



COLORADO CENTER ON LAW AND POLICY

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 Colorado Center on Law and Policy

As an advocacy organization dedicated to promoting justice, economic security, access to health care, and sound fiscal policies, the [Colorado Center on Law and Policy](#) (CCLP) is a key partner in building a health equity advocacy field throughout Colorado.

CCLP’s overarching goal is to ensure low-income Coloradans have access to affordable, quality health care, and the tools to achieve personal well-being and economic security. To achieve this goal, CCLP researches and analyzes policy options, advocates before the legislature and executive agencies, educates and engages diverse communities, builds

coalitions with community partners for systemic change, and protects the rights of low-income Coloradans through legal and administrative actions.

Along with meeting health care and human services decision-makers face to face, CCLP shares its data and analyses with policymakers in hearings and meetings, and builds awareness and support for its policy advocacy work through traditional and social media.

At the launch of Phase 2, CCLP was already supporting efforts to maintain Medicaid eligibility for immigrants and was in the early stages of developing a statewide network of anti-poverty organizations to advance legislation and policies that support low-income Coloradans. CCLP relied heavily on its community-based partners to tell them what their constituents needed. However, CCLP realized that to ensure that its policy work achieved its desired ends, it needed to directly engage affected populations.

CCLP's Phase 2 Work

While CCLP's policy work is data-driven, during Phase 2 CCLP made efforts to become more community-driven to ensure its work was informed by community-defined needs. CCLP did this by attending community-led meetings and strengthening its partnerships with community organizing groups and direct service providers.

Prior to Phase 2, CCLP had partnered with Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition (CCDC), an HEA cohort organization that advocates and organizes for disability rights. But in Phase 2, their relationship deepened with CCLP, with CCLP serving more as a strategic partner to support CCDC's work. CCLP listened carefully to the needs identified by CCDC's advocates and provided targeted technical assistance trainings on Congress' proposed changes to Medicaid and how they would impact Colorado's Medicaid program and the people who rely on it. CCLP's trainings armed CCDC's advocates with the technical and legal information they needed to make sure their organizing and advocacy efforts were as targeted and accurate as possible. In turn, CCLP gained greater knowledge about the needs of the disability community and developed a deeper relationship with this partner organization.



Increasing our connections in the community is also allowing us to talk to the community about our work, and the more that's happening, I think that both pushes CCLP's successes, but also makes sure that our work is informed by our partners that work directly with the community."

- Allison Neswood,
Health Care Attorney

CCLP has also expanded its community-driven efforts through its data reports. The Vital Signs report (funded through a technical assistance grant from the HEA Strategy) highlights the influence of income, race, and place on health outcomes and reveals disparities in Colorado and their effects. In the past, CCLP did not include case studies or individual stories in its analyses, but through its Health Equity Advocacy work and relationships with direct service providers and community organizing groups, they were able to put faces and stories behind reported data. The case studies included in Vital Signs were developed in partnership with four HEA cohort members: Re:Vision, Grand County Rural Health Network, Colorado-Cross Disability Coalition, and Asian Pacific Development Center.

The process of creating the Vital Signs report enabled CCLP to develop its health equity frame and strategize in partnership with other organizations around both specific policy issues and also bigger capacity-building strategies to support systems change and racial and health equity work.

Laying the Groundwork for an Emerging Field

Building upon the community-driven work that was seeded in Phase 2, CCLP continues to learn about the needs of communities from trusted partners that directly engage and serve affected populations. In its continued work as a policy organization, CCLP will play a critical role in the health equity advocacy field as a bridge between community organizers and direct service providers to policymakers and Colorado health decision-makers in state and local government. Going forward, CCLP will continue to build capacity to ensure its work is rooted in and guided by principles of equity while also continuing to leverage its statewide network to promote health equity across Colorado and to grow the field of health equity advocates.

Vital Signs Report Case Studies



Re:Vision: Matilde Garcia's Story



Grand County Rural Health Network: Mark Davis' Story



Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition: Margaret Williams' Story



Asian Pacific Development Center: Dollar Lee's Story

Looking Forward

Beginning in 2017, the 17 HEA cohort members, including CCLP, 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. CCLP is poised to serve as a leader in this collective endeavor.

Highlights: Colorado Center on Law and Policy's Seeds of the Field

- Relationships with direct service providers and community organizing groups strengthened to support more effective advocacy efforts
- New data report that highlights community voices
- Greater opportunities to serve as a bridge between policymakers and community organizing groups and direct service providers increased

