



# COLORADO CHILDREN'S CAMPAIGN



In 2014, The Colorado Trust launched the **Health Equity Advocacy (HEA) Strategy**, a multi-phased investment in building a strong and diverse field of health equity advocates to ensure equitable health outcomes for Colorado's most vulnerable. A centerpiece of the second phase of this strategy (2015-2016) included providing financial and capacity-building support to a cohort of direct service, community organizing, and policy advocacy organizations across the state. This support was designed to strengthen individual and collective capacity to "seed" an emerging health equity advocacy field in Colorado.

The following is part of a "**Seeds of the Field**" series of profiles of each of the 17 cohort members funded in the second phase of the HEA Strategy.

## Seeding a Health Equity Advocacy Field: The Story of the Colorado Children's Campaign

As a research, policy, and advocacy organization, the [Colorado Children's Campaign](#) (Children's Campaign) has a mission of *realizing every chance for every child in Colorado*. The Children's Campaign advocates for data-driven public policies that improve Colorado children's well-being in health, education, and early childhood.

A leading advocate for children across Colorado, the Children's Campaign focuses on removing the barriers that lead to gaps in student achievement and health outcomes for low-income children and children of color, promoting high-quality early learning education and K-12 education, and pushing for access to affordable health care and

healthy communities for all Colorado children. In order to reach this goal, the Children's Campaign compiles and shares critical data across multiple issue areas to key stakeholders, policymakers, and communities, and is a part of numerous coalitions to drive equitable policies for children and families in Colorado.

## The Children's Campaign's Phase 2 Work

The Children's Campaign spent Phase 2 developing policy solutions for children's well-being in Colorado by strengthening partnerships with HEA cohort members to improve the equity lens in its work, engaging affected populations in its data collection processes, and deepening its equity capacity—both internally and in its coalitions and networks.

Being part of the HEA cohort has challenged the Children's Campaign to be a better advocate for children and families by infusing a strong health equity message in its work and engaging HEA cohort organizations to serve as thought partners in its advocacy work. As a result, one of the Children's Campaign's major successes in Phase 2 was in securing additional funding for family planning in Colorado. The Children's Campaign led the Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC4CO) coalition with HEA cohort member, Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials (CALPHO). Early on in the campaign, community organizing partners noted that the messaging of the LARC4CO coalition used language that could be perceived as disrespectful to teen mothers. The Children's Campaign was able to work with the coalition partners to ensure that their language was more equity-minded and person-first, and that it supported long-term goals around Medicaid financing. Erin Miller, Vice President, Health Initiatives, of the Children's Campaign reflects,

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Another critical Phase 2 achievement included the implementation of significant changes to one of the Children's Campaign's most influential reports. For more than 23 years, the Children's Campaign has created a *KIDS COUNT in Colorado!* report, and in 2017 it made racial equity the main focus. Rather than simply disaggregating data on child outcomes by race and ethnicity, and presenting the data through its own policy advocacy lens, the Children's Campaign invested additional resources (through an HEA technical assistance grant) to help ensure the data are presented through the lens of the communities most impacted. The Children's Campaign partnered with OMNI institute to conduct 10 community dialogue sessions and gather information from community members and local organizations on racial/ethnic disparities within the Children's Campaign's well-being indicators for children. Communities weighed in and gave voice to the data, building the narrative to highlight structural barriers and community strengths, as well as potential opportunities for change. As the Children's Campaign continues to develop the *KIDS COUNT* reports, they will further explore opportunities to engage communities in the development process at the data collection, interpretation, and presentation phases.

The Children's Campaign recognized the importance of building its diversity, equity, and inclusion lens as an organization in order to build a field of health equity advocates. It engaged an organizational consultant to work with the organization's Equity Team and to help implement its Equity Development plan. In addition, the Children's Campaign staff attended workshops and trainings on racial equity, including equity messaging training from the Center on Social Inclusion. To share their racial equity learnings beyond the organization, the Children's Campaign staff received HEA technical assistance funding to provide health equity mini-workshops to the All Kids Covered Coalition (AKC). These workshops provided participants with a deeper understanding about the role of structural racism in policymaking and the ways in which these policies can lead to the persistence of racial disparities in health insurance coverage and health outcomes. To that end, it introduced the HEA Health Equity Impact Assessment tool to help AKC analyze their priorities for 2017.

### **Laying the Groundwork for an Emerging Field**

Throughout Phase 2, the Children's Campaign laid groundwork by building their diversity, equity, and inclusion lens, continuing to engage community voice, and leading policy efforts across Colorado. The Children's Campaign recognizes that while the 2016 election



may have shifted the landscape for health equity work, they are firmly committed to protecting the gains made for Colorado's children and continuing to push for policies that improve the well-being of children. As they embark on the next phase of this work, the Children's Campaign will continue to serve as a key leader in health equity advocacy for children across Colorado, while continuing to strengthen partnerships with other organizations and communities to seed a field of health equity advocates.

## **Looking Forward**

Beginning in 2017, the 17 HEA cohort members, including the Children's Campaign, are launching a new phase of work focused on further cultivating the seeds collectively planted across the state in Phase 2. Ultimately, guided by common values and empowered communities, cohort members will be aligning their change efforts to dismantle structural and racial inequities and build equitable health systems so that all Coloradans can thrive. The Children's Campaign is poised to serve as a leader in this collective endeavor.

### **Highlights: The Colorado Children's Campaign's Seeds of the Field**

- Stronger equity partnerships with HEA cohort members in policy advocacy work
- More capacity to directly engage affected populations in health equity data analysis
- Greater equity capacity as a coalition and network leader for children and family policy advocacy
- New *KIDS COUNT in Colorado!* report that now includes the voices and perspectives of the communities represented in the report

