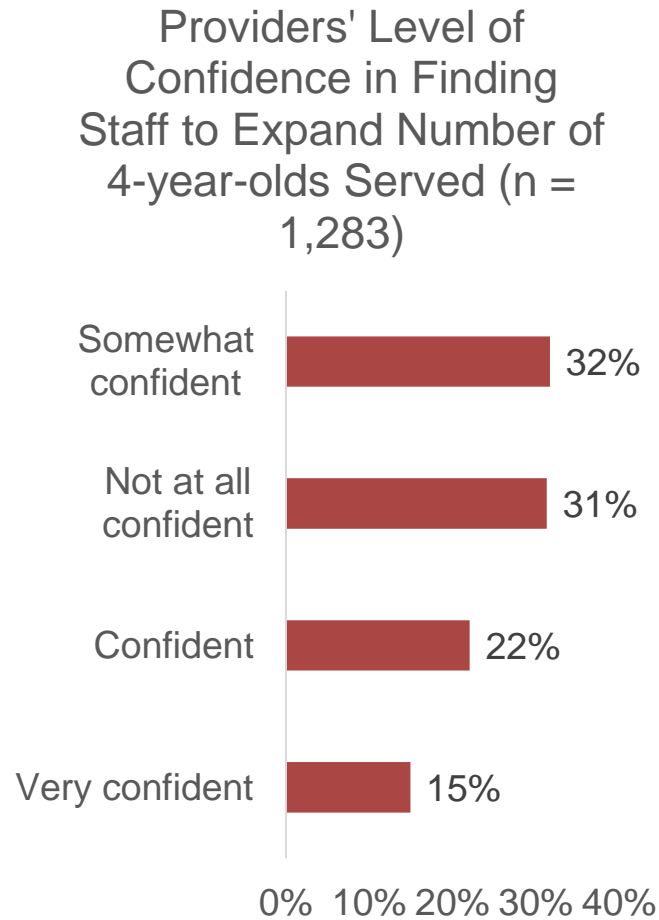




## Key Takeaways

- Colorado families continue to experience economic hardship
- Families who lack sufficient childcare report worsening mental health
- Families see preschool as a form of childcare and have high hopes for preschool to help them improve family life overall.
- Families find preschool valuable for socializing children, supporting academic preparedness, and teaching social and emotional skills.

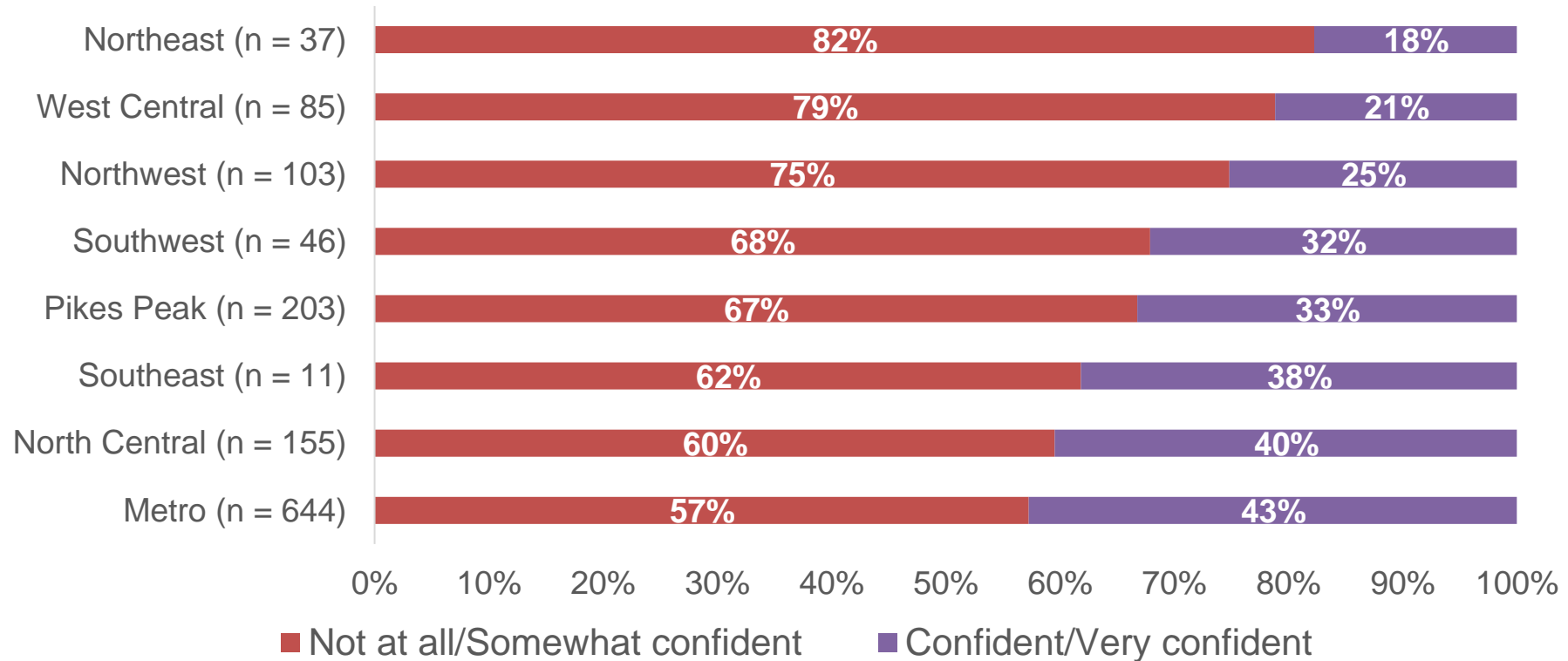
## WAVE II PROVIDER DATA: SPRING SUMMER 2021





**WAVE II PROVIDER DATA: SPRING SUMMER 2021**

Provider Confidence in Finding Enough Staff to Serve More 4-year-olds by Region



# Colorado Experts

Jennifer Stedron, Ph.D.



Executive Director  
Early Milestones Colorado

Dawn Odean



Director  
Colorado Universal Preschool  
Program

Alethia Gomez



Director of Programs & Initiatives  
Executives Partnering to Invest in  
Children

# Round tables

Select a round table for deeper discussion. After 15-minutes select one additional round table for deeper discussion.

- **Early childhood workforce** with Jennifer Stedron and Jeni Palmer
- **Universal prekindergarten** with Dawn Odean, Anna Shapiro and Melissa Mincic
- **The legislative perspective** with Rep. Sirota and Wade Fickler
- **The business perspective** with Alethea Gomez and Patrick Lyons
- **Early childhood governance** with Lisa Roy and Alison May
- **State-local coordination** with Tom Massey and Jenna Bannon

Return to this room at **4:45 p.m.**



**Thank you,  
panelists!**

# Next steps



## Tonight

- Dinner on your own!
- Keep your receipts. NCSL will reimburse up to \$40.



## Tomorrow

- First session begins at 8 am.
- Check out before coming down to the meeting room.
- Bring your luggage with you.