

Early Connections Learning Center Shared Services Alliance

Sponsoring Organization:

Early Connections Learning Center
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Contact Person:

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Service Delivery Area:

El Paso County --approximately 60 miles south of Denver, Colorado at the base of Pikes Peak. El Paso County is the most populated county in Colorado, with a population of approximately 742,000 people in 240,000 households.

Type of Organization:

Independent, non-profit ECE agency

Summary of Approach:

Early Connections Learning Center operates 5 full day, full year child development centers (which serve approximately 380 children) and one drop-in facility at the County Courthouse. Additionally, Early Connections Learning Center has 4 off-site school-age programs, with an estimated capacity of 200 children. Early Connections Learning Center supports 15 family child care homes (which serve approximately 120 children) through a program called The Home Network. Early Connections uses a Shared Services framework to reorganize the administrative structure at the center and corporate levels. The reorganization helped to: increase efficiency in day to day operations, increase the capacity to serve children in centers and homes, and improve quality at all program levels. By 2011, Early Connections proposes to add 80 family child care homes and home-based providers a range of fiscal, administrative and program support services based on a Shared Services model. At maximum capacity, Early Connections' home-based network could include 100 homes with the capacity to serve 800 children.

Type of Approach:

Multi-site, non-profit center-based plus FCC network

Services provided for all center and home-based sites:

- USDA Food Program management (centers)
- Billing/fee collection
- On-site technical assistance
- Training
- Classroom observations



- Substitutes
- Program Support Staff
- Curriculum Support
- Child Assessment
- Enrollment
- Referral Services
- Purchasing (equipment, food, supplies) through procurement department for all operations
- Administrative Support Staff
- Bi-lingual Staff
- Benefits (health, life, dental) available to centers

Narrative describing services provided:

Early Connections Learning Center offers training to staff for all center- and home-based sites. All teaching staff is required to develop an annual professional development plan and to be working on formal education. All center-based sites use the *Storybook Journey* curriculum and homes typically use *Creative Curriculum*. Center-based sites use the Work Sampling System and the Ounce scale for child outcome assessment and homes use the *Teaching Strategies Gold* and child assessment (developmental profile). Ongoing training and support is offered as part of the overall professional development plan. All center-based sites are currently engaged in the new NAEYC accreditation process and homes are part of FCCH Accreditation Facilitation Project operated by Early Connections.

Staff at Network Coordinator or "Umbrella" Organization:

Chief Executive Officer
 Chief Financial Officer Executive
 Vice President (HR, CACFP)
 Vice President,
 Development Volunteer Director (.75 FTE)
 Communications Director
 Professional Development Director
 Curriculum and Assessment Director (2 FTE) (homes and centers)
 Family Support Director
 School Age Director Education Specialist (homes)
 Vice President of Center Operations
 Vice President of Home Operations
 Vice President of Facilities Operations (Facilities Director)
 Assistant Facilities Staff
 Staff Accountant
 Administrative Assistant



Funding:

Early Connections Learning Center has multiple funding supports which include Pikes Peak United Way, City of Colorado Springs, Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), program service fees (sliding scale), resource development funds and endowment income. Funding partnerships include: Head Start/Early Head Start (169 total), Colorado Preschool Kindergarten Program (2 classrooms), Harrison School District Two (donated space/custodial services for SACC sites and Family Center); City of Colorado Springs (donated space/maintenance/support services); Court Care (funding for on-site drop-in center.)

