

RAISE UP OREGON

PROGRESS REPORT 2019-2020, HIGHLIGHTS



JANUARY 2021

The report is issued by the Early Learning Council

Acknowledgements

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KATE BROWN
GOVERNOR

January 2021

Dear Early Learning Stakeholder:

Early childhood is a priority of mine because I believe that, as the evidence supports, investing in services and systems for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and their families provides exponential benefits for our entire state. In 2019, the Early Learning Council released Oregon's statewide early learning systems plan, Raise Up Oregon. Raise Up Oregon set a strategic direction for our commitment to do more and do better for babies, toddlers, preschoolers, and their families.

Since its initial release, public and private leaders, advocates, providers, and families have worked to move the plan from concept to implementation. As you read the *Raise Up Oregon Progress Report 2019-2020*, you will see concrete evidence of steady and successful steps to develop an early learning system that prepares children for Kindergarten and supports healthy, stable families. It has required collaboration among five state agencies (early care and education, human services, health, K-12, and housing) plus the business and philanthropic communities to create these impacts.

We are now two years into implementation, and the extraordinary events of 2020 deepened our resolve and heightened our actions. COVID-19 only affirmed the importance of this work, and the urgency of acting now to work toward racial justice could not be clearer. Investing our time, energy, and resources in early childhood is the right road for us to be on; it incorporates our core values and commitments. I commend my agency directors and their staff, the Early Learning Council, and our many partners throughout the state on the successes to date.

As we move into 2021, more work awaits us. I will continue to challenge my agency directors, the Early Learning Council, and partners to keep at it. You can see my commitment in the Governor's Recommended Budget and in various legislative initiatives my office is advancing. I am proud to share this Progress Report with you and to be working hand in hand with you as we continue to realize the powerful impact of children's earliest years on their future, and to ensure that we have done all in our power to support our youngest children and their families. Thank you for your partnership.

Sincerely,

Governor Kate Brown

“

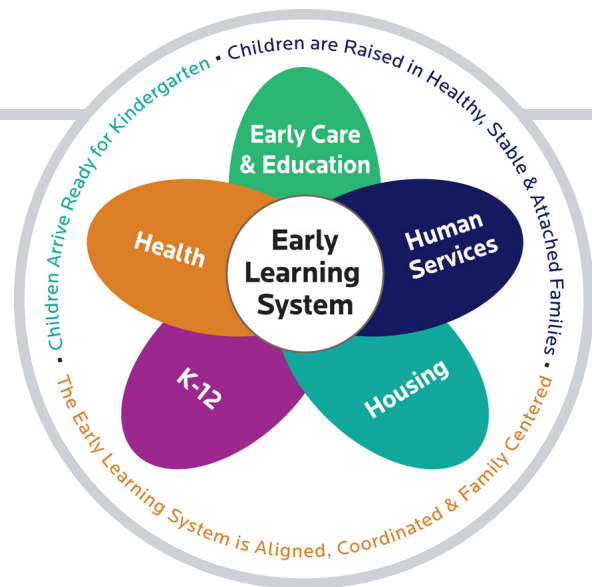
Investing our time, energy, and resources in early childhood is the right road for us to be on; it incorporates our core values and commitments.

- Governor Kate Brown



Introduction

Oregon is making considerable progress for its youngest children and families through steadfast implementation of *Raise Up Oregon: A Statewide Early Learning System Plan*. *Raise Up Oregon*, adopted by the Early Learning Council and endorsed by Governor Kate Brown in 2018, is grounded in the science of child development, equity, and a firm understanding that leaders from early care and education, K-12, health, housing, and human services—together with families, communities, and the public and private sectors—must work together during this critical period of children’s lives.



This *Raise Up Oregon Progress Report 2019-2020 (Progress Report)* showcases progress across five state agencies between January 2019 and September 2020 on the three goals of *Raise Up Oregon*:

1. Children arrive ready for kindergarten
2. Children are raised in healthy, stable, and attached families
3. The Early Learning System is aligned, coordinated, and family-centered

Income, race and zip code are powerful predictors of whether children and their families experience the conditions that are optimal for young children’s development. Breaking the link between these inherited factors and life outcomes can only happen if we change the circumstances of families, which means changing the distribution of opportunities in those years. The importance of the commitment to equity running through *Raise Up Oregon* has only deepened in the historic events of 2020. Between an unprecedented pandemic and a renewed awakening surrounding racial justice, the need to build racial equity in systems has intensified.

Raise Up Oregon creates a shared blueprint for agencies and sectors to work in tandem and avoid historic silos in building equitable systems that serve children and families across the state. While COVID-19 has had a profound impact on all of Oregon, it has reinforced the importance of the strategies in *Raise Up Oregon*, as well as the urgency of this work. Looking forward to the next three years of implementation, the Early Learning Council will continue to use *Raise Up Oregon* as the roadmap to guide policy and decision-making, and champion cross-sector approaches supporting the three goals.

The *Progress Report* starts with highlights, by each of the three goal areas, where state agencies have developed or expanded cross-sector programming, received new funding for cross-sector work, or engaged in creative collaborations over the past two years to better meet the needs of Oregon’s young children and their families. The next section includes the Early Learning Council’s priorities for the coming year. Priorities for the Council’s work address gaps between the many high-level, cross-sector accomplishments before and during COVID that are not captured in the highlights.

Raise Up Oregon Highlights 2019-2020

Goal 1: Children Arrive Ready for Kindergarten

When infants, toddlers and preschoolers are well supported through early care and education and access to health care, they are set up to succeed in school and beyond. During the first two years of *Raise Up Oregon* implementation, Oregon agencies made progress in closing important gaps in health and education service delivery to children, including children who have been underserved in the past and those with developmental delays and disabilities.

Health Care

Major strides to support early childhood health services were made in the first two years of *Raise Up Oregon* implementation.

1. Oregon Health Authority's (OHA) updated CCO 2.0 (Coordinated Care Organizations) for the Medicaid population and expanded innovative ways of improving maternal and early childhood health, such as Traditional Health Workers (i.e., doulas).
2. Children's social-emotional health is being supported through CCO 2.0, including a new collaboration between the OHA and Early Learning Division (ELD) to create a CCO-level metric on improving the social-emotional health of children under age six.
3. OHA initiated the Integrated Care for Kids (InCK) Model, which is developing local referral and wraparound services targeted to children's specific health and social needs.

Early Care and Education

The Student Success Act (SSA) of the 2019 Oregon Legislative Session (HB 3427) was a historic investment that included several key accomplishments in early care and education expansion, outlined below.

1. An additional 2,610 children can participate in three early care and education programs administered by the ELD (i.e., Preschool Promise [PSP], Oregon Pre-Kindergarten [OPK], Early Head Start).
2. Increased compensation for the workforce in three early care and education programs administered by the ELD (i.e., PSP, OPK, Baby Promise) to meet compensation levels of kindergarten teachers and assistant teachers.
3. Supports for enhancing competency-based early care and educational professional development for ELD's preschool programs, through linguistically and culturally responsive technical assistance provided by all Child Care Resource and Referral agencies.



4. Expanded investment in the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to increase access to and equitable outcomes in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) services for children with developmental delays and disabilities.

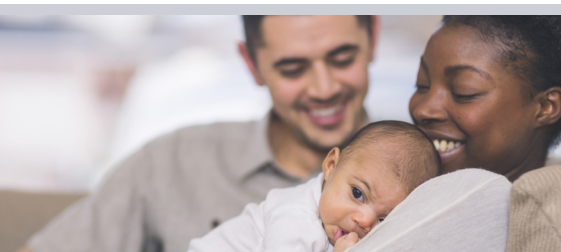
Child Care

Special focus was placed on child care for infants and toddlers, as well as rapid response in light of COVID-19.

1. The Legislature authorized ELD to start Baby Promise, a new initiative to increase the supply of quality, affordable infant/toddler child care in communities (HB 2024).
2. All programs can now access Infant and Toddler Quality Improvement Specialists through the Child Care Resource & Referral entities.
3. To provide relief during COVID-19, Oregon Department of Human Services – Self-Sufficiency Programs (ODHS – SSP) and ELD collaborated to support families and to protect child care supply. To support families, the Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) program eliminated family co-payments and increased family income eligibility. To protect child care supply, the ELD provided emergency grants and supplies for providers. Likewise, the ERDC program modified payment policies and practices in order to help child care providers survive the increased costs and reduced revenue caused by COVID-19.

Goal 2: Children Are Raised in Healthy, Stable and Attached Families

Babies, toddlers and preschoolers thrive within the context of their families and their communities. Several key cross-sector accomplishments have been made over the past two years to improve comprehensive supports for families with young children. The 2019 Oregon Legislative Session resulted in several innovative support programs for children and families throughout the state.



Home Visiting

Universally Offered Home Visiting (SB 526), using the Family Connects model, is poised to begin offering services to families of newborns in early 2021. To deliver Universally Offered Home Visiting/Family Connects, Oregon Health Authority (OHA) is partnering with local communities and Early Learning Hubs to connect families with comprehensive supports.



Paid Family Leave

The statewide insurance program administered by the Oregon Employment Department provides up to 12 weeks of paid leave beginning in 2023 (HB 2005 of the 2019 Oregon Legislative Session). The tiered construction ensures that lowest-income employees are not constrained by wage loss if they choose to take leave to care for their newborn or adopted child, a critical time for attachment. Oregonians at the lowest income levels will have the same access to leave as higher-income earners, an important step in building equity at birth.

Family Support Services

Oregon Department of Human Services – Self-Sufficiency Programs (ODHS – SSP) made it easier for families to access Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) during COVID-19. For example, virtual signatures are now allowed and benefits are authorized virtually.

Child Welfare

ODHS – Child Welfare (ODHS-CW) made significant reforms to better support families in the child welfare system.

1. In response to COVID-19, the foster care system, ODHS – CW began offering daily virtual visitation to parents of children in the foster care system instead of once-weekly in-person visits, allowing biological parents and children to build stronger relationships.
2. ODHS – CW moved forward the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), aimed at reducing out-of-home placements. Full implementation is slated for 2021-23 when FFPSA will collaborate with community partners, Tribal Nations, and state agencies, including OHA, ODE, and ELD to provide cross-sector supports to families.

Housing

Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) spurred interest across the public and private sectors to foster co-location of affordable housing with services for families in their 2020 Build Early Convening. While funding for a pilot program between OHCS and ODHS was approved in the 2019 Oregon Legislative Session (HB 2032) to provide housing stabilization services to families receiving TANF, the funding was repealed and re-allocated due to the COVID-19 budget crisis.

Goal 3: The Early Learning System is Aligned, Coordinated, and Family Centered

To effectively meet the comprehensive needs of children and their families, as well as reduce burden on families, cross-sector systems building and collaboration is essential. This systems building work is difficult; often seen as bureaucratic; requires long-term commitment and leadership from many; and includes working in a new way with culturally specific, community-based organizations. It will also require leadership and coordination from multiple levels of state government, including the Early Learning Council, Governor’s Children’s Cabinet and the Raise Up Oregon Agency Implementation Coordination Team (RUOAICT).

Systems Equity

One factor in systems equity is to give state agencies the ability to work directly with community-specific and culturally specific organizations. Policies to allow direct contracting with community-based organizations provide models for other agencies as well.

1. The Early Childhood Equity Fund (ECEEF) was created through the 2019 Student Success Act (HB 3427) with \$10.4M of annual funding. Through the ECEF, the Early Learning Division (ELD) contracted with

culturally specific, community-based organizations to build early learning programs and organizational capacity.

2. Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) benefited from a statutory change in the Second Special Session of 2020 to allow direct funding to culturally responsive organizations to support diverse families in the COVID-19 response.

Application and Data Systems

Progress has been made in building data systems.

1. Oregon Department of Human Services – Self-Sufficiency Programs (ODHS – SSP) is piloting the cross-sector ONE Integrated Eligibility (ONE IE) System, with statewide rollout to follow, which will allow families to complete a single application for TANF, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), ERDC, and Oregon Health Plan (OHP). Families will no longer have to apply separately for programs for which they have overlapping eligibilities.
2. Notable progress in data collection across sectors to support improvement in service delivery models was also made. The Oregon Child Integrated Data Set (OCIDS), housed at Oregon Health & Science University, is integrating data from across many state agencies to answer important policy and planning questions.

Early Learning System Coordination

Early Learning Hubs were leveraged to support systems coordination.

1. The Student Success Act (2019) included funding for ELD’s Early Learning Hubs (Hubs) to pilot coordinated enrollment for Preschool Promise. Eventually coordinated enrollment will expand over time to include other ELD programs, including OPK and Baby Promise so parents can easily consider and find all options.
2. Hubs created robust sector plans in 2020 that mapped early childhood needs and gaps across the state and were used to distribute preschool expansion resources.



Priorities

The Early Learning Council, at its 2020 retreat, adopted the following priorities for championing in 2021. These priorities were shared with Governor Kate Brown for consideration in the Governor's Recommended Budget 2021-2023. The Early Learning Council will continue advocating for resources and policies that build capacity and equity into the entire early learning system.

Goal I: Children Arrive Ready for Kindergarten

To ensure that children can thrive during their infant, toddler and preschool years, the Council prioritizes both policy and budget initiatives with a critical focus on early care and education—inclusive of child care, public preschool and services for children with developmental delays and disabilities.

The Council is particularly concerned about publicly funded efforts to increase the supply of quality, affordable early care and education, and note several concrete steps with budget and legislative implications for the upcoming session:

1. Increase the supply of quality, affordable, culturally responsive child care
2. Adopt new models for funding for early care and education, based on the cost of services, including a living wage for providers
3. Protect funding and COVID-related policy changes in ERDC
4. Expand Baby Promise, OPK and Preschool Promise
5. Identify resources for early care and education facilities
6. Expand access to mental health consultation in early care and education in order to strengthen social-emotional supports and reduce suspension and expulsion

At the policy level, Council priorities include:

7. Develop a diverse, culturally responsive, high quality early care and education workforce through implementation of professional learning pathways; access to post-secondary education; and trainings in social and emotional learning
8. Develop policies and supports to reduce expulsion and suspension of infants, toddlers and preschoolers in early care and education settings
9. Implement the safe sleep campaign across agencies (child welfare, public health, early learning)
10. Revise and strengthen the Kindergarten Assessment and Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines to ensure that their purpose is clear, they are culturally responsive and support positive child development
11. Improve inclusion for children with developmental delays and disabilities in child care as well as public preschool
12. Support culturally responsive kindergarten transition practices and culturally-responsive curricula from infants through the early grades

Goal 2: Children Are Raised in Healthy, Stable and Attached Families

Babies, toddlers and preschoolers thrive within the context of their families and their communities. The Early Learning Council champions a comprehensive approach that simultaneously supports young children and their families.

Priorities with near-term budget and legislative implications include:

1. Co-locate early childhood facilities and affordable housing
2. Expand the ability to use housing dollars to contract with community-based organizations
3. Continue to grow Universally Offered Home Visiting for all new parents
4. Establish a behavioral/mental health workforce for families with young children

Policy initiatives are also consequential in this area, and include:

5. Support the inclusion of early childhood efforts within the Families First Plan including Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) and home visiting
6. Achieve specific focus, performance measures and investments in early childhood for both physical and behavioral health within the CCOs
7. Ensure essential workers, including early care and education providers, are getting all the early childhood and family supports that they need
8. Support cross-sector collaboration to ensure that comprehensive services are directed to families as well as young children

Goal 3: The Early Learning System is Aligned, Coordinated, and Family Centered

There are many public agencies that must work together to assure that Oregon is successful at implementing systems and comprehensive services for young children and their families. In the first year of implementing *Raise Up Oregon*, greater emphasis was placed on securing immediate gains in the first two goal areas. Cross-agency work has started, and each agency has stepped forward to identify its own priorities for infants, toddlers and preschoolers and their families. There are significant opportunities for this work in the coming year.

Budget and legislative initiatives that are Council priorities follow:

1. Advance an independent early learning state agency focusing on early care and education, bringing together the disparate early care and education programs scattered in Early Learning Division, Oregon Department of Human Services, and Oregon Department of Education
2. Ensure availability of direct contracting with local organizations and culturally specific organizations across all agencies as part of a strategy for deepening the partnerships between the state and local community-based organizations
3. Reduce silos for accessing services across the various agencies, services and systems

Policy work priorities include:

4. Escalate cross-agency, cross-sector work, including shared professional development with a focus on supporting the social-emotional health of young children and their families

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5. Improve contribution of parents and providers to service and system design by developing effective ways of engaging parents and providers
6. Continue and elevate local partnerships in rural, suburban and urban communities that are cross-agency, cross-sector
7. Create a Tribal Early Learning Hub
8. Support homeless data tracking to include young children
9. Continue to encourage CCOs to deepen their partnerships with Early Learning Hubs and early education sector
10. Advocate for CCOs to have representation from early care and education community
11. Continue to support ODHS's ONE integrated eligibility system

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