



# The Colorado Preschool Program

The Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) is a state-funded early childhood education program administered by CDE. The General Assembly provides funding for up to 29,360 children to attend half- or full-day preschool each year. CPP is managed by local school districts and their District Advisory Councils (DAC). Each participating school district receives a base allocation of half-day positions. These positions are used to serve preschoolers in either half- or full-day programs in school district preschool classrooms, local childcare centers, community preschools or Head Start programs.

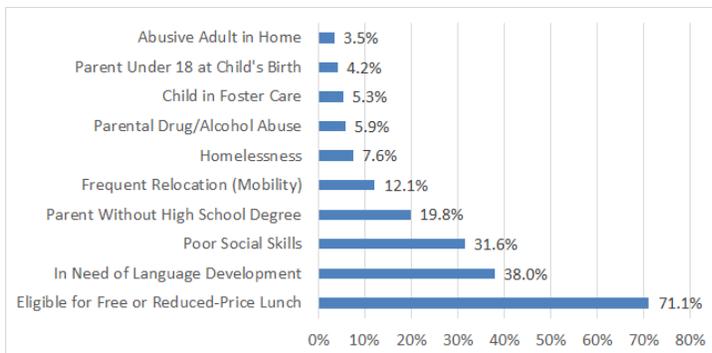
## CPP Eligibility

To be eligible for CPP children must be between the ages of three and five and have specific risk factors. Children who are three must have three risk factors whereas four- and five-year-olds need to have one risk factor and not be age-eligible for kindergarten. Districts have the responsibility to establish a clear eligibility policy to ensure that the program serves preschoolers with the highest need.

The CPP Act defines 10 risk factors under which children may qualify for CPP. In the figure below, each row shows the percentage of children served in CPP in 2018-19 with each of the legislatively defined risk factors.

### CPP Eligibility Risk Factors (2018-19)<sup>1</sup>

Each line represents the percentage of children served in CPP with that reported risk factor



### Quick-Reference Statistics (2018-19)

- **29,360** total authorized CPP positions
- Of these, **9,200** positions are Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement (ECARE) positions which can be used to fund half- or full-day programming
- **27,530** children were served
- **1,829** children served with two CPP positions for full-day services
- **5,586** ECARE positions used for full-day kindergarten
- **175** out of 179 school districts participated in CPP
- **\$122.5 million** in total program funding was allocated
- **\$4,171** average funding was provided for each CPP position (\$4,448 average funding per child)

<sup>1</sup> Because four-year-olds may qualify with more than one risk factor, and three-year-olds must be identified with at least three risk factors, the percentages total more than 100 percent.



## Partnerships between School District and Community Based Programs in CPP

The CPP Act promotes district partnerships with community-based child care agencies, Head Start programs, and other non-public schools. Districts are required to issue a formal Request for Proposal at least every two years to identify non-public school partners in their area who have interest in serving children eligible for CPP. CDE published a guide for early care and education programs interested in becoming community partners, [Community Partners and the Colorado Preschool Program](#), which communicates program requirements along with the benefits and logistics of successful partnering between public and non-public schools. CDE is currently working with districts to identify and remove barriers to support additional partnerships between school districts and non-public school preschool settings, when available, within local communities.

Preliminary district data submitted in the 2018-19:

- 53% of participating school districts contract some or all of their positions to community based childcare providers.
- Of these, 28% contract out all CPP positions to community based childcare providers. Many of these are small rural districts with only one community based childcare centers.

## Allocation of CPP Positions

Each district that voluntarily participates in CPP has a base allocation of half-day positions, some of which districts may combine to fund full-day services. Districts base allocations are determined based upon a review of an initial application along with analysis of their requested number of positions compared to need and risk data.

Districts occasionally turn back positions they cannot use during the fall pupil count. When this occurs, the positions are temporarily reallocated to another district until the next school year. The reduced need may occur for a variety of reasons including temporary changes in preschool population, absences of identified children during the pupil count window, and differences between predicted and actual enrollment. CDE works closely with districts before and during the fall pupil count in order to ensure returned positions are utilized by other districts that are able to serve additional eligible preschoolers.

## Allocation of Additional CPP Positions during Expansion Years

When expansion opportunities are made available as a result of increases to funding from the legislature, districts apply to CDE for additional positions through a competitive application as a part of their Annual Report and Reapplication. CDE reviews and ranks district applications for expansion positions using similar criteria as for awarding initial allocations, including:

- Program eligibility in accordance with the CPP Act (sections 22-28-107 and 108 C.R.S.).
- Evidence of need (i.e., estimated population, actual eligibility for free and reduced lunch, self-reported CPP enrollment data based on community specific eligibility factors)
- Data associated with school failure (i.e., dropout rates, assessment results, etc.).



More recently, in order to address equitable distribution CDE began to identify the number of potentially eligible children in each district compared with the actual number served. This allows CDE to compare districts, in terms of the proportion of the potentially eligible population served. Using this information, CDE is able to prioritize expansion opportunities for districts who are serving a lower proportion of eligible children.

### *ESTIMATING UNMET NEED FOR CPP*

CDE estimates that there are 76,410 3- and 4-year-olds in Colorado who may qualify for CPP. Of these, 9,397 children already receive preschool services through Head Start, resulting in a total of 67,013 estimated CPP eligible children. Of those, 23,497 preschool children were served in the current school year with the available 29,360 positions, some of which were combined for full day programs. Although 5,586 positions were redirected from kindergarten to serve even more preschoolers, there are still a large proportion of potentially eligible preschoolers with no state funding for service.

### **Increased Demand for Full Day Preschool**

There is some flexibility available to school districts to combine half-day CPP positions to provide full-day programming for students. Up to 5% of standard CPP positions can be combined whereas all ECARE positions have this flexibility. In the 2018-19 school year, 3,658 positions were combined in this way to serve 1,829 children in full-day programs.

For the 2019-20 school year, 11,726 positions are being combined for full-day programming, which is a substantial increase from about 12% to 39.9% of all CPP positions. This increase in reported use of combined positions is consistent with district reports of an increased demand from families for full-day services. Districts that offer only part-day programs report that some eligible families decline the program because they have difficulty paying tuition for the other portion of the day or because participation in a part-day program would require children to be enrolled in multiple programs across the course of the day or week.