

EARLY LEARNING

Building Excellent Early Education in Colorado

Partner Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC)

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The Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) is responsible for ensuring that the state's early childhood education system is the best it can be. Colorado's young children are educated in a variety of settings, including homes and centers. To help early childhood educators provide safe, engaging, culturally responsive, and equitable care, CDEC partnered with Education Northwest to build its library of self-paced e-learning courses. The courses, which range from thirty minutes to two hours, cover injury prevention, safe sleep for infants, nutrition, trauma-informed care, and many other topics and are available in both English and Spanish.

Expanding the knowledge base for early education providers

Since the beginning of the partnership in September 2019, we have developed a total of 63 courses, with another 16 expected to be completed by the end of the project in September 2023. Education Northwest staff members created self-paced online courses in English from storyboards provided by CDEC, translated existing courses from English to Spanish, and assembled curricula for instructor-led courses in both languages. The process involved managing the work of copyeditors, translators, voice talent, quality assurance reviewers in English and Spanish, and both in-house and contract developers.

Equitable professional development

These courses, which are posted on the **Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System**, now make up the majority of the CDEC course catalog and have significantly expanded the agency's Spanish-language professional development offerings. This helps make Colorado's early childhood care system more equitable, since many providers and the families they serve

speak Spanish as a first language. Early childhood educators now have more opportunities for professional development, and the state's children and their families have more consistent care because providers have easy access to the knowledge they need on a wide variety of topics.

In all, early childhood educators in Colorado have racked up 128,467 course completions so far. Some of the courses are required for all child care providers in the state, while others satisfy annual professional development requirements. Colorado has built a credentialing system to reward providers for completing the courses, which constitute a foundational piece of the state's early learning licensure program.